The Social Change Quotient: Are We Doing Our Share?

Theory of Change Workshop
Heléne Clark
ActKnowledge
Example:
Long-term Goal: School Reform

One possible precondition: Parent Engagement
Next step: Explain why

Why do you think that parent engagement is a necessary precondition for reforming schools?
This process is repeated until you have all the steps to get you from where you are to where you want to be.
But, there’s more....

Each step (or precondition) is a goal itself

E.g. – Parent Engagement is a precondition to school reform, AND it is a goal. Because it’s a precondition, it’s an EARLIER goal. You need to reach it before you can have school reform (according to your beliefs)
And for each goal:

You need to know:

Did I Get There?
Because:

Your theory depends on meeting each precondition

(That’s what makes it a precondition – it’s NECESSARY)
How Will You Know?

EVIDENCE!
Evidence

Measurable **Indicators** of Success

What does it look like if the goal is met?
For example

Goal = Academic Achievement
Goal = Academic Achievement

Possible Indicators:

- Reading and Math Test Scores
- Grades
- Graduation Rates
For Every Indicator:

What?
For Whom?
How Many?
How Good?
By When?
Example: Reading Test Scores (the what)

For whom: Fourth-graders
How many: 80%
How good: Read at grade level
By when: One year (or end of after-school program, or whatever you decide)
Now, Let’s Look at a Real Theory of Change for a Very Simple Program
Children’s Literacy

Family Support Center Takes On Child Literacy Campaign
Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Family Support Center Takes On Child Literacy Campaign
Only ONE Precondition?

This is only an example!
Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents have access to High Quality Books

Family Support Center Takes On Child Literacy Campaign
Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents have access to High Quality Books

Parents Understand Value of Reading to their Children

Family Support Center Takes On Child Literacy Campaign
Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents have access to High Quality Books
Parents Understand Value of Reading to their Children
Parents Have Required Literacy Skills

Family Support Center Takes On Child Literacy Campaign
Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents Have Access to High Quality Books

Parents Understand Value of Reading to their Children

Parents Have Required Literacy Skills

Family Support Center Takes On Child Literacy Campaign
Remember Being Realistic?

Because they only are addressing ONE precondition for literacy, they SHOULD NOT have a measure of success that is overblown.
Without addressing school curricula and barriers to learning, they cannot expect to have all kids reading perfectly.

They can expect that a certain percentage of students will improve and have to decide on a REALISTIC TARGET.
Now, explain what makes the outcomes work:

Justifications and Assumptions about the Context of your Community
JUSTIFICATIONS AND ASSUMPTIONS about the context of your community should explain the theory and help plan your interventions.
In other words, why do we believe that if the preconditions are met, the outcome at the next level will occur?

How may outcomes interact?
Context

What are you assuming will also happen or exist that will allow the precondition to lead to the outcome?
Are there other conditions that you assume will be met?

Are there contextual conditions that could limit success?
Parents Understand Value of Reading to Their Children

Parents Have Required Literacy Skills

Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents Have Access to High Quality Books

Parents Use of Reading

A

B

C

D

E

The Justification of why one outcome would lead to the other could be research shows that children who have adults read to them are better readers.
Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents Have Access to High Quality Books

Parents Understand Value of Reading to Their Children

Parents Have Required Literacy Skills

Interaction Between Outcomes
Parents Understand Value of Reading to Their Children

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents Have Access to High Quality Books

Parents Understand Value of Reading to Their Children

Parents Have Required Literacy Skills

Assumption about your community (E) may be that parents will have time to read to their children.
Other Possible Assumptions

Non-literate parents will be motivated to attend literacy classes

The Family Support Center has the capacity to run the class
Now that they have the WHAT (their goals)

They can address the HOW (programs)
Specifying Interventions

For every outcome that can only occur if you do something, specify the intervention needed
Children’s Literacy

Parents Read to Their Children Regularly

Parents Have Access to High Quality Books

Parents Understand Value of Reading to Their Children

Parents Have Required Literacy Skills

Family Support Center Takes On Child Literacy Campaign
In this example, the interventions are needed at:

1  2  3
Intervention

1

Family Support Centers Implement a Lending Library
Intervention

Family Support Centers Implement a Reading Awareness Class
Intervention

3

Family Support Centers Implement Adult Literacy Classes
Heléne Clark
ActKnowledge
212-817-1906

hclark@actknowledge.org

365 Fifth Avenue
New York, New York 10016

www.theoryofchange.org