

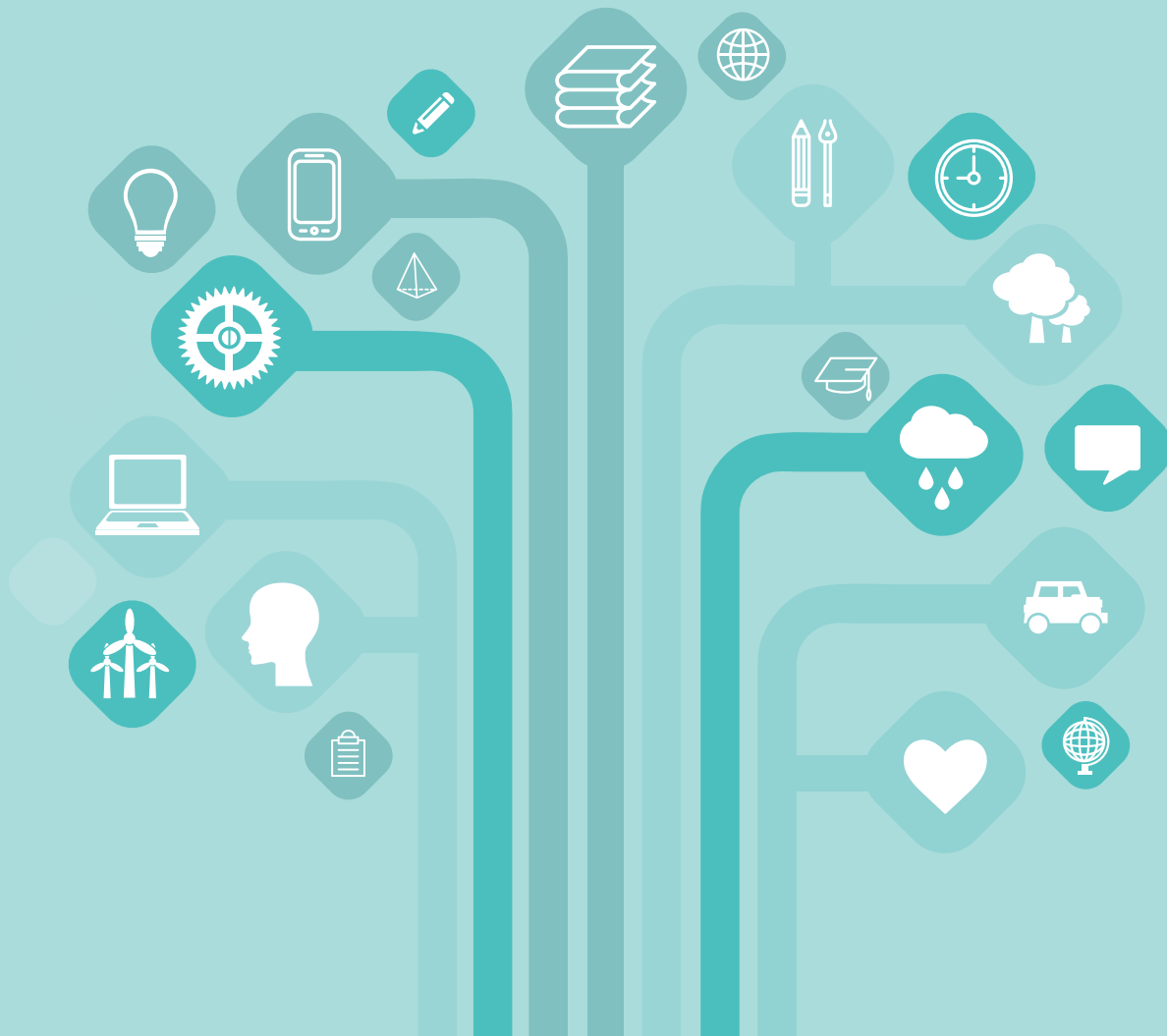
SHIFTING THE FRAMEWORK

BEREA COLLEGE BUILDS ON
KENTUCKY'S COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

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Break the Cycle

WITH SUPPORT FROM



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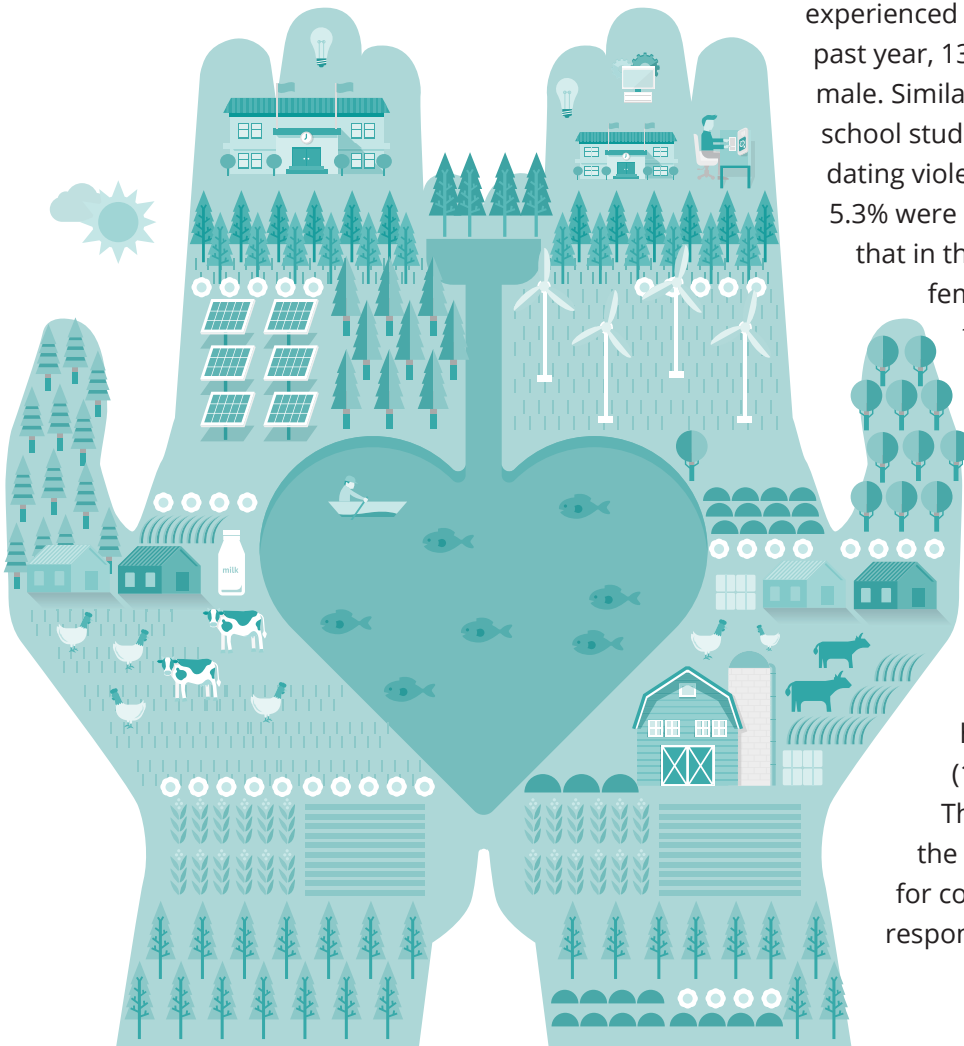
BEREA COLLEGE BUILDS ON KENTUCKY'S COMMUNITY STRENGTHS

The three-county Promise Neighborhood (PN) that Berea College focused on for their project is rural. Like other rural communities, residents experience many challenges including: limited transportation options, volatile weather, and noticeable rates of dating abuse. Promise Neighborhood lacks a public transportation system, and with many students living on dirt or gravel roads leads to barriers for accessing school and support services during harsh weather. Sherry Taubert, Project Director

of Berea College's PN, described local weather challenges as "winter wipeout," referencing the frequent absences that occur from ongoing weather issues.

Rates of violence are an added challenge faced by PN community members. Despite the positive results of the 2012 Healthy Relationships Survey, dating violence amongst young people persisted across the three communities. According to the 2015 National Youth Risk Behavior Survey, of the 10.1% of Kentucky high school students who experienced sexual dating violence in the past year, 13.8% were female and 6.1% were male. Similarly, of the 8.9% of Kentucky high school students who experienced physical dating violence, 12.1% were female and 5.3% were male. This new data asserts that in the state of Kentucky, high school female students are more than twice as likely to experience dating violence as their male peers.

In 2015, 1 in 10 Kentucky high school students experienced sexual dating violence. Additionally, the rate of these students reporting ever being physically forced to have sexual intercourse was higher than the national rate (10.3% and 6.7%, respectively). These rates of violence speak to the need for a collective approach for coordinated prevention and response strategies.





SCHOOL BASED PROGRAMS: INTENTIONAL & FLEXIBLE

Securing sustainable engagement is a common challenge when attempting to implement violence prevention and intervention programs in schools. Working in connection with local schools posed multiple challenges including: addressing differing needs, limited time, and shifting responsibilities for their school-based partners. However, Berea College collectively worked with districts, educators, principals, students, and other community members to create a coordinated group, dedicated to supporting the safety of PN students.

INDIVIDUALIZED APPROACHES

One of the strengths of Berea College's project was their establishment of individualized approaches for each school. The team crafted an integrated planning process that involved identifying the unique needs of each school, and working with superintendents, principals, and other key stakeholders within a campus. The project team was able to present various options for programming by outlining the expectations and details associated with each. This method of collaborative decision-making, based in community-specific needs, allowed the grant partners to creatively implement a strategy. By centering the capacity and

BEREA COLLEGE STEP GRANT PROGRAM GOALS

Provide all secondary schools within the Promise Neighborhood service region with training and education for promoting healthy and respectful relationships among young people.

Work with school districts to develop effective school-based policies and services to better help those young people who might be negotiation troubling and traumatic experiences associated with gender-based violence and dating violence.

demands of each campus, the staff found innovative ways to "piggyback on other programming that's happening in the school," according to Taubert. These creative solutions involved locating pockets of time for school stakeholder engagement. Similarly, Berea College leveraged their assets and community presence to build on the individualized approaches, while maintaining the commitment to an overall community approach to ending violence and supporting young survivors.

"I think the number one piece with all of this – if I could give you on them – is relationship-building. It's just absolutely critical and it's relationship-building with schools, community partners, teachers, staff, faith-based community across the gamut.

– Sherry Taubert



COMMUNITY COORDINATION: CREATIVE & FORWARD-THINKING

In an area with limited access to resources, coordinated community approaches is essential. Berea College knew that continued funding wasn't guaranteed, so they focused on ensuring sustainability from the start of the project. "We have to think about the sustainability of it at the beginning, not the end," Taubert explained. "And I think that's the piece that we have to make sure carries forward."

ENSURING MULTI-LEVEL CAPACITY

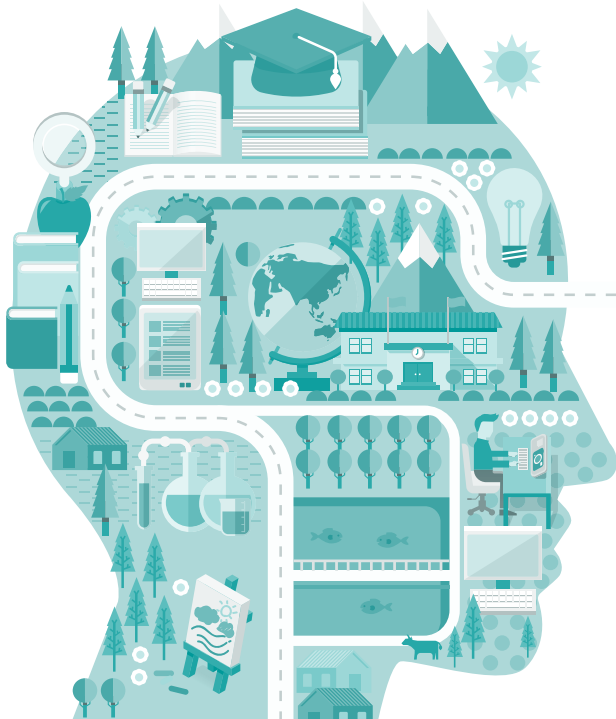
School-based programming often struggles with staff turnover. For this reason, the project team concentrated on cultivating and nourishing multi-level relationships ranging from: superintendents, principals, central office, district level staff, teachers, and students. These relationships were significant in the successful implementation of the Green Dot program in all five of the schools served under the project. When a staff member left, the program interruption

"[The student] voice is powerful, and all we have to do is listen to them... They know the solution, they just need to be empowered to come up with it themselves.

- Sherry Taubert

caused an immediate impact. Longer-term impacts were caused until a new staff member was hired. For this reason, Berea College focused on bringing training to both school staff and local community partner organizations.

Beyond the importance of school participation, Berea College's team knew that student buy-in was essential to long-term engagement and the success of their prevention programming. Engaging students meant furthering the initiative's sustainability, ensuring credible messaging, and cultivating long-term leaders in creating change. The project team was able to reaffirm the importance of youth-led and youth-informed programs by building relationships with key school stakeholders. As a result, administrators supported a range of youth-led initiatives including; the establishment of youth advocacy groups and the development of campaigns addressing teen dating and domestic violence. Taubert explained, "[t]hat's been a real movement that we've seen in our schools - listening more to our students and hearing the student voice and wanting the student voice engaged." Students were equally excited about the opportunity, and the collective buy-in allowed the team to center the expertise of students and cultivate leaders to continue the project's goals.





THE TASK FORCE

Berea College identified champions for the work and created the space needed to foster buy-in, relationship building, and understanding around the issue of violence. Taubert described their role in coordinating local and external stakeholders as, “sort of coaching and mentoring that process and building their cultural competency.” Although sexual violence and domestic violence organizations were a part of this consortium, none of those agencies are located within Jackson, Clay, or Oswego County. This distance posed a challenge when young survivors were in need of support services, leading to the creation of the local task force.

For Berea College, community partners extended beyond those directly involved in the project. Pollard highlighted key actors who play a unique role in creating healthy communities including: school staff, community agencies, and faith-based leaders. According to Pollard, “[f]amilies spend a lot of time involved with their churches. So I think that’s a big piece of this community involvement in general, is getting the faith-based community involved and in that conversation.”

Beyond project coordinating, the task force also served as a space for community partners to collaborate. “They’ve been able to meet each other,

and I think that naturally just snowballed into having projects or one vision about having the youth feel safe,” explained Pollard. Taubert highlighted that the task force was bringing community members to the table that may have worked less than a mile from each other, but have never spoken until they joined the team.

SUSTAINING SUCCESS

Sustainable prevention, intervention, and response programming targeting dating abuse in schools are difficult tasks regardless of location, but are especially challenging when serving communities with intersecting environmental factors. In Berea College’s case, flexibility, creativity, intentional partnership, and individualized care centered in a community concern, were essential strategies in achieving success. Berea College’s project focused on a collective approach to child safety and health by building bridges between schools and organizations, while also consciously employing methods to help ensure the project’s sustainability. The positive impact that Berea College’s project has had, and can continue to have across the three-county PN highlights the need for a collective community commitment to action.

“When you write grants you really – you have a destination that you’re going [toward]. And then you’ve got your map in front of you and you chart a course. But how often when we’re driving to a destination do we learn on that pathway that, gosh, this road’s been closed for a rock fall, so I’m going to have to take an alternative road. But at the end of the day I end up at the same location. And the information I may have learned and discovered upon the pathway [becomes] actually more valuable than the original path itself.

- Sherry Taubert

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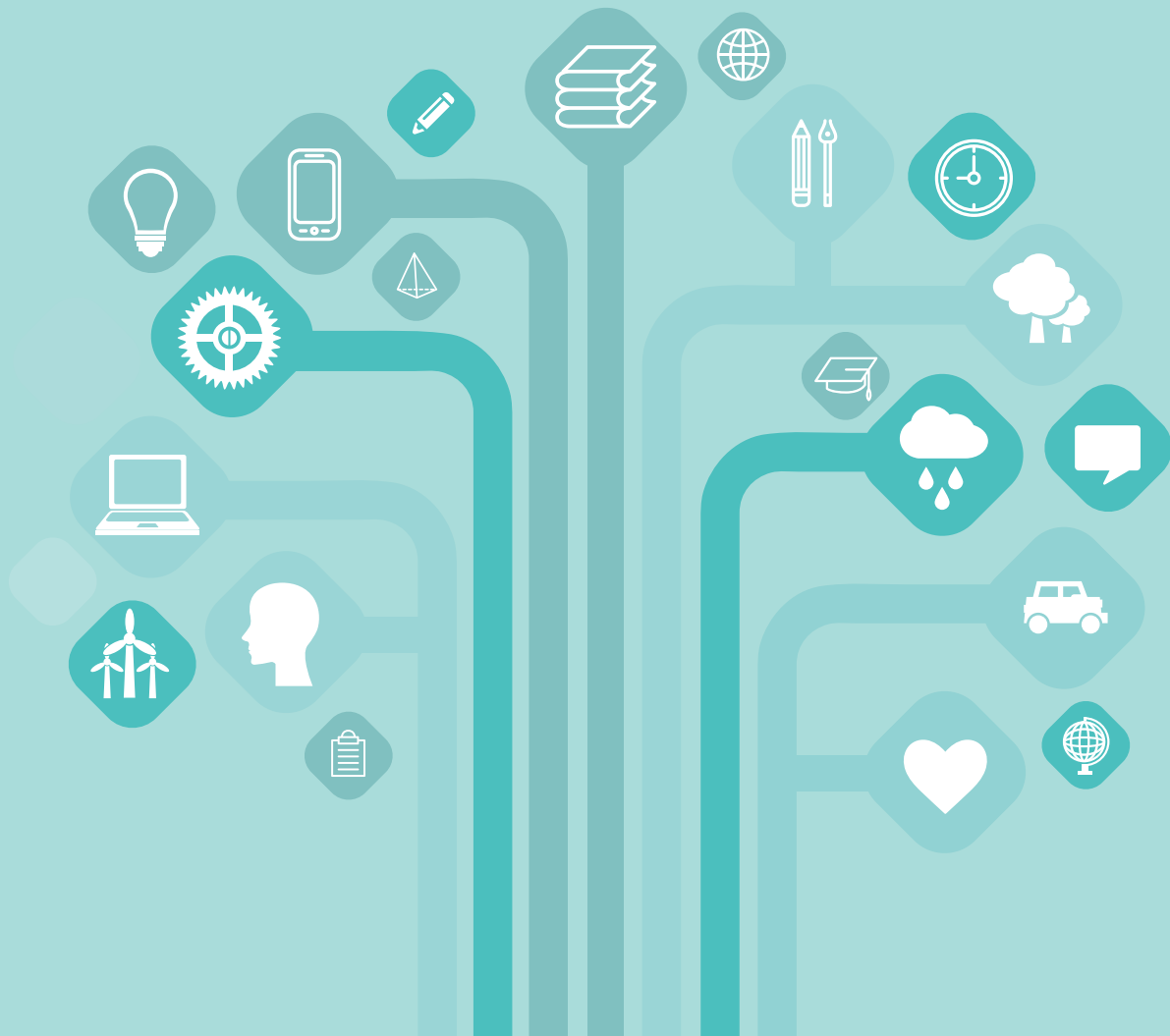
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