One Vision, One Voice: Effectively Talking About Prevention & Children’s Issues
The Community’s Role in Child Well-being
Science tells us that children’s experiences literally build the architecture of the maturing brain.
Like a house, a sturdy or a fragile foundation affects all the development that follows… the key to everything that comes later.
That’s why getting it right the first time is far more effective than trying to fix things later.
Goals

• Recognize dominant frames about child development

• Familiarity with reframed messages

• Working knowledge of Strategic Frame Analysis messaging techniques

• Knowledge of framing resources
Communications is a powerful tool for social change

- Defines the problem
- Sets the parameters of the debate
- Determines who will be heard
- Influences how the public and leaders understand your issue and take action for (or against) it
- All stakeholders have the opportunity to advance your agenda
Typical Measures of Communications Success

- Creativity of Campaign Slogan
- Placement of Print & Broadcast News Coverage
- Website hits
- Google news results
- Diggs/Twitter/Facebook mentions
How do we shift public understanding of and support for an issue?

As advocates, we need to get our message out there AND we need to make sure it is the “right” message.

- One that helps the public understand the issue and the importance of policy choices attached to that issue
- One that does not reinforce “existing stories” in the public dialogue that undermine our efforts
The Public Believes

• Child abuse is intentional and serious.
• Neglect is not as harmful as abuse.
• Child abuse and neglect is a family issue.
• Reporting is prevention – the only way to prevent child abuse is to report it to DSS.
• The government is monitoring families too closely.
• Discipline is not abuse, and they hold conflicting views on what constitutes abuse and what is discipline.
Media’s Portrayal of Child Abuse and Neglect

• In a scan of print articles and TV stories about child abuse, it is:
  • portrayed as an extreme, horrifying crime committed by a horrible adult.
  • seen as a result of a failure of the CPS system.
  • viewed as being committed by sexual predators and violent parents who we cannot stop.
  • evident the public is confused about what is discipline and what is abuse.
So... Making news can’t be our only goal. Especially because....most people get information about social problems from the news media.
Framing Childhood Issues for Public Understanding and Support
We communicate as if the mind is an empty room....
"BLANK SLATE"
When it’s actually quite full!
How the swamp works

– We use mental shortcuts to make sense of the world

– Incoming information provides cues that connect to the pictures (schema) in our heads

– Finding some familiar element causes us to activate an existing picture/story in our heads, and we understand the new information as if it were an exemplar of that old story.

– Understanding means finding a story you already know and saying, ‘Oh yeah, that one.’

– Once we have found (the) story, we stop processing.
We share the swamp

• Our mental shortcuts (how we process new information) rely on “cultural models” or “worldviews” we share with others in our society.

• **Cultural models** are a small set of widely shared and understood schema; internalized concepts and values that allow us to accord meaning to new information or unfolding events.
Henry is a short, slim man. He likes to read poetry, and has been active in environmental and feminist causes. Henry is most likely a _________________.

A. TRUCK DRIVER

B. IVY LEAGUE CLASSICS PROFESSOR
Let’s do the math....

• There are 8 ivy league schools with maybe 10 classics professors at each school

• Total of classics professors NATIONWIDE: 80

• There are 2 million truck drivers!
But.....

Do you still think he might be one of those 80 classics professors?

• What about Henry says “classics professor?”
• What is your typical picture of a truck driver?

This is cultural models at work!
How a story is “framed” influences the cultural model people rely on to interpret it or to “fill in the blanks” to make sense of the incoming information.
A frame is the way a message is put together.
Frames help people understand:

- WHY they should care about the issue.
- WHAT the problem is and HOW it can be solved,
- WHO can solve it.
People make decisions based on values (emotion) not facts (data).
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org
What do you need to know to communicate effectively on an issue?

• How does the public think about this issue?
• Are there strategies that will improve public understanding of our issue and support for social policy?
FrameWorks’ Multi-Method Approach to Communications Research

- Media Content Analyses
- Reviews of Experts and Advocates Materials

Pump the Swamp

Expose the Gaps and Traps
- Expert/Advocate Interviews
- Cultural Models Interviews
- Peer Discourse Analysis

Redraw the Map

- Simplifying Models Research
- Experimental Tests of Frame Effects
FrameWorks’ Research Base on Child Abuse and Neglect

• 120+ one-on-one interviews with adults in 12 states
• 60 peer discourse sessions in 20 states
• 6 focus groups and 40 one-on-one interviews with state legislators in 8 states
• Experimental survey of 2,000 business leaders
• Experimental survey with 2,000 Americans in 2007; 4,200 in 2008; 5,700 in 2010
• 500 Persistence Trials with ordinary Americans to test simplifying models
• 8 years of collaboration with the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child to establish the core expert story of early childhood
• Similar efforts on epigenetics, executive function, children’s mental health completed in 2010...
How FrameWorks Measures Framing Strategy Success

- Rigorous testing with qualitative and quantitative methods
- Significant shifts in
  - issue understanding, and
  - policy support

see http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/methods.html
Messages That Work for Child Abuse and Neglect
Self-Made Child
Development is automatic
Discipline
Stress is good for you
We turned out ok

Very Complicated
Something about the brain
Only for scientists
Everything matters

Family Bubble
Bad parents
Mama knows best
Kids are a private concern

Early Ed
Hurried Child
Fancy Parents
Flash cards in cribs

What's in the swamp of...
Child Development

Safety
Community = predator
Control and contain

Opportunity
Children are the future
Begins in school
I think it's all at home, development happens. It's inevitable kids out. And it is nothing that they're going to stay good one parent at least. In the first five years, should stay at home. That sets the tone for the kids. You know, development just happens. It's inevitable. And there is nothing that anybody can do or should do any differently than they've been doing for hundreds and thousands of years.
What is this about?

What kind of issue is this?

What is the solution?
Focus on Values, Metaphors and Solutions
The future prosperity of any society depends on its ability to foster the health and well-being of the next generation. When a society invests wisely in children and families, the next generation will pay that back through a lifetime of productivity and responsible citizenship.
Other examples of how to frame prosperity

If we want North Carolina’s future to be in good hands, we need to develop a strong bench—a generation of solid, decent young people who can lead our communities and grow our economy.

Preparing North Carolina for a prosperous future begins with recognizing that our youngest citizens must get what they need today to become the adults who will strengthen our communities and build our economy.
Innovative states and communities have been able to design high-quality programs for children. These programs have solved problems in childhood development and shown significant long-term improvements for children, and are the kinds of innovations we need.
Another example of how to frame ingenuity

Our future as a state depends on fostering the health and well-being of the next generation. And if we expect solid outputs, we have to make sure we’re providing solid inputs. The good news is there are innovative programs that have been shown to support children’s development and show long term benefits.
Values = Prosperity, Ingenuity

The issue = Child Development

The Solution
Use Metaphors and “Simplifying Models” to Explain Child Development

Specifically, we need to fill the gaps in public thinking about....

What actually “develops”?

How does development happen?

What derails development?
What Develops?
The brain’s architecture.

The early years of life matter because children’s experiences affect the architecture of the maturing brain, establishing either a sturdy or a fragile foundation for all of the development and behavior that follows.
How Does the Brain Architecture Develop?

Serve and Return

Like the process of serve and return in games such as ping pong or volleyball, children naturally reach out for interaction - it is important that caring adults engage and respond in kind.
What derails development?

UNSANE BUILDING CONDITIONS

TOXIC STRESS
## Not All Stress is the Same

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>POSITIVE STRESS</strong></th>
<th>Important to development, in the context of stable and supportive relationships</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOLERABLE STRESS</strong></td>
<td>Potentially disruptive; buffered by supportive relationships and safe environments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOXIC STRESS</strong></td>
<td>Unrelenting, long term stress; disrupts brain architecture; increases risk of later physical and mental health issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Values = Prosperity, Ingenuity

The issue = Child Development

The Solution
Public policies across many systems can provide the tools and supports for communities to successfully support families and ensure our future generations thrive.
Together We Can Ensure NC’s Future Prosperity

• Ask policy makers what they are doing to support North Carolina’s youngest citizens.

• Talk about the importance of children’s healthy development to the future success of our state.

• Talk about how your program or service contributes to children’s healthy development.
And......the Other Elements of the Frame
Visuals

http://frameworksinstitute.org/workshops/wal/
Visuals
Tone

**Argumentative**

- Opinionated, highly charged and ideological
- Causes skepticism

**Reasonable**

- Activates a community approach
- Instills a “can-do” attitude
- Helps audience focus on how to solve the problem

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Messengers
Data

- Numbers are not frames
- Understandable
- Give meaning first
Future Prosperity

Past
Need more info?

FrameWorks Institute:
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org

Strategic Frame Analysis:
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/sfa.html

FrameWorks Issues:
http://www.frameworksinstitute.org/allissues.html
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