

School-Community Partnerships: A Guide



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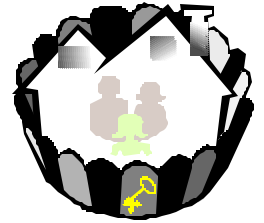
Executive Summary

Recent years have seen an escalating expansion in school-community linkages. Initiatives are sprouting in a rather dramatic and ad hoc manner.

These efforts could improve schools, strengthen neighborhoods, and lead to a marked reduction in young people's problems. Or, such "collaborations" can end up being another reform effort that promised a lot, did little good, and even did some harm. It is time to document and analyze what has developed and move forward with a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

This guidebook briefly

- Underscores the "why" of school-family-community collaborations
- Highlights their key facets
- Sketches out the state of the art across the country
- Offers some recommendations for local school and community policy makers
- Discusses steps for building and maintaining school-community partnerships
- Includes some tools for developing such partnerships.



Why School-Community Partnerships?

Increasingly, it is evident that schools, families, and communities should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals. Schools are located in communities, but often are islands with no bridges to the mainland. Families live in neighborhoods, often with little connection to each other or to the schools their youngsters attend. Neighborhood entities such as agencies, youth groups, and businesses have major stakes in the community. All these entities affect each other, for good or bad. Because of this and because they share goals related to education and socialization of the young, schools, homes, and communities must collaborate with each other if they are to minimize problems and maximize results.

Policy makers must realize that, as important as it is to reform and restructure health and human services, such services remain only one facet of a comprehensive, cohesive approach for strengthening families and neighborhoods.

Interest in working together is bolstered by concern about widespread fragmentation of school and community interventions and problems of access. The hope is that by integrating available resources, a significant impact can be made on "at risk" factors. In particular, appropriate and effective collaboration and teaming are seen as key facets of addressing barriers to development, learning, and family self-sufficiency.

While informal school-family-community linkages are relatively simple to acquire, establishing major long-term connections is complicated. They require vision, cohesive policy, and basic systemic reform. The difficulties are readily seen in attempts to evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of school-community interventions. Such a comprehensive continuum involves more than connecting with the community to enhance resources to support

instruction, provide mentoring, and improve facilities. It involves more than school-linked, integrated services and activities. It requires weaving school and community resources together in ways that can only be achieved through connections that are formalized and institutionalized, with major responsibilities shared.

What are School-Community Partnerships?

School-community partnerships often are referred to as collaborations. Optimally, such partnerships formally blend together resources of at least one school and sometimes a group of schools or an entire school district with resources in a given neighborhood or the larger community. The intent is to sustain such partnerships over time. The range of entities in a community are not limited to agencies and organization; they encompass people, businesses, community based organizations, postsecondary institutions, religious and civic groups, programs at parks and libraries, and any other facilities that can be used for recreation, learning, enrichment, and support.

School-community partnerships can weave together a critical mass of resources and strategies to enhance caring communities that support all youth and their families and enable success at school and beyond. Strong school-community connections are critical in impoverished communities where schools often are the largest piece of public real estate and also may be the single largest employer. Comprehensive partnerships represent a promising direction for generating essential interventions to address barriers to learning, enhance healthy development, and strengthen families and neighborhoods. Building such partnerships requires an enlightened vision, creative leadership, and new and multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools and communities, as well as for all who are willing to assume leadership.

In thinking about school-community partnerships, it is essential not to overemphasize the topics of coordinating community services and co-locating services on school sites. Such thinking downplays the need to also restructure the various education support programs and services that schools own and operate. And, it has led some policy makers to the mistaken impression that community resources can effectively meet the needs of schools in addressing barriers to learning. In turn, this has led some legislators to view the linking of community services to schools as a way to free-up the dollars underwriting school-owned services. The reality is that even when one adds together community and school assets, the total set of services in impoverished locales is woefully inadequate. In situation after situation, it has become evident that as soon as the first few sites demonstrating school-community collaboration are in place, community agencies find they have stretched their resources to the limit.

A Growing Movement

Projects across the country demonstrate how schools and communities connect to improve results for youngsters, families, and neighborhoods. Various levels and forms of school-community collaboration are being tested, including state-wide initiatives in California, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, and Oregon, among others. The aims are to improve coordination and eventually integrate many programs and enhance linkages with school sites. To these ends, projects incorporate as many health, mental health, and social services as feasible into "centers" (including school-based health centers, family and parent centers) established at or near a school. They adopt terms such as school-linked and coordinated services, wrap-around, one-stop shopping, full service schools, systems of care, and community schools. There are projects to (a) improve access to health and social services, (b) expand after school academic, recreation, and enrichment, (c) build systems of care, (d) reduce delinquency, (e) enhance transitions to work/career/post-secondary education, and (f) enhance life in school and community.

Such "experiments" have been prompted by diverse initiatives:

- C some are driven by school reform
- C some are connected to efforts to reform community health and social service agencies
- C some stem from the youth development movement
- C a few arise from community development initiatives.

For example, initiatives for school-linked services often mesh with the emerging movement to enhance the infrastructure for youth development. This growing youth development movement encompasses concepts and practices aimed at promoting protective factors, asset-building, wellness, and empowerment. Included are (a) some full service school approaches, (b) efforts to establish "community schools," (c) programs to mobilize community and social capital, and (d) initiatives to build community policies and structures to enhance youth support, safety, recreation, work, service, and enrichment. This focus on community embraces a wide range of stakeholders, including families and community based and linked organizations such as public and private health and human service agencies, schools, businesses, youth and faith organizations, and so forth. In some cases, institutions for postsecondary learning also are involved, but the nature and scope of their participation varies greatly, as does the motivation for the involvement. Youth development initiatives expand intervention efforts beyond services and programs. They encourage a view of schools not only as community centers where families can easily access services, but also as hubs for community-wide learning and activity. Increased federal funding for after school programs at school sites enhances this view by expanding opportunities for recreation, enrichment, academic supports, and child care. Adult education and training at neighborhood school sites also help change the old view that schools close when the youngsters leave. Indeed, the concept of a "second shift" at school sites is beginning to spread in response to community needs.

No complete catalogue of school-community initiatives exists. Examples and analyses suggesting trends are summarized in this document. A reasonable inference from available data is that school-community collaborations can be successful and cost effective over the long-run. They not only improve service access, they encourage schools to open their doors and enhance opportunities for recreation, enrichment, remediation and family involvement. However, initiatives for enhancing school-community collaboration have focused too heavily on integrated school-linked services. In too many instances, school-linked services result only in co-locating agency staff on school campuses. As these activities proceed, a small number of youngsters receive services, but little connection is made with school staff and programs, and thus, the potential impact on academic performance is minimized.

Recommendations to Enhance School-Community Partnerships

School-community partnerships must not be limited to linking services. Such partnerships must focus on using all resources in the most cost-effective manner to evolve the type of comprehensive, integrated approaches essential for addressing the complex needs of all youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods. This includes a blending of many public and private resources. To these ends, a high priority policy commitment at all levels is required that (a) supports the strategic development of comprehensive approaches by weaving together school and community resources, (b) sustains partnerships, and (c) generates renewal. In communities, the need is for better ways of connecting agency and other resources to each other and to schools. In schools, there is a need for restructuring to combine parallel efforts supported by general funds, compensatory and special education entitlement, safe and drug free school grants, and specially funded projects. In the process, efficiency and effectiveness can be achieved by connecting families of schools, such as high schools and their feeder schools.

School-community partnerships require a cohesive set of policies. Cohesive policy will only emerge if current policies are revisited to reduce redundancy and redeploy school and community resources that are used ineffectively. Policy must

- C move existing *governance* toward shared decision making and appropriate degrees of local control and private sector involvement -- a key facet of this is guaranteeing roles and providing incentives, supports, and training for effective involvement of line staff, families, students, and other community members
- C create *change teams and change agents* to carry out the daily activities of systemic change related to building essential support and redesigning processes to initiate, establish, and maintain changes over time
- C delineate high level *leadership assignments* and underwrite essential *leadership/management training* re. vision for change, how to effect such changes, how to institutionalize the changes, and generate ongoing renewal
- C establish institutionalized *mechanisms to manage and enhance resources* for school-community partnerships and related systems (focusing on analyzing, planning, coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and strengthening ongoing efforts)
- C provide adequate funds for *capacity building* related to both accomplishing desired system changes and enhancing intervention quality over time -- a key facet of this is a major investment in staff recruitment and development using well-designed, and technologically sophisticated strategies for dealing with the problems of frequent turnover and diffusing information updates; another facet is an investment in technical assistance at all levels and for all aspects and stages of the work
- C use a sophisticated approach to *accountability* that initially emphasizes data that can help develop effective approaches for collaboration in providing interventions and a results-oriented focus on short-term benchmarks and that evolves into evaluation of long-range indicators of impact. (Here, too, technologically sophisticated and integrated management information systems are essential.)

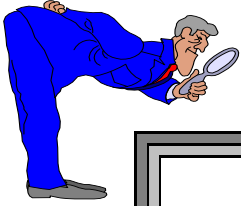
Such a strengthened policy focus would allow personnel to build the continuum of interventions needed to make a significant impact in addressing the health, learning, and well being of all youngsters through strengthening youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods.

Guidelines and Strategies for Building and Maintaining School-Community Partnerships

Adopting a scale-up model. Establishing effective school-community partnerships involves major systemic restructuring. Moving beyond initial demonstrations requires policies and processes that ensure what often is called diffusion, replication, roll out, or scale-up. Too often, proposed systemic changes are not accompanied with the resources necessary to accomplish essential changes throughout a county or even a school-district. Common deficiencies include inadequate strategies for creating motivational readiness among a critical mass of stakeholders, assignment of change agents with relatively little specific training in facilitating large-scale systemic change, and scheduling unrealistically short time frames for building capacity to accomplish desired institutional changes. The process of scale-up requires its own framework of steps, the essence of which involves establishing mechanisms to address key phases, tasks, and processes for systemic change. These are described in Appendix E of this document. Fourteen steps for moving school-community partnerships from projects to wide-spread practice are outlined.

Building from localities outward. From a decentralized perspective and to maintain the focus on evolving a comprehensive continuum of programs/services that plays out in an effective manner in *every locality*, it is a good idea to conceive the process from localities outward. That is, first the focus is on mechanisms at the school-neighborhood level. Then, based on analyses of what is needed to facilitate and enhance efforts at a locality, mechanisms are conceived that enable several school-neighborhood collaborations to work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. Then, system-wide mechanisms can be (re)designed to provide support for what each locality is trying to develop.

Building capacity. An infrastructure of organizational and operational mechanisms at all levels are required for oversight, leadership, resource development, and ongoing support. With each of these functions in mind, specific mechanisms and their inter-relationship with each other and with other planning groups are explored. Key mechanisms include change agents, administrative and staff leads, resource-oriented teams and councils, board of education subcommittees, and so forth. The proposed infrastructure provides ways to (a) arrive at decisions about resource allocation, (b) maximize systematic and integrated planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of enabling activity, (c) outreach to create formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to a school and establish special linkages with others, and (d) upgrade and modernize the component to reflect the best intervention thinking and use of technology. At each level, these tasks require that staff adopt some new roles and functions and that parents, students, and other representatives from the community enhance their involvement. They also call for redeployment of existing resources, as well as finding new ones. (Appendices provide tools and resource to aid in capacity building.)



Preface

Families have always provided a direct connection between school and community. Recent years have seen an escalating expansion in school-community linkages. Initiatives have sprouted in a rather dramatic and ad hoc manner. It is time to clarify a big picture, document and analyze what has developed, and move forward with a renewed sense of purpose and direction.

This guidebook briefly (a) underscores the “why” of school-community partnerships, (b) highlights their nature and key dimensions, (c) sketches out the state of the art across the country and in L.A. County, (d) offers some recommendations for local school and community policy makers, (e) discusses steps for building and maintaining school-community partnerships, and (f) includes some tools for developing such partnerships.

This document was developed with three objectives in mind:

- C to enhance understanding of the concept of school-community partnerships
- C to convey a sense of the state of the art in a way that would underscore directions for advancing the field
- C to provide some tools for those interested in developing and improving the ways schools and communities work together in the best interests of young people and their families.

In a real sense, the entire document is meant to be a toolkit. The material contained here can be drawn upon to develop a variety of resource aids. Given the different groups of stakeholders who must be involved if school-community partnerships are to succeed, there is a need to prepare brief introductions to the topic and develop presentation materials to fit each audience (e.g., community members, practitioners, policy makers). You will certainly want to rewrite sections to fit your specific objectives and to enhance readability for a given audience. You will also want to add attractive design and formatting touches

Treat the material as a starting point. Feel free to use whatever you find helpful and to adapt it in any way that brings the content to life.

Note: A great many references have been drawn upon in preparing this guide. These are included in a special reference section. Individual citations in the text are made only to credit sources for specific concepts, quotes, and materials.



INTRODUCTION

Collaboratives are sprouting in a dramatic and ad hoc manner. Properly done, collaboration among schools, families, and communities should improve schools, strengthen families and neighborhoods, and lead to a marked reduction in young people's problems. Alternatively, poorly implemented "collaborations" can end up being another reform effort that promised a lot, did little good, and even did some harm.

Leaders for fostering family, community, and school connections have cautioned that some so-called collaborations amount to little more than groups of people sitting around engaging in "collabo-babble." Years ago, former Surgeon General Jocelyn Elders cautioned: "We all say we want to collaborate, but what we really mean is that we want to continue doing things as we have always done them while others change to fit what we are doing."

An optimal approach involves formally blending together resources of at least one school and sometimes a group of schools or an entire school district with local family and community resources. The intent is to sustain connections over time. The range of entities in a community are not limited to agencies and organization; they encompass people, businesses, community based organizations, postsecondary institutions, religious and civic groups, programs at parks and libraries, and any

other facilities that can be used for recreation, learning, enrichment, and support.

One of the most important, cross-cutting social policy perspectives to emerge in recent years is an awareness that no single institution can create all the conditions that young people need to flourish

Melaville & Blank, 1998

While it is relatively simple to make informal linkages, establishing major long-term collaborations is complicated. Doing so requires vision, cohesive policy, and basic systemic reforms. The complications are readily seen in any effort to develop a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach to promoting healthy development and addressing barriers to development and learning. Such an approach involves much more than linking a few services, recreation, and enrichment activities to schools. Major systemic changes are required to develop and evolve formal and institutionalized sharing of a wide spectrum of responsibilities and resources.

Collaboratives can weave together a critical mass of resources and strategies to enhance caring communities that support all youth and their families and enable success at school and beyond. Strong family-school-community connections are critical in impoverished

communities where schools often are the largest piece of public real estate and also may be the single largest employer.

Comprehensive collaboration represents a promising direction for efforts to generate essential interventions to address barriers to learning, enhance healthy development, and strengthen families and neighborhoods. Building such collaboration requires stake-holder readiness, an enlightened vision, creative leadership, and new and multi-faceted roles for professionals who work in schools and communities, as well as for family and other community members who are willing to assume leadership.

As noted, interest in connecting families, schools, and communities is growing at an exponential rate. For schools, such links are seen as a way to provide more support for schools, students, and families. For agencies, connection with schools is seen as providing better access to families and youth and thus as providing an opportunity to reach and have an impact on hard-to-reach clients. The interest in collaboration is bolstered by the renewed concern about widespread fragmentation of school and community interventions. The hope is that integrated resources will have a greater impact on “at risk” factors and on promoting healthy development.

In fostering collaboration, it is essential not to limit thinking to coordinating community services and collocating some on school sites. Such an approach downplays the need to also restructure the various education support programs and services that schools own and operate. And, it has led some policy makers to the mistaken impression that community resources can effectively meet the needs of schools in addressing barriers to learning. In turn, this has led some legislators to view the linking of

community services to schools as a way to free-up the dollars underwriting school-owned services. The reality is that even when one adds together community and school assets, the total set of services in impoverished locales is woefully inadequate. In situation after situation, it has become evident that as soon as the first few sites demonstrating school-community collaboration are in place, local agencies find they have stretched their resources to the limit. Policy makers must realize that increasing access to services is only one facet of any effort to establish a comprehensive, cohesive approach for strengthening families and neighborhoods.

Collaboratives often are established because of the desire to address a local problem or in the wake of a crisis. In the long-run, however, family-community-school collaboratives must be driven by a comprehensive vision about strengthening youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods. This encompasses a focus on safe schools and neighborhoods, positive development and learning, personal, family, and economic well-being, and more.

It is commonly said that collaboratives are about building relationships. It is important to understand that the aim is to build potent, synergistic, *working* relationships, not simply to establish positive personal connections. Collaboratives built mainly on personal connections are vulnerable to the mobility that characterizes many such groups. The point is to establish stable and sustainable working relationships. This requires clear roles, responsibilities, and an institutionalized infrastructure, including well-designed mechanisms for performing tasks, solving problems, and mediating conflict.

A collaborative needs financial support. The core operational budget can be direct funding and in-kind contributions from the resources of stakeholder groups. A good example is the provision of space for the collaborative. A school or community entity or both should be asked to contribute the necessary space. As specific functions and initiatives are undertaken that reflect overlapping arenas of concern for schools and community agencies such as safe schools and neighborhoods, some portion of their respective funding streams can be braided together. Finally, there will be opportunities to supplement the budget with extra-mural grants. A caution here is to avoid pernicious funding. That is, it is important not to pursue funding for projects that will distract the collaborative from vigorously pursuing its vision in a cohesive (nonfragmented) manner.

The governance of the collaborative must be designed to equalize power so that decision making appropriately reflects all stakeholder groups and so that all are equally accountable. The leadership also must include representatives from all groups, and all participants must share in the workload – pursuing clear roles and functions. And, collaboratives must be open to all who are willing to contribute their talents.

Obviously, true collaboration involves more than meeting and talking. The point is to work together in ways that produce the type of actions that result in important results. For this to happen, steps must be taken to ensure that collaboratives are formed in ways that ensure they can be effective. This includes providing them with the training, time, support, and authority to carry out their roles and functions. It is when such matters are ignored that groups find themselves meeting and meeting, but going nowhere.

It's not about a collaborative . . . it's about collaborating to be effective



Section I: Why School-Community Partnerships?

Why School-Community Partnerships?

- **To enhance effectiveness**
- **To provide a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of interventions**
- **To support all youth & families**
- **Hawaii's Healthy Children Healthy Communities model**

Definitions

Principles

Dimensions and Characteristics

- **Table 1: Some key dimensions relevant to family-community-school collaboration**
- **Figure 1A: Framework outlining areas for school-community collaboration**
- **Figure 1B: Nature and scope of collaboration principles**

State of the Art

- **A growing movement across the country**
- **School-family partnerships**
- **Family and citizen involvement**
- **Enhanced support, access, & impact**
- **An example of why collaboration is needed**
- **What it looks like from a community-wide perspective**
- **Table 2: Four overlapping areas of school-community collaboration in Los Angeles County**
- **Table 3: A range of resources that could be part of a collaboration**

Recommendations to Enhance School-Community Partnerships

- **Partnerships in rural school districts**
- **Public Schools and Their Communities: Executive Summary**

Why School-Community Partnerships?

Schools are located in communities, but often are islands with no bridges to the mainland. Families live in neighborhoods, often with little connection to each other or to the schools their youngsters attend. Nevertheless, all these entities affect each other, for good or bad. Because of this and because they share goals related to education and socialization of the young, schools, homes, and communities must collaborate with each other if they are to minimize problems and maximize results.

Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed people can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.

-Margaret Mead

Dealing with multiple and interrelated problems, such as poverty, child development, education, violence, crime, safety, housing, and employment, requires multiple and interrelated solutions. Interrelated solutions require collaboration.

Promoting well-being, resilience, and protective factors and empowering families, communities, and schools also requires the concerted effort of all stakeholders.

Collaboration can improve service access and provision, increase support and assistance for learning and for addressing barriers to learning, enhance opportunities for learning and development, and generate new approaches to strengthen family, school, and community. Thus, appropriate and effective collaboration and teaming are keys to promoting well-being and addressing barriers to development, learning, family well-being, and community self-sufficiency.

To enhance effectiveness

Schools are more effective and caring places when they are an integral and positive part of the community. This means enhanced academic performance, fewer discipline problems, higher staff morale, and improved use of resources. Reciprocally, families and other community entities can enhance parenting and socialization, address psychosocial problems, and strengthen the fabric of family and community life by working in partnership with schools.

Leaving no child behind is only feasible through well-designed collaborative efforts.

Increasingly, it is becoming evident that schools and communities should work closely with each other to meet their mutual goals. Indeed, for many schools to succeed with their educational mission, they must have the support of community resources such as family members, neighborhood leaders, business groups, religious institutions, public and private agencies, libraries, parks and recreation, community-based organizations, civic groups, local government. Reciprocally, many community agencies can do their job better by working closely with schools. On a broader scale, many communities need schools to play a key role in strengthening families and neighborhoods.

For schools and other public and private agencies to be seen as integral parts of the community, steps must be taken to create and maintain various forms of collaboration. Greater volunteerism on the part of parents and others from the community can break down barriers and help increase home and community involvement in schools. Agencies can make services more accessible by linking with schools and enhance effectiveness by integrating with school programs. Clearly, appropriate and effective collaboration and teaming are key facets of addressing barriers to development, learning, and family self-sufficiency.

To provide a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of interventions

While informal school-community linkages are relatively simple to acquire, establishing major long-term connections is complicated. They require vision, cohesive policy, and basic systemic reforms. The complications are readily seen in efforts to evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of school-community interventions. Such a comprehensive continuum involves more than connecting with the community to enhance resources to support instruction, provide mentoring, and improve facilities. It involves more than establishing school-linked, integrated health and human services, and recreation and enrichment activities.. It requires comprehensive, multifaceted strategies that can only be achieved through school-community connections that are formalized and institutionalized, with major responsibilities shared. (For an example, see Appendix A.)

Strong school-community connections are especially critical in impoverished communities where schools often are the largest piece of public real estate and also may be the single largest employer. As such they are indispensable to efforts designed to strengthen families and neighborhoods. Comprehensive school-community partnerships allow all stakeholders to broaden resources and strategies to enhance caring communities that support all youth and their families and enable success at school and beyond.

To support
all youth &
families.

Comprehensive school-community partnerships represent a promising direction for efforts to generate essential interventions to address barriers to learning, enhance healthy development, and strengthen families and neighborhoods. Building such partnerships calls for an enlightened vision, creative leadership, and new and multifaceted roles for professionals who work in schools and communities, as well as for all who are willing to assume leadership.

Hawaii's Healthy Children Healthy Communities Model stresses the importance using school-community partnerships to develop a systemic approach, comprehensive, multifaceted approach. They note: "A systemic approach recognizes that no one program, no matter how well designed it is, will work for all participants." Their model, "which is comprehensive in nature, goes an important step beyond assuming that a process which has been developed is systemic simply because it has a comprehensive foundation. The interactions between essential environments (e.g., culture, community, school, family, peers) need to be in sync, understood, and explained in how they are coherently pushing in the same direction for desired wellness outcomes. A systemic approach is fluid, dynamic, interactive -- a cohesive process supporting outcome for a shared vision. Key components offer:

- * **comprehensive integration** of all the essential strategies, activities, and environments of school, community, family, students, and peers;
- * **prevention** rather than crisis orientation by offering young people support and opportunities for growth;
- * **collaborative partnerships** between policymakers, departmental managers, schools, community health and social agencies, businesses, media, church groups, university and colleges, police, court, and youth groups; and
- * **local decision-making** empowering communities to produce change for youth by recognizing and solving their own problems and practicing an assets-based approach in program development.

What are School-Community Partnerships?

About Definition

One recent resource defines a school-community partnership as:

An intentional effort to create and sustain relationships among a K-12 school or school district and a variety of both formal and informal organizations and institutions in the community (Melaville & Blank, 1998).

For purposes of this guide, the *school* side of the partnership can be expanded to include pre-k and post secondary institutions.

Defining the *community* facet is a bit more difficult. People often feel they belong to a variety of overlapping communities – some of which reflect geographic boundaries and others that reflect group associations. For purposes of this guide, the concept of community can be expanded to encompass the entire range of *resources* (e.g., all stakeholders, agencies and organizations, facilities, and other resources -- youth, families, businesses, school sites, community based organizations, civic groups, religious groups, health and human service agencies, parks, libraries, and other possibilities for recreation and enrichment).

The term partnership also may be confusing in practice. Legally, it implies a formal, contractual relationship to pursue a common purpose, with each partner's decision-making roles and financial considerations clearly spelled out. For purposes of this guide, the term partnerships is used loosely to encompass various forms of temporary or permanent structured connections among schools and community resources. Distinctions will be made among those that connect for purposes of communication and cooperation, those that focus on coordinating activity, those concerned with integrating overlapping activity, and those attempting to weave their responsibilities and resources together by forming a unified entity. Distinctions will also be made about the degree of formality and the breadth of the relationships.

As should be evident, these definitions are purposefully broad to encourage “break-the-mold” thinking about possible school-community connections. Partnerships may be established to enhance programs by increasing availability and access and filling gaps. The partnership may involve use of school or neighborhood facilities and equipment; sharing other resources; collaborative fund raising and grant applications; shared underwriting of some activity; volunteer assistance; pro bono services, mentoring, and training from professionals and others with special expertise; information sharing and dissemination; networking; recognition and public relations; mutual support; shared responsibility for planning, implementation, and evaluation of programs and services; building and maintaining infrastructure; expanding opportunities for assistance; community service, internships, jobs, recreation, enrichment; enhancing safety; shared celebrations; building a sense of community.

*Defining
Collaboration
and its Purposes*

School-community partnerships often are referred to as collaborations. Collaboration involves more than simply working together. It is more than a process to enhance cooperation and coordination. Thus, professionals who work as a multidisciplinary team to coordinate treatment are not a collaborative; they are a treatment team. Interagency teams established to enhance coordination and communication across agencies are not collaboratives; they are a coordinating team.

*Some was defined
collaboration as an
unnatural act between
nonconsenting adults*

The hallmark of collaboration is a formal agreement among participants to establish an autonomous structure to accomplish goals that would be difficult to achieve by any of the participants alone. Thus, while participants may have a primary affiliation elsewhere, they commit to working together under specified conditions to pursue a shared vision and common set of goals. A collaborative structure requires shared governance (power, authority, decision making, accountability) and weaving together of a set of resources for use in pursuit of the shared vision and goals. It also requires building well-defined working relationships to connect and mobilize resources, such as financial and social capital, and to use these resources in planful and mutually beneficial ways.

Growing appreciation of social capital has resulted in collaboratives expanding to include a wide range of stakeholders (people, groups, formal and informal organizations). The political realities of local control have further expanded collaborative bodies to encompass local policy makers, representatives of families, nonprofessionals, and volunteers.

Families have always provided a direct connection between school and community. In addition, the militancy of advocates for students with special needs has led to increased parent and youth participation on teams making decisions about interventions. Many who at best were silent partners in the past now are finding their way to the collaborative table and becoming key players.

*It's relatively easy
to establish a
"collaborative" ...*

*it's turning the
group into an
effective mechanism
& maintaining it
that's hard to do*

Any effort to connect home, community, and school resources must embrace a wide spectrum of stakeholders. In this context, collaboration becomes both a desired process and an outcome. That is, the intent is to work together to establish strong working relationships that are enduring. However, family, community, and school collaboration is not an end in itself. It is a turning point meant to enable participants to pursue increasingly potent strategies for strengthening families, schools, and communities.

As defined above, true collaboratives are attempting to weave the responsibilities and resources of participating stakeholders together to create a new form of unified entity. For our purposes here, any group designed to connect a school, families, and other entities from the surrounding neighborhood is referred to as a "school-community" collaborative. Such groups can encompass a wide range of stakeholders. For example, collaboratives may include agencies and organizations focused on providing programs for education, literacy, youth development, and the arts; health and human services; juvenile justice; vocational education; and economic development. They also may include various sources of social and financial capital, including youth, families, religious groups, community based organizations, civic groups, and businesses.

*It's about functions . . .
not the "collaborative"*

Operationally, a collaborative is defined by its *functions*. Family, community, and school connections may be made to pursue a variety of functions. These include enhancing how existing resources are used, generating new resources, improving communication, coordination, planning, networking and mutual support, building a sense of community, and much more.

Such functions encompass a host of specific tasks such as mapping and analyzing resources, exploring ways to share facilities, equipment, and other resources; expanding opportunities for community service, internships, jobs, recreation, and enrichment; developing pools of nonprofessional volunteers and professional pro bono assistance; making recommendations about priorities for use of resources; raising funds and pursuing grants; advocating for appropriate decision making, and much more.

#####

Remember the organizational principle:

Form (structure) follows function.

#####

Organizationally, a collaborative must develop a differentiated infrastructure (e.g., steering and work groups) that enables accomplishment of its functions and related tasks. Furthermore, since the functions pursued by a collaborative almost always overlap with work being carried out by others, a collaborative needs to establish connections with other bodies.

*Effective collaboration requires vision, cohesive policy,
potent leadership, infrastructure, & capacity building*

Dimensions and Characteristics

As should be evident by now, collaboratives differ in terms of purposes adopted and functions pursued. They also differ in terms of a range of other dimensions. For example, they may vary in their degree of formality, time commitment, breadth of the connections, as well as the amount of systemic change required to carry out their functions and achieve their purposes.

Because family, community, and school collaboration can differ in so many ways, it is helpful to think in terms of categories of key factors relevant to such arrangements (see below).

Table 1
Some Key Dimensions Relevant to Family-Community-School Collaborative Arrangements

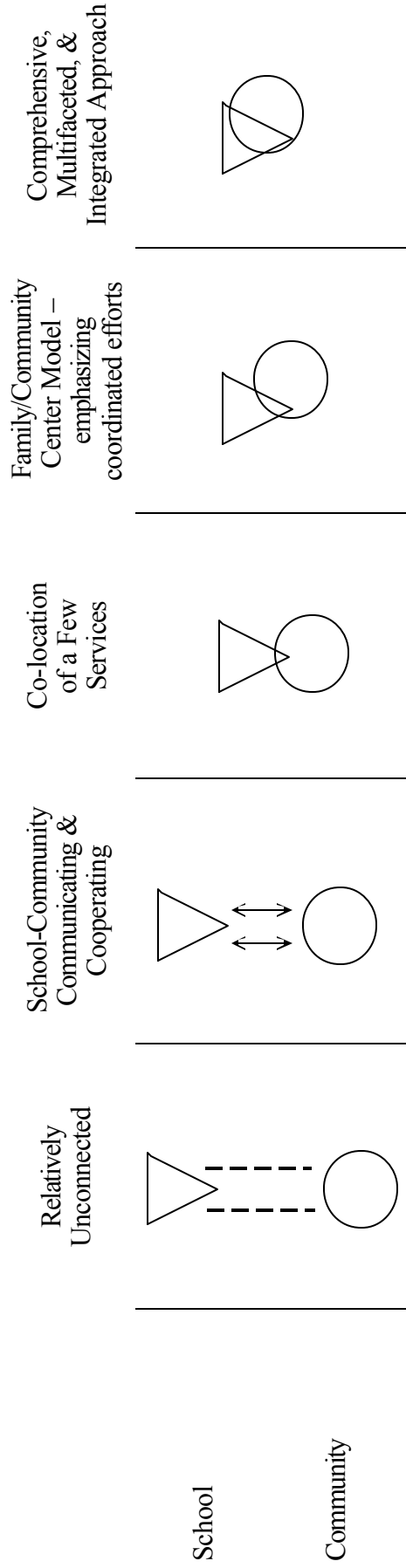
<p>I. Initiation <i>A. School-led</i> <i>B. Community-driven</i></p> <p>II. Nature of Collaboration <i>A. Formal</i> C memorandum of understanding C contract C organizational/operational mechanisms <i>B. Informal</i> C verbal agreements C ad hoc arrangements</p> <p>III. Focus <i>A. Improvement of program and service provision</i> C for enhancing case management C for enhancing use of resources <i>B. Major systemic reform</i> C to enhance coordination C for organizational restructuring C for transforming system structure/function</p> <p>IV. Scope of Collaboration <i>A. Number of programs and services involved (from just a few -- up to a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum)</i> <i>B. Horizontal collaboration</i> C within a school/agency C among schools/agencies <i>C. Vertical collaboration</i> C within a catchment area (e.g., school and community agency, family of schools, two or more agencies) C among different levels of jurisdictions (e.g., community/city/county/state/federal)</p> <p>V. Scope of Potential Impact <i>A. Narrow-band -- a small proportion of youth and families can access what they need</i> <i>B. Broad-band -- all in need can access what they need</i></p>	<p>VI. Ownership & Governance of Programs and Services <i>A. Owned & governed by school</i> <i>B. Owned & governed by community</i> <i>C. Shared ownership & governance</i> <i>D. Public-private venture -- shared ownership & governance</i></p> <p>VII. Location of Programs and Services <i>A. Community-based, school-linked</i> <i>B. School-based</i></p> <p>VIII. Degree of Cohesiveness among Multiple Interventions Serving the Same Student/Family <i>A. Unconnected</i> <i>B. Communicating</i> <i>C. Cooperating</i> <i>D. Coordinated</i> <i>E. Integrated</i></p> <p>IX. Level of Systemic Intervention Focus <i>A. Systems for promoting healthy development</i> <i>B. Systems for prevention of problems</i> <i>C. Systems for early-after-onset of problems</i> <i>D. Systems of care for treatment of severe, pervasive, and/or chronic problems</i> <i>E. Full continuum including all levels</i></p> <p>X. Arenas for Collaborative Activity <i>A. Health (physical and mental)</i> <i>B. Education</i> <i>C. Social services</i> <i>D. Work/career</i> <i>E. Enrichment/recreation</i> <i>F. Juvenile justice</i> <i>G. Neighborhood/community improvement</i></p>
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Figure 1A. Framework outlining areas for school-community collaborations.

	Health (physical/mental)	Education (regular/special trad./alternative)	Social Services	Work/ Career	Enrichment/ Recreation	Juvenile Justice	Neighborhood/ Comm. Improvement
Prevention							
Early-After- Onset Intervention							
Treatment of Chronic & Severe Problems							

Level of Initiatives: National (federal/private), State-wide, Local, School/neighborhood

Figure 1B. Nature and scope of collaboration.



Principles

Those who create school-community partnerships subscribe to certain principles.

In synthesizing “key principles for effective frontline practice,” Kinney, Strand, Hagerup, and Bruner (1994) caution that care must be taken not to let important principles simply become *the rhetoric of reform, buzzwords that are subject to critique as too fuzzy to have real meaning or impact . . . a mantra . . . that risks being drowned in its own generality.*

Below and on the following page are some basic tenets and guidelines that are useful referents in thinking about school-community partnerships and the many interventions they encompass. With the above caution in mind, it is helpful to review the ensuing lists. They are offered simply to provide a sense of the philosophy guiding efforts to address barriers to development and learning, promote healthy development, and strengthen families and neighborhoods.

As guidelines, Kinney et al (1994) stress:

- *a focus on improving systems, as well as helping individuals*
- *a full continuum of interventions*
- *activity clustered into coherent areas*
- *comprehensiveness*
- *integrated/cohesive programs*
- *systematic planning, implementation, and evaluation*
- *operational flexibility and responsiveness*
- *cross disciplinary involvements*
- *deemphasis of categorical programs*
- *school-community collaborations*
- *high standards-expectations-status*
- *blending of theory and practice*

Interventions that are:

- *family-centered, holistic, and developmentally appropriate*
- *consumer-oriented, user friendly, and that ask consumers to contribute*
- *tailored to fit sites and individuals*

Interventions that:

- *are self-renewing*
- *embody social justice/equity*
- *account for diversity*
- *show respect and appreciation for all parties*
- *ensure partnerships in decision making/shared governance*
- *build on strengths*
- *have clarity of desired outcomes*
- *incorporate accountability*

(cont on next page)

The following list reflects guidelines widely advocated by leaders for systemic reforms who want to evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated continuum of interventions.

An infrastructure must be designed to ensure development of a continuum that

- C includes a focus on prevention (including promotion of wellness), early-age and early-after-onset interventions, and treatment for chronic problems,
- C is comprehensive (e.g., extensive and intensive enough to meet major needs)
- C is coordinated-integrated (e.g., ensures collaboration, shared responsibility, and case management to minimize negative aspects of bureaucratic and professional boundaries),
- C is made accessible to all (including those at greatest risk and hardest-to-reach),
- C is of the same high quality for all,
- C is user friendly, flexibly implemented, and responsive,
- C is guided by a commitment to social justice (equity) and to creating a sense of community,
- C uses the strengths and vital resources of all stakeholders to facilitate development of themselves, each other, the school, and the community,
- C is designed to improve systems and to help individuals, groups, and families and other caretakers,
- C deals with the child holistically and developmentally, as an individual and as part of a family, and with the family and other caretakers as part of a neighborhood and community (e.g., works with multigenerations and collaborates with family members, other caretakers, and the community),
- C is tailored to fit distinctive needs and resources and to account for diversity,
- C is tailored to use interventions that are no more intrusive than is necessary in meeting needs (e.g., least restrictive environment)
- C facilitates continuing intellectual, physical, emotional and social development, and the general well being of the young, their families, schools, communities, and society,
- C is staffed by stakeholders who have the time, training, skills and institutional and collegial support necessary to create an accepting environment and build relationships of mutual trust, respect, and equality,
- C is staffed by stakeholders who believe in what they are doing,
- C is planned, implemented, evaluated, and evolved by highly competent, energetic, committed and responsible stakeholders.

Furthermore, infrastructure procedures should be designed to

- C ensure there are incentives (including safeguards) and resources for reform,
- C link and weave together resources owned by schools and other public and private community entities,
- C interweave all efforts to (a) facilitate development and learning, (b) manage and govern resources, and (c) address barriers to learning,
- C encourage all stakeholders to advocate for, strengthen, and elevate the status of young people and their families, schools, and communities,
- C provide continuing education and cross-training for all stakeholders,
- C provide quality improvement and self-renewal,
- C demonstrate accountability (cost-effectiveness and efficiency) through quality improvement evaluations designed to lead naturally to performance-based evaluations.

State of the Art

A growing movement across the country

Much of the emerging theory and practice of family and community connections with schools encourages a rethinking of our understanding of how children develop and how the various people and contexts fit together to support that development.

-Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2001)

School and community agency personnel long have understood that if schools and their surrounding neighborhoods are to function well and youth are to develop and learn effectively, a variety of facilitative steps must be taken and interfering factors must be addressed. All across the country, there are demonstrations of how schools and communities connect to improve results for youngsters, families, and neighborhoods.

Various levels and forms of school-community-family collaboration are being tested, including state-wide initiatives in California, Florida, Kentucky, Missouri, New Jersey, Ohio, and Oregon, among others. To these ends, major demonstration projects across the country are incorporating as many health, mental health, and social services as feasible into "Centers" (including school-based health centers, family centers, parent centers) established at or near a school and are adopting terms such as school-linked services, coordinated services, wrap-around services, one-stop shopping, full service schools, systems of care, and community schools.

The aims of such initiatives are to improve coordination and eventually integrate many programs and enhance their linkages to school sites. One sees projects focused on (a) improving access to health (e.g., immunizations, substance abuse programs, asthma care, pregnancy prevention) and social services (e.g., foster care, family preservation, child care), (b) expanding after school academic, recreation, and enrichment programs (e.g. tutoring, youth sports and clubs, art, music, museum and library programs) (c) building wrap around services and systems of care for special populations (e.g., case management and specialized assistance), (d) reducing delinquency (truancy prevention, conflict mediation, violence prevention), (e) enhancing transition to work/career/postsecondary education (mentoring, internships, career academies, job placement), and (f) improving schools and the community (e.g., adopt-a-school, volunteers and peer programs, neighborhood coalitions).

Such "experiments" have been prompted by diverse initiatives:

Some are driven by school reform

Some are connected to efforts to reform community health and social service agencies

Some stem from the youth development movement

A few arise from community development initiatives.

Currently, only a few initiatives are driven by school reform. Most stem from efforts to reform community health and social services with the aim of reducing redundancy and increasing access and effectiveness. While the majority of effort focuses narrowly on "services," some initiatives link schools and communities as ways to enhance school to career opportunities, encourage the community to come to school as volunteers and mentors, and expand programs for after school recreation and enrichment with the goal of reducing delinquency and violence.

A budding trend is for school-linked services initiatives to coalesce with the youth development movement

The youth development movement encompasses a range of concepts and practices aimed at promoting protective factors, asset-building, wellness, and empowerment. Included are efforts to establish full-fledged community schools, programs for community and social capital mobilization, and initiatives to build community policies and structures to enhance youth support, safety, recreation, work, service, and enrichment. This focus on community embraces a wide range of partners, including families and community-based and linked organizations such as public and private health and human service agencies, schools, businesses, youth and faith organizations, and so forth. In some cases, institutions for postsecondary learning also are involved, but the nature and scope of their participation varies greatly, as does the motivation for the involvement. Youth development initiatives clearly expand intervention efforts beyond services and programs. They encourage a view of schools not only as community centers where families can access services, but as hubs for community-wide learning and activity. Increased federal funding for after school programs at school sites is enhancing this view by expanding opportunities for recreation, enrichment, academic supports, and child care. Adult education and training at neighborhood schools also are changing the old view that schools close when the youngsters leave. The concept of a "second shift" at a school site to respond to community needs is beginning to spread.

School-community linkages are meant to benefit a wide range of youngsters and their families, and some of the best articulated collaborations are those being established for special education students with emotional disturbance. This population is served by classrooms, counseling, day care, and residential and hospital programs. The need for all involved to work together in providing services and facilitating the transitions to and from services is widely acknowledged. To address the needs for monitoring and maintaining care, considerable investment has been made in establishing what are called *wrap around services* and *systems of care*. Initial evaluations of systems of care underscore both the difficulty of studying collaboratives, and the policy issues that arise regarding appropriate outcomes and cost-effectiveness.

School-Family Partnerships

Schools must become places where families feel wanted and recognized for their strengths and potential. Studies show that school practices to encourage parents are more important than family characteristics like parental education, family size, marital status, socioeconomic level, or student grade level in determining whether parents get involved (Dauber & Epstein, 1993). For partnerships to work, there must be mutual trust and respect, an ongoing exchange of information, agreement on goals and strategies, and a sharing of rights and responsibilities.

There are several concrete actions that schools and families can take to improve the school environment and promote partnerships with families:

- C *Establish family-school-community partnerships.*
 - *Make learning relevant to children.*
 - *Emphasize early childhood education.*
 - *Recognize the disconnection.*
 - *Train teachers to work with parents.*
 - *Reduce distrust and cultural barriers.*
 - *Address language barriers.*
 - *Evaluate parents' needs.*
 - *Accommodate families' work schedules.*
 - *Use technology to link parents to the classroom.*
 - *Make school visits easier.*
 - *Establish a home-school coordinator.*
 - *Give parents a voice in school decisions.*

Excerpted from ERIC Clearinghouse on Urban Education (1994). *School-Family Partnerships*. In Strong Families, Strong Schools at <http://eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/families/strong/>.

Family and Citizen Involvement

For various reasons, many collaboratives around the country consist mainly of professionals. Family and other citizen involvement may be limited to a few representatives of powerful organizations or to “token” participants who are needed and expected to “sign-off” on decisions.

Genuine involvement of a wide-range of representative families and citizens requires a deep commitment of collaborative organizers to recruiting and building the capacity of such stakeholders so that they can competently participate as enfranchised and informed decision makers.

Collaboratives that proactively work to ensure a broad range of stakeholders are participating effectively can establish an essential democratic base for their work and help ensure there is a critical mass of committed participants to buffer against inevitable mobility. Such an approach not only enhances family and community involvement, it may be an essential facet of sustaining collaborative efforts over the long-run.

Enhanced support, access, & impact

Interest in school-community collaborations is growing at an exponential rate. For schools, such partnerships are seen as one way to provide more support for schools, students, and families. For agencies, connection with schools is seen as providing better access to families and youth and thus as providing an opportunity to reach and have an impact on hard-to-reach clients. The interest in school-community collaboration is bolstered by the renewed concern for countering widespread fragmentation of school and community interventions. The hope is that by integrating available resources, a significant impact can be made on “at risk” factors.

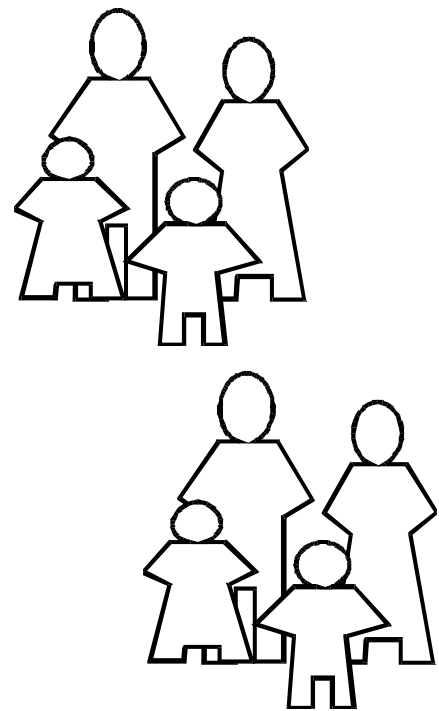
* In practice, the terms *school-linked* and *school-based* encompass two separate dimensions: (a) where programs/services are *located* and (b) who *owns* them. Taken literally, school-based should indicate activity carried out on a campus, and school-linked should refer to off-campus activity with formal connections to a school site. In either case, services may be owned by schools or a community based organization or in some cases may be co-owned. As commonly used, the term school-linked refers to community owned on- and off-campus services and is strongly associated with the notion of coordinated services.

There is no complete catalogue of school-community initiatives. A sampling of types of activity and analyses suggesting trends can be found in various works. A few conclusions from several resources follow.

“The range of services provided and the variety of approaches to school-linked services are broad, reflecting the diversity of needs and resources in each community.”

Hardiman, Curcio,
& Fortune (1998)

Concern about the fragmented way *community* health and human services are planned and implemented has led to renewal of the 1960s human service integration movement. The hope of this movement is to better meet the needs of those served and use existing resources to serve greater numbers. To these ends, there is considerable interest in developing strong relationships between school sites and public and private community agencies. In analyzing school-linked service initiatives, Franklin and Streeter (1995) group them as -- informal, coordinated, partnerships, collaborations, and integrated services. These categories are seen as differing in terms of the degree of system change required. As would be anticipated, most initial efforts focus on developing informal relationships and beginning to coordinate services. A recent nation-wide survey of school board members reported by Hardiman, Curcio, & Fortune (1998) indicates widespread presence of school-linked programs and services in school districts. For purposes of the survey, school-linked services were defined as “the coordinated linking of school and community resources to support the needs of school-aged children and their families.” The researchers conclude: “The range of services provided and the variety of approaches to school-linked services are broad, reflecting the diversity of needs and resources in each community.” They are used to varying degrees to address various educational, psychological, health, and social concerns, including substance abuse, job training, teen pregnancy, juvenile probation, child and family welfare, and housing. For example, and not surprisingly, the majority of schools report using school-linked resources as part of their efforts to deal with substance abuse; far fewer report such involvement with respect to family welfare and housing. Most of this activity reflects collaboration with agencies at local and state levels. Respondents indicate that these collaborations operate under a variety of arrangements: “legislative mandates, state-level task forces and commissions, formal agreements with other state agencies, formal and informal agreements with local government agencies, in-kind (nonmonetary) support of local government and nongovernment agencies, formal and informal referral network, and the school administrator’s



prerogative.” About half the respondents note that their districts have no policies governing school-linked services.*

"multiple and interrelated problems . . . require multiple and interrelated solutions"

Schorr (1997)

Schorr (1997) approaches the topic from the perspective of strengthening families and neighborhoods and describes a variety of promising community and school partnerships (see examples in Appendix B). Based on her analysis of such programs, she concludes that a synthesis is emerging that "rejects addressing poverty, welfare, employment, education, child development, housing, and crime one at a time. It endorses the idea that the multiple and interrelated problems . . . require multiple and interrelated solutions" (see box).

"the ability of school-community initiatives to strengthen school functioning develops incrementally"

Melaville & Blank (1998)

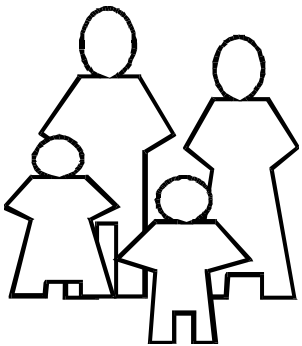
Melaville and Blank (1998) surveyed a sample of 20 school-community initiatives (see Appendix C). They conclude that the number of school-community initiatives is skyrocketing; the diversity across initiatives in terms of design, management, and funding arrangements is dizzying and daunting. Based on their analysis, they suggest (1) the initiatives are moving toward blended and integrated purposes and activity and (2) the activities are predominantly school-based and the education sector plays "a significant role in the creation and, particularly, management of these initiatives" and there is a clear trend "toward much greater community involvement in all aspects" of such initiatives -- especially in decision making at both the community and site levels. (p. 100) They also stress that "the ability of school-community initiatives to strengthen school functioning develops incrementally," with the first impact seen in improved school climate. (p. 100) With

*As the notion of school-community collaboration spreads, the terms services and programs are used interchangeably and the adjective comprehensive often is appended. This leads to confusion, especially since addressing a full range of factors affecting young people's development and learning requires going beyond *services* to utilize an extensive continuum of programmatic interventions. Services themselves should be differentiated to distinguish between narrow-band, personal/clinical services and broad-band, public health and social services. Furthermore, although services can be provided as part of a program, not all are. For example, counseling to ameliorate a mental health problem can be offered on an ad hoc basis or may be one element of a multifaceted program to facilitate healthy social and emotional development. Pervasive and severe psychosocial problems, such as substance abuse, teen pregnancy, physical and sexual abuse, gang violence, and delinquency, require multifaceted, programmatic interventions. Besides providing services to correct existing problems, such interventions encompass primary prevention (e.g., public health programs that target groups seen as "at risk") and a broad range of open enrollment didactic, enrichment, and recreation programs. Differentiating services and programs and taking care in using the term comprehensive can help mediate against tendencies to limit the range of interventions and underscores the breadth of activity requiring coordination and integration.

respect to sustainability, their findings support the need for stable leadership and long-term financing. Finally, they note

The still moving field of school-community initiatives is rich in its variations. But it is a variation born in state and local inventiveness, rather than reflective of irreconcilable differences or fundamental conflict. Even though communication among school-community initiatives is neither easy nor ongoing, the findings in this study suggest they are all moving toward an interlocking set of principles. An accent on development cuts across them all. These principles demonstrate the extent to which boundaries separating major approaches to school-community initiatives have blurred and been transformed. More importantly, they point to a strong sense of direction and shared purpose within the field. (p. 101)

Too little thought has been given to the importance of connecting community programs with existing school operated support programs.



Findings from the work of the Center for Mental Health in Schools (e.g., 1996;1997) are in considerable agreement with the above. However, this work also stresses that the majority of school and community programs and services function in relative isolation of each other. Most school and community interventions continue to focus on discrete problems and specialized services for individuals and small groups. Moreover, because the primary emphasis is on restructuring community programs and co-locating some services on school sites, a new form of fragmentation is emerging as community and school professionals engage in a form of parallel play at school sites. It appears that too little thought has been given to the importance of *connecting* community programs with existing school operated support programs.*

* Ironically, while initiatives to integrate health and human services are meant to reduce fragmentation (with the intent of enhancing outcomes), in many cases fragmentation is compounded because these initiatives focus mostly on *linking* community services to schools. As a result, when community agencies collocate personnel at schools, such personnel tend to operate in relative isolation of existing school programs and services. Little attention is paid to developing effective mechanisms for coordinating complementary activity or integrating parallel efforts. Consequently, a youngster identified as at risk for dropout, suicide, and substance abuse may be involved in three counseling programs operating independently of each other. Related to all this has been a rise in tension between school district service personnel and their counterparts in community based organizations. When "outside" professionals are brought in, school specialists often view it as discounting their skills and threatening their jobs. The "outsiders" often feel unappreciated and may be rather naive about the culture of schools. Conflicts arise over "turf," use of space, confidentiality, and liability.

*Assuring safety provides
a major example of*

Why Collaboration Is Needed

Concern about violence at schools provides opportunities for enhancing connections with families and other neighborhood resources. However, in too many cases, those responsible for school safety act as if violence on the campus had little to do with home and community. Youngsters, of course, do not experience such a separation. For them violence is a fact of life. And, it is not just about guns and killing.

The problem goes well beyond the widely-reported incidents that capture media attention. For youngsters, the most common forms of violence are physical, sexual, and emotional abuse experienced at school, at home, and in the neighborhood. There isn't good data on how many youngsters are affected by all the forms of violence or how many are debilitated by such experiences. But no one who works to prevent violence would deny that the numbers are large. Far too many youngsters are caught up in cycles where they are the recipient or perpetrator (and sometimes both) of physical and sexual harassment ranging from excessive teasing, bullying, and intimidation to mayhem and major criminal acts.

Clearly, the problem is widespread and is linked with other problems that are significant barriers to development, learning, parenting, teaching, and socialization. As a consequence, simplistic and single factor solutions cannot work. This is why guides to safe school planning emphasize such elements as school-wide prevention, intervention, and emergency response strategies, positive school climate, partnerships with law enforcement, mental health and social services, and family and community involvement. In effect, the need is for a full continuum of interventions – ranging from primary prevention through early-after-onset interventions to treatment of individuals with severe, pervasive, and chronic problems. School and community policy makers must quickly move to embrace comprehensive, multifaceted school-wide and community-wide approaches. And, they must do so in a way that fully integrates such approaches with school reform at every school site.

All this requires families, communities, and schools working together.

The fragmentation is worsened by the failure of policymakers at all levels to recognize the need to reform and restructure the work of school and community professionals who are in positions to address barriers and facilitate development and learning. For example, the prevailing approach among school reformers is to concentrate almost exclusively on improving instruction and management of schools. This is not to say they are unaware of the many barriers to learning. They simply don't spend much time developing effective ways to deal with such matters. They mainly talk about "school-linked integrated services" -- apparently in the belief that a few health and social services will do the trick. The reality is that prevailing approaches to reform continue to marginalize all efforts designed to address barriers to development and learning. As a result, little is known about effective processes and mechanisms for building school-community connections to prevent and ameliorate youngsters' learning, behavior, emotional, and health problems. The situation is unlikely to improve as long as so little attention is paid to restructuring what schools and communities already do to deal with psychosocial and health problems and promote healthy development. And a key facet of all this is the need to develop models to guide development of productive school-community partnerships.

A reasonable inference from available data is that school-community collaborations can be successful and cost effective over the long-run. They not only improve access to services, they seem to encourage schools to open their doors in ways that enhance recreational, enrichment, and remedial opportunities and family involvement.

Ultimately, a strong research agenda for family and community connections with schools must include a clear and multifaceted picture of what these connections are, their benefits and limitations, and different stakeholders can be involved. A sound research base will help practitioners envision and implement connections that will become part of the everyday environment of schools, homes, and communities.

From: *Emerging Issues in School, Family, & Community Connections: Annual Synthesis* (2001) by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory

The Data Suggest School-Community Collaborations Can Work, But . . .

We all know that public schools and community agencies are under constant attack because of poor outcomes. We know that some reforms are promising but, in some settings, appear not to be sufficient for doing the assigned job. As new ideas emerge for doing the job better, policy makers and practitioners are caught in a conundrum. They must do something more, but they don't have the money or time to do all that is recommended by various experts.

A nice way out of the conundrum would be a policy of only adopting proven practices. The problem is that too many potentially important reforms have not yet been tried. This is especially the case with ideas related to comprehensive systemic restructuring. And so asking for proof is putting the cart before the horse. The best that can be done is to look at available evidence to see how effective current programs are. Because of the categorical and fragmented way in which the programs have been implemented, the major source of data comes from evaluations of special projects. A reasonable inference from available evidence is that school-community collaborations can be successful and cost effective over the long-run. By placing staff at schools, community agencies enable easier access for students and families -- especially in areas with underserved and hard to reach populations. Such efforts not only provide services, they seem to encourage schools to open their doors in ways that enhance family involvement. Analyses suggest better outcomes are associated with empowering children and families, as well as with having the capability to address diverse constituencies and contexts. Families using school-based centers are described as becoming interested in contributing to school and community by providing social support networks for new students and families, teaching each other coping skills, participating in school governance, helping create a psychological sense of community, and so forth. Another outcome of school-community collaborations is the impact on models for reform and restructuring.*

However, because the interventions and evaluations have been extremely limited in nature and scope, so are the results. Comprehensive approaches have not been evaluated, and meta-analyses have been conducted in only a few areas. Moreover, when successful demonstration projects are scaled-up and carried out under the constraints imposed by extremely limited resources, the interventions usually are watered-down, leading to poorer results. In this respect, Schorr's (1997) cogent analysis is worth noting: "If we are to move beyond discovering one isolated success after another, only to abandon it, dilute it, or dismember it before it can reach more than a few, we must identify the forces that make it so hard for a success to survive." She then goes on to suggest the following seven attributes of highly effective programs. (1) They are comprehensive, flexible, responsive, and persevering. (2) They see children in the context of their families. (3) They deal with families as parts of neighborhoods and communities. (4) They have a long-term, preventive orientation, a clear mission, and continue to evolve over time. (5) They are well managed by competent and committed individuals with clearly identifiable skills. (6) Their staffs are trained and supported to provide high-quality, responsive services. (7) They operate in settings that encourage practitioners to build strong relationships based on mutual trust and respect.

*For example, see Allensworth, Wyche, Lawson, & Nicholson (1997), Brewer, Hawkins, Catalano, & Neckerman (1995), Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development (1988), Durlak & Wells (1997), Dryfoos (1994, 1998), Gottfredson (1997), Hoagwood & Erwin (1997), Knapp (1995), Schorr (1988, 1998), SRI (1996), U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (1994), U.S. General Accounting Office (1993), Weissberg, Gullotta, Hamptom, Ryan, & Adams (1997), White & Wehlage (1995).

Except from: *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives: Volume 2, Theory, Measurement, and Analysis* (1998). Edited by K. Fulbright-Anderson, A.C. Kubisch, and J.P. Connell (Eds.)

In the closing article of this work, Robert Granger concludes:

This paper has echoed much of what others have said about program evaluation research in the past thirty years. The advice, that is, is to use theory as a guide, mix methods, seek patterns that corroborate each other (both within and across studies), and creatively combine various designs. None of this will surprise applied social scientists, nor will it be particularly reassuring to those who call for redefining the standards of proof or discarding questions about effects. In short, the recommendation is to do the conventional work better, recognizing that CCI (Comprehensive Community Initiatives) evaluation is helped in many ways by a theory-based approach.

This analysis suggests that a theory of change approach can assist in making causal inferences, regardless of an evaluation's immediate purpose. It is easier to document problems when a clear theory is available that will direct the baseline analysis and help a community design a CCI that can cause change. Program refinement demands causal analyses that can help decision makers allocate start-up resources, and these decision makers will be assisted by thinking through the links between strategies and early outcomes. Summative program assessment demands strong counterfactuals (the stakes regarding misjudgments are high at this stage), multiple measures of effects, and strong theory to lead the search for confirming patterns in those effects. Finally, generalizability to other persons, places, and times requires a theory to help us make and investigate such generalizations. All this seems especially true with CCIs, given their extreme complexity.

The main caution for the CCI community (including funders) is that a premature push for "effects" studies is likely to be very unsatisfying. Too much time will be spent gathering too much data that will not get synthesized across efforts. In contrast, funding of CCIs should rest on the *prima facie* merit of their activities at the present time. Funders should encourage mixed inquiry techniques, theory building, and cross-site communication so the field can aggregate useful information over time.

The contents of this edited volume are as follows:

Evaluating Community Initiatives: A Progress Report (A.C. Kubisch, K. Fulbright-Anderson, & J.R. Connell)

A Theory of Change Approach to Evaluation

Applying a Theory of Change Approach to the Evaluation of Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Progress, Prospects, and Problems (James R Connell and Anne C Kubisch)

Implementing a Theory of Change Evaluation in the Cleveland Community-Building Initiative: A Case Study (Sharon Milligan, Claudia Coulton, Peter York, and Ronald Register)

Reflections from Evaluation Practitioners

The Virtue of Specificity in Theory of Change Evaluation (Susan Philliber)

Shaping the Evaluator's Role in a Theory of Change Evaluation (Prudence Brown)

Using a Theory of Change Approach in a National Evaluation of Family Support Programs (S.L. Kagan)

Applying the Theory of Change Approach to Two National, Multisite Comprehensive Community Initiatives (Scott Hebert and Andrea Anderson)

Issues in Measurement and Analysis

Challenges of Measurement in Community Change Initiatives (Michelle Alberti Gambone)

Measuring Comprehensive Community Initiative Outcomes Using Data Available for Small Areas (Claudia Coulton and Robinson Hollister)

Establishing Causality in Evaluations of Comprehensive Community Initiatives (Robert C. Granger)

What it looks like from a community-wide perspective



Table 2 represents a work-in-progress sketching out major school-community initiatives in Los Angeles County. These are categorized in terms of initiatives to enhance (a) the capabilities of schools for meeting their educational mission, (b) agency linkages with school sites, (c) youth development, and (d) community improvement and development. (Also see Appendix D for a few profiles of major initiatives and a table highlighting the types of collaborative arrangements made throughout the county by projects funded through the state's school-linked services initiative called Healthy Start.)

Although Table 2 and Appendix D provide a wide variety of examples, it is important to keep in mind that most schools have developed only a few linkages, and most of these are limited in nature and scope. What is evident from analyses of the many school-community connections in Los Angeles County is that

- C the possibilities for developing school-community partnerships are great, as are the potential benefits
- C the creation by the County of eight Service Planning Area Councils offers a mechanism to support the movement for school-community partnerships.

However:

- C even when the collaboration is at the district level, most of the current connections are limited to a small proportion of schools and to a small proportion of students in the participating schools
- C most of the connections are informal ones
- C most of the initiatives are formulated as special projects and are marginalized in daily operation
- C many of the organizational and operational mechanisms put in place for specific collaborations are temporary in nature
- C a policy structure to move such collaborations from projects to institutionalized practice has not been developed and thus sustainability is a major concern
- C with the exception of Healthy Start projects, few collaborations are being evaluated using methodologically sound designs and measures
- C Service Planning Area Councils have yet to focus in a potent way on their role in fostering effective school-community partnerships.

Table 2

**Four Overlapping Areas of School-Community Collaboration
in Los Angeles County**

I. Focus on Enhancing Schools' Capabilities to Meet Their Educational Mission

A. Business & Nonprofit Organizations and Foundations Working with Schools on School Reform

Examples:

LAAMP, LEARN, Los Angeles Educational Partnership, New American Schools

B. Parent Involvement in Schooling, Aides from the Community, and Volunteers

Examples:

Parents -- PTA/PTSA groups; PTA Health Centers and Welfare Resources; parent centers at school sites Parent Action Leadership Teams; Parent Support Teams; parent training programs; parent mutual support groups; parent welcoming groups and peer buddies; parents involved on shared decision making (governance/management); invitations to parents and others in community to attend activities at school; mandated parent involvement (e.g., IEPs); parent volunteers

Others from the community -- volunteers (e.g., LAUSD DOVES, Kindergarten Intervention Project); community aides; advisory councils, committees, commissions, and task forces; community members providing safe passages to and from school

*C. District/School Outreaching to Agencies/Professional Volunteers**

1. Seeking more services (medical, dental, social, psychological, vocational) and ways to improve service coordination (district-wide and at specific sites)

Examples:

Healthy Start Projects (see Table 3), School-Based and Linked Health/Mental Health Centers, Family Service Centers, Early Mental Health Initiative projects, connecting with medical/dental mobile vans, seeking pro bono professional services, bringing Neighborhood Youth Authority programs to school sites; establishing coordinating teams and councils, participating with L.A. County's Service Planning Area Councils, restructuring of school-owned health & human services, interfacing around specific problems (e.g., crisis situations, homeless youth, homebound/hospitalized youth, special education populations, communicable disease control; intergroup relations)

2. Establishing mechanisms and special collaborative programs to address other barriers to learning, facilitate learning, and support the school in general

Examples:

School Attendance Review Boards (SARB); pregnant and parenting minors program; safe, disciplined, and drug free schools programs; (DARE, SANE, MADD, Al-Anon, Alateen community school safe havens, gang-oriented programs; smoking cessation, nutrition); work experience/job programs; mentoring; high school academies; crime prevention programs; adult and career education; Adopt-A-School Program; special projects funded by philanthropic organizations, local foundations, and service clubs; TV station (e.g., KLCS-TV)

Table 2 (cont.)

II. Agencies/Institutions/Professional Services Outreaching to Connect with Schools*

Examples

County health and human service departments are involved in a variety of outreach efforts

- >Health Services (CHDP, S-CHIP, dental fluoride, immunizations, health education, initiative for Medicaid Demonstration Project to develop a Healthy Students Partnership program with schools)
- >Mental Health (School mental health, AB3632, systems of care)
- >Children and Family Services (Education project/foster children, family preservation and support)
- >Public Social Services (child abuse reporting)

Local public and private hospitals and clinics, health and dental associations, managed care providers (SBHCs, mobile vans, health education.)

LA Childrens' Planning Council initiatives (Neighborhood 5A Service Centers, children's court liaison/probation programs/camp returnee programs/juvenile assistance diversion efforts)

Police/sheriff (DARE, SANE, Jeopardy)

Fire (safety)

District Attorney (truancy mediation, aid to victims)

City and County Departments for Parks and Recreation (after school programs)

City and County libraries (after school programs)

The range of other organizations and projects that outreach to schools is illustrated by Communities in Schools, Planned Parenthood, the Special Olympics, Youth Fair Chance, various civic events organizations, post secondary education institutions/student organizations (e.g., medical and dental projects, outreach to encourage college attendance, science education projects, tutoring)

III. Youth Development (including recreation and enrichment)

Examples

Boys and Girls Club, Boys Scouts, Child/Youth Advocacy Task Force, Consolidated Youth Services Network, district youth academic support/recreational/enrichment programs (e.g., Mayors' Program -- L.A.'s Best, 21st Century Learning Community Centers, other after school programs), 4-H Club, Future Scientists and Engineers of America, Getty Arts Education Program, Head Start, Keep Youth Doing Something (KYDS), L.A. County Museum of Art Education Program, Music Center programs for school children, Special Olympics, Theater programs for school children, Teen Centers, Woodcraft Rangers, Y.M.C.A., Y.W.C.A., Youth Alliances and Commissions

Note: United Way and several other organizations have a long history of support for youth development. Currently, a number of recreation and enrichment organizations have set out to establish a group (Partners for Los Angeles Youth Enrichment and Recreation Services -- with the acronym of PLAYERS) to enhance coordination and advocacy for youth development.

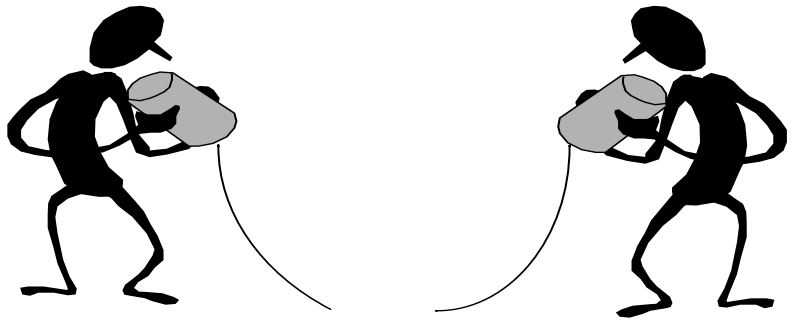
IV. Community Improvement and Development

Examples (in addition to all of the above)

Americorps, California Conservation Corps/Clean and Green, California Department of Employment Development, Central Neighborhood Association, City of Long Beach Neighborhood Improvement Strategies, Committee for Multi-Racial Projects, Empowerment zones, Estrella Community Development Corporation, Glendale Literacy Coalition, LA Alliance for a Drug-Free Community, Neighborhood Watch, 186th Area Homeowners Assoc. & Community Action Network, Operation Safe Community, Pacoima Urban Village, Toberman Settlement House, Verdugo School-to-Career Coalition, Watts Labor Community Action Committee, Westminster Neighborhood Association

*In some instances, the connection was made through mutual "outreach."

There is much to learn from all efforts to develop school-community partnerships.



Tables 2 and Appendices B, C, and D reflect efforts to map what is emerging. Based on mapping and analysis done to date, Table 3 highlights the wealth of community resources that should be considered in establishing family, community, and school connections.

The mechanisms that have been identified as key to the success of school-community partnerships are discussed in the section of this document that outlines how such collaborations are developed and maintained.

Table 3

A Range of Community Resources that Could Be Part of a Collaboration

County Agencies and Bodies

(e.g., Depts. of Health, Mental Health, Children & Family Services, Public Social Services, Probation, Sheriff, Office of Education, Fire, Service Planning Area Councils, Recreation & Parks, Library, courts, housing)

Municipal Agencies and Bodies

(e.g., parks & recreation, library, police, fire, courts, civic event units)

Physical and Mental Health & Psychosocial Concerns Facilities and Groups

(e.g., hospitals, clinics, guidance centers, Planned Parenthood, Aid to Victims, MADD, "Friends of" groups; family crisis and support centers, helplines, hotlines, shelters, mediation and dispute resolution centers)

Mutual Support/Self-Help Groups

(e.g., for almost every problem and many other activities)

Child Care/Preschool Centers

Post Secondary Education Institutions/Students

(e.g., community colleges, state universities, public and private colleges and universities, vocational colleges; specific schools within these such as Schools of Law, Education, Nursing, Dentistry)

Service Agencies

(e.g., PTA/PTSA, United Way, clothing and food pantry, Visiting Nurses Association, Cancer Society, Catholic Charities, Red Cross, Salvation Army, volunteer agencies, legal aid society)

Service Clubs and Philanthropic Organizations

(e.g., Lions Club, Rotary Club, Optimists, Assistance League, men's and women's clubs, League of Women Voters, veteran's groups, foundations)

Youth Agencies and Groups

(e.g., Boys and Girls Clubs, Y's, scouts, 4-H, Woodcraft Rangers)

Sports/Health/Fitness/Outdoor Groups

(e.g., sports teams, athletic leagues, local gyms, conservation associations, Audubon Society)

Community Based Organizations

(e.g., neighborhood and homeowners' associations, Neighborhood Watch, block clubs, housing project associations, economic development groups, civic associations)

Faith Community Institutions

(e.g., congregations and subgroups, clergy associations, Interfaith Hunger Coalition)

Legal Assistance Groups

(e.g., Public Counsel, schools of law)

Ethnic Associations

(e.g., Committee for Armenian Students in Public Schools, Korean Youth Center, United Cambodian Community, African-American, Latino, Asian-Pacific, Native American Organizations)

Special Interest Associations and Clubs

(e.g., Future Scientists and Engineers of America, pet owner and other animal-oriented groups)

Artists and Cultural Institutions

(e.g., museums, art galleries, zoo, theater groups, motion picture studios, TV and radio stations, writers' organizations, instrumental/choral, drawing/painting, technology-based arts, literary clubs, collector's groups)

Businesses/Corporations/Unions

(e.g., neighborhood business associations, chambers of commerce, local shops, restaurants, banks, AAA, Teamsters, school employee unions)

Media

(e.g., newspapers, TV & radio, local assess cable)

Family members, local residents, senior citizens groups

Recommendations to Enhance School-Community Partnerships

Initiatives for enhancing school-community collaboration have focused heavily on integrated school-linked services. However, it is essential not to limit such partnerships to efforts to integrate services. School-community partnerships are about using resources in better ways to evolve the type of comprehensive, integrated approaches that are essential for addressing the complex needs of all youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods in the most cost-effective manner.

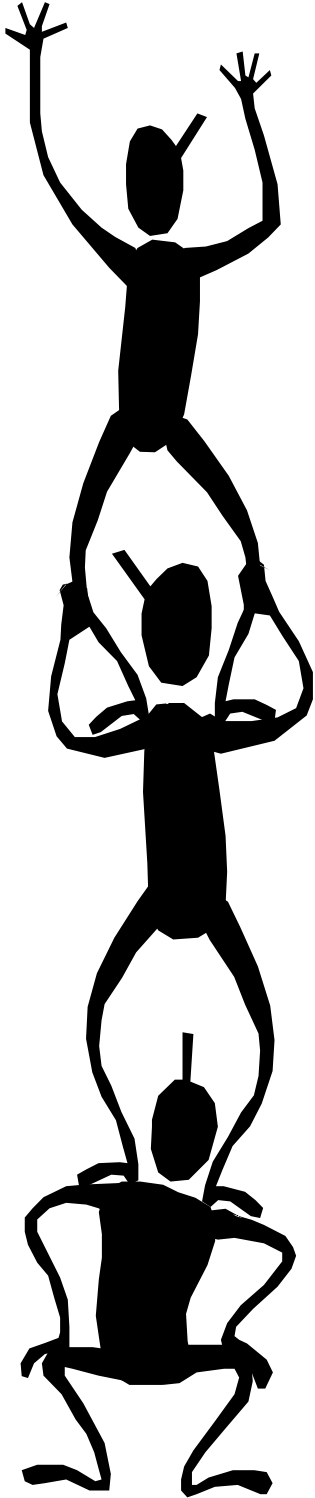
Ironically, policy simply calling for interagency collaboration to reduce fragmentation and redundancy with a view to greater efficiency may, in the long run, be counterproductive to improving school community connections. In too many instances, school-linked services result only in co-locating community agencies on school campuses. As these activities proceed, a small number of students receive services, but little connection is made with school staff and programs.

Needed:
a high priority
commitment
& an overall
strategy

Development of a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach that promotes the well being of *all* youngsters through strengthening youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods requires cohesive policy that facilitates blending of many public and private resources. In schools, this includes restructuring to combine parallel efforts supported by general funds, compensatory and special education entitlement, safe and drug free school grants, and specially funded projects. This also involves connecting families of schools, such as high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools to enhance efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. In communities, the need is for better ways of connecting agency resources to each other and to schools. All this points to the need for (a) a high priority policy commitment to using school-community partnerships strategically to develop comprehensive, multifaceted approaches and to sustaining such partnerships, and (b) an overall strategy at each level for moving forward with efforts to weave school and community (public and private) resources together and generating renewal over time. The end product should be cohesive and potent school-community partnerships. With proper policy support, a comprehensive approach can be woven into the fabric of every school. Neighboring schools can be linked to share limited resources and achieve powerful school community connections.

Needed . . .	Effective school-community partnerships appear to require a linked, cohesive set of policies. Cohesive policy will only emerge if current policies are revisited to reduce redundancy and redeploy those school and community resources being used ineffectively.
enhanced policy cohesion	Policy must
changes in governance	C move existing <i>governance</i> toward shared decision making and appropriate degrees of local control and private sector involvement -- a key facet of this is guaranteeing roles and providing incentives, supports, and training for effective involvement of line staff, families, students, and other community members
creation of mechanisms for change	C create <i>change teams and change agents</i> to carry out the daily activities of systemic change related to building essential support and redesigning processes to initiate, establish, and maintain changes over time
designated leadership	C delineate high level <i>leadership assignments</i> and underwrite essential <i>leadership/management training</i> related to the vision for change, how to effect such changes, how to institutionalize the changes, and how to generate ongoing renewal
mechanisms for managing and enhancing resources	C establish institutionalized <i>mechanisms to manage and enhance resources</i> for school-community partnerships and related systems (focusing on analyzing, planning, coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and strengthening ongoing efforts)
adequate support for capacity building	C provide adequate funds for <i>capacity building</i> related to both accomplishing desired system changes and enhancing intervention quality over time -- a key facet of this is a major investment in staff recruitment and development using well-designed, and technologically sophisticated strategies for dealing with the problems of frequent turnover and diffusing information updates; another facet is an investment in technical assistance at all levels and for all aspects and stages of the work
sophisticated accountability	C use a sophisticated approach to <i>accountability</i> that initially emphasizes data that can help develop effective approaches for collaboration in providing interventions and a results-oriented focus on short-term benchmarks and that evolves over time into evaluation of long-range indicators of impact. (Here, too, technologically sophisticated and integrated management information systems are essential.)

Such a strengthened policy focus would allow personnel to build the continuum of interventions needed to make a significant impact in addressing the health, learning, and well being of all youth through strengthening youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods.



In general, the movement toward integrated services and school-community collaboration aims at enhancing access to services by youth and their families, reducing redundancy, improving case management, coordinating resources, and increasing effectiveness. Obviously, these are desirable goals. In pursuing these ends, however, it is essential not to limit thinking to the topics of coordinating community services and collocation on school sites. For one thing, such thinking downplays the need to also restructure the various education support programs and services that schools own and operate. Initiatives for school-community collaboration also have led some policy makers to the mistaken impression that community resources can effectively meet the needs of schools in addressing barriers to learning. In turn, this has led some legislators to view the linking of community services to schools as a way to free-up the dollars underwriting school-owned services. The reality is that even when one adds together community and school assets, the total set of services in economically impoverished locales is woefully inadequate. In situation after situation, it has become evident that after the first few sites demonstrating school-community collaboration are in place, community agencies find they have stretched their resources to the limit. Policy makers must remember that as important as it is to reform and restructure health and human services, accessible and high quality services are only one facet of a comprehensive and cohesive approach for strengthening families and neighborhoods.

Partnerships in Rural School Districts

Taking into account both the opportunities and challenges posed by conditions of rural life, educators can work to involve parents by setting up programs that include features with well-documented, positive results (see Bauch, 1994; Davies, 1991; Hinson, 1990; Swick, 1991). Among the features most often recommended are

- Parent enrollment in adult education and parenting education programs
- Cooperative strategies for extending the school curriculum beyond the school walls
- Efforts to help parents provide learning experiences at home
- Home visits by personnel trained to facilitate home-school communication
- In-classroom involvement of parents, business leaders, and citizens
- Summer enrichment programs for both parents and children
- Community-based learning
- Use of school facilities for community activities
- University participation in an advisory and supportive role

Programs that combine these features are indeed extensive, recognizing both strengths and weaknesses that parents may bring to partnerships with their children's schools. Such programs recognize that parenting improves when parents feel effective in a variety of adult roles. But they also take into account the fact that schooling improves when a variety of adults share their talents and model successful strategies of life management. Moreover, when community and business organizations have a visible presence in classroom life, students are more likely to see a meaningful connection between their studies and their eventual success in the workplace.

*Excerpted from S. Maynard & A. Howley (1997).
Parent and Community Involvement in Rural Schools.
<http://www.ael.org/eric/digests/edorc973.htm>*

Excerpt from

School Reform Proposals: The Research Evidence (2002)

Alex Molnar, Editor

Education Policy Studies Laboratory/Education Policy Research Unit

Arizona State University

<http://www.asu.edu/educ/epsl/Reports/epru/EPRU%/202002-101/epru-2002-101.htm>

Public Schools and Their Communities

Executive Summary

Summary of Research Findings

Although limited largely to case studies, research has documented a wide range of programs that have expanded public schools' involvement with the communities in which they operate. Such programs face a variety of challenges that range from institutional rivalries to competition for scarce financial resources. Operated effectively, however, they can contribute to improved achievement by students living in poverty.

Recommendations

- Basic parental involvement programs should be enhanced to include multiple opportunities for formal and informal communication between school personnel and parents.
- Parental involvement programs should be developed that embrace the ethnic, linguistic, cultural, racial, and religious diversity of the parents.
- Parental involvement programs should be designed to be sensitive to the special needs of poor parents, single parents, parents with large families, and those families where both parents work outside of the home.
- Written materials should be provided in the language with which parents are the most familiar.
- Schools and other social organizations wishing to provide school-linked services should carefully consider the scope, funding needs, organizational and professional complexities, and types of services to be offered.
- Funding for new community involvement projects should be kept consistent and stable. The bigger and more complex the project, the greater the need for adequate funding.
- Extra-curricular programs should be kept vital to help foster strong parental involvement.
- Educational leaders and policy makers should be encouraged to reconceptualize the public school as a vital economic resource that must be nurtured.

Section II: Building and Maintaining Effective Collaboratives

Building and Maintaining Effective Collaboratives

- Creating readiness for collaboration and new ways of doing business
- Exhibit 1: About collaborative infrastructure

Building from Localities Outward

- Table 4: An overview of steps in moving school-community partnerships from projects to wide-spread practice

Mechanisms

- Steering mechanism
- Local collaborative bodies
- Administrative leads
- Staff leads
- Lessons learned from the New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program

A Multi-Locality Collaborative

- Resource Coordinating Councils
- County & regional planning groups
- System-wide mechanisms
- Local Management Boards
- Lessons Learned

Barriers to Collaboration

Building and Maintaining Effective Collaboratives

*F*rom a policy perspective, efforts must be made to guide and support the building of collaborative bridges connecting school, family, and community. For schools not to marginalize such efforts, the initiative must be fully integrated with school improvement plans. There must be policy and authentic agreements. Although formulation of policy and related agreements take considerable time and other resources, their importance cannot be overemphasized. Failure to establish and successfully maintain effective collaboratives probably is attributable in great measure to proceeding without the type of clear, high level, and long-term policy support that ends the marginalization of initiatives to connect families-communities-schools.

*Systemic changes
are essential . . .*

*and this requires
policy buy-in
and leadership*

Given that all involved parties are committed to building an effective collaboration, the key to doing so is an appreciation that the process involves significant systemic changes. Such an appreciation encompasses both a vision for change and an understanding of how to effect and institutionalize the type of systemic changes needed to build an effective collaborative infrastructure. The process requires changes related to governance, leadership, planning and implementation, and accountability. For example:

- Existing governance must be modified over time. The aim is shared decision making involving school and community agency staff, families, students, and other community representatives.
- High level leadership assignments must be designated to facilitate essential systemic changes and build and maintain family-community-school connections.
- Mechanisms must be established and institutionalized for analyzing, planning, coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and strengthening collaborative efforts.

Evidence of appropriate policy support is seen in the adequacy of funding for *capacity building* to (a) accomplish desired system changes and (b) ensure the collaborative operates effectively over time. Accomplishing systemic changes requires establishment of temporary facilitative mechanisms and providing incentives, supports, and training to enhance commitment to and capacity for essential changes. Ensuring effective collaboration requires institutionalized mechanisms, long-term capacity building, and ongoing support.

Much more is involved than implementing demonstration projects

Efforts to establish effective school-community collaboratives also require much more than implementing demonstrations at a few sites. Policies and processes are needed to ensure such partnerships are developed and institutionalized to meet the needs of all youngsters, families, schools, and neighborhoods. This involves what often is called diffusion, replication, roll out, or scale-up.

For the most part, researchers and reformers interested in school-community initiatives have paid little attention to the complexities of large-scale diffusion. Furthermore, leadership training has given short shrift to the topic of scale-up. Thus, it is not surprising that proposed systemic changes are not accompanied with the resources necessary to accomplish the prescribed changes throughout a county or even a school-district in an effective manner. Common deficiencies include inadequate strategies for creating motivational readiness among a critical mass of stakeholders, assignment of change agents with relatively little specific training in facilitating large-scale systemic change, and scheduling unrealistically short time frames for building capacity to accomplish desired institutional changes.

In reading the following, think about major school-community partnerships designed to evolve a comprehensive, multifaceted, and integrated approach. The intent is to create a cohesive set of well-coordinated, and where feasible integrated, programs and services. Such an approach evolves by building a *continuum of programs/ services* -- from primary prevention to treatment of chronic problems -- using a *continuum of interveners, advocates, and sources of support* (e.g., peers, parents, volunteers, nonprofessional staff, professionals-in-training, professional staff, specialists). Building such a component requires blending resources. Thus, the emphasis throughout is on *collaboration* -- cooperation, coordination, and, where viable, integration -- among all school and community resources.



In pursuing major systemic restructuring, a complex set of interventions is required. These must be guided by a sophisticated scale-up model that addresses substantive organizational changes at multiple levels. A scale-up model is a tool for systemic change. It addresses the question "How do we get from here to there?" Such a model is used to implement a vision of organizational aims and is oriented toward results.

Successful systemic change begins with a model that addresses the complexities of scale-up

The vision for *getting from here to there* requires its own framework of steps, the essence of which involves establishing mechanisms to address key phases, tasks, and processes for systemic change. These include creating an infrastructure and operational mechanisms for

Ccreating readiness: enhancing the climate/culture for change;

Cinitial implementation: adapting and phasing-in a prototype with well-designed guidance and support;

Cinstitutionalization: ensuring the infrastructure maintains and enhances productive changes;

Congoing evolution: creative renewal.

In the following discussion, we take as given that key mechanisms for implementing systemic changes have been established. These mechanisms are essential when school-community partnerships are to be established on a large-scale.

The real difficulty in changing the course of
any enterprise lies not in developing new ideas
but in escaping old ones.
John Maynard Keynes

*Major system change is not easy,
but the alternative is to maintain
a very unsatisfactory status quo.*

Creating Readiness for Collaboration and New Ways of Doing Business

Matching motivation and capabilities. Success of efforts to establish an effective collaborative depends on stakeholders' motivation and capability. Substantive change is most likely when high levels of positive energy can be mobilized and appropriately directed over extended periods of time. Among the most fundamental errors related to systemic change is the tendency to set actions into motion without taking sufficient time to lay the foundation needed for substantive change. Thus, one of the first concerns is how to mobilize and direct the energy of a critical mass of participants to ensure readiness and commitment. This calls for strategies that establish and maintain an effective match with the motivation and capabilities of involved parties.

Motivational readiness. The initial focus is on communicating essential information to key stakeholders using strategies that help them understand that the benefits of change will outweigh the costs and are more worthwhile than the status quo or competing directions for change. The strategies used must be personalized and accessible to the subgroups of stakeholders (e.g., must be "enticing," emphasize that costs are reasonable, and engage them in processes that build consensus and commitment). Sufficient time *must* be spent creating motivational readiness of key stakeholders and building their capacity and skills.

And readiness is an everyday concern. All changes require constant care and feeding. Those who steer the process must be motivated and competent, not just initially but over time. The complexity of systemic change requires close monitoring of mechanisms and immediate follow up to address problems. In particular, it means providing continuous, personalized guidance and support to enhance knowledge and skills and counter anxiety, frustration, and other stressors. To these ends, adequate resource support must be provided (time, space, materials, equipment) and opportunities must be available for increasing ability and generating a sense of renewed mission. Personnel turnover must be addressed by welcoming and orienting new members.

A note of caution. In marketing new ideas, it is tempting to accentuate their promising attributes and minimize complications. For instance, in negotiating agreements for school connections, school policy makers frequently are asked simply to sign a memorandum of understanding, rather than involving them in processes that lead to a comprehensive, informed commitment. Sometimes they agree mainly to obtain extra resources; sometimes they are motivated by a desire to be seen by constituents as doing *something* to improve the school. This can lead to premature implementation, resulting in the form rather than the substance of change.

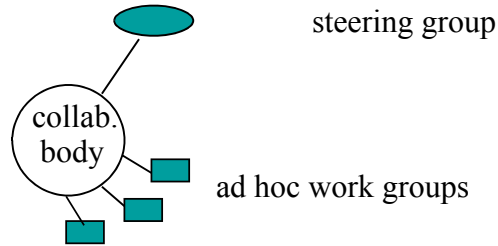
Exhibit 1

About Collaborative Infrastructure

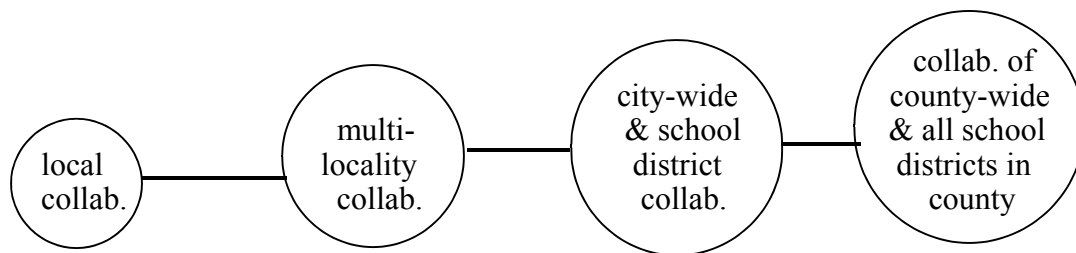
*Basic Collaborative Infrastructure**

Who should be at the table?

- >families¹
- >schools²
- >communities³



*Connecting Collaboratives at All Levels**



*Collaborations can be organized by any group of stakeholders. Connecting the resources of families and the community through collaboration with schools is essential for developing comprehensive, multifaceted programs and services. At the multi-locality level, efficiencies and economies of scale are achieved by connecting a complex (or “family”) of schools (e.g., a high school and its feeder schools). In a small community, such a complex often is the school district. Conceptually, it is best to think in terms of building from the local outward, but in practice, the process of establishing the initial collaboration may begin at any level.

¹*Families.* It is important to ensure that all who live in an area are represented – including, but not limited to, representatives of organized family advocacy groups. The aim is to mobilize all the human and social capital represented by family members and other home caretakers of the young.

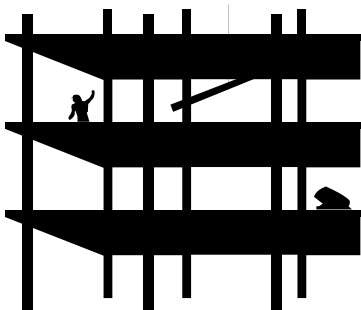
²*Schools.* This encompasses all institutionalized entities that are responsible for formal education (e.g., pre-K, elementary, secondary, higher education). The aim is to draw on the resources of these institutions.

³*Communities.* This encompasses all the other resources (public and private money, facilities, human and social capital) that can be brought to the table at each level (e.g., health and social service agencies, businesses and unions, recreation, cultural, and youth development groups, libraries, juvenile justice and law enforcement, faith-based community institutions, service clubs, media). As the collaborative develops, additional steps must be taken to outreach to disenfranchised groups.

Building from Localities Outward

The focus is first on what is needed at the school-neighborhood level . . .

. . . then on ways several school-neighborhood partners can work together and, finally, on what system-wide resources can do to support local collaborations



In developing an effective collaborative, an infrastructure of organizational and operational mechanisms at all relevant levels are required for oversight, leadership, capacity building, and ongoing support (e.g., see Exhibit 2). Such mechanisms are used to (a) make decisions about priorities and resource allocation, (b) maximize systematic planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation, (c) enhance and redeploy existing resources and pursue new ones, and (d) nurture the collaborative. At each level, such tasks require pursuing a proactive agenda.

An effective family-community-school collaboration must coalesce at the local level. Thus, a school and its surrounding community are a reasonable focal point around which to build an infrastructure. Moreover, primary emphasis on this level meshes nicely with contemporary restructuring views that stress increased school-based and neighborhood control.

Thus, first the focus is on mechanisms at the school-neighborhood level. Then, based on analyses of what is needed to facilitate and enhance efforts at a locality, mechanisms are conceived that enable several school-neighborhood collaborations to work together to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. Then, system-wide mechanisms can be (re)designed to provide support for what each locality is trying to develop.

An infrastructure of organizational and operational mechanisms at all levels are required for oversight, leadership, resource development, and ongoing support. Such mechanisms provide ways to (a) arrive at decisions about resource allocation, (b) maximize systematic and integrated planning, implementation, maintenance, and evaluation of enabling activity, (c) outreach to create formal working relationships with community resources to bring some to a school and establish special linkages with others, and (d) upgrade and modernize the component to reflect the best intervention thinking and use of technology. At each level, these tasks require that staff adopt some new roles and functions and that parents, students, and other representatives from the community enhance their involvement. They also call for redeployment of existing resources, as well as finding new ones.

Awareness of the myriad political and bureaucratic difficulties involved in making major institutional changes, especially with limited financial resources, leads to the caution that the type of large-scale restructuring described below is not a straightforward sequential process. Rather, the changes emerge in overlapping and spiraling phases. Nevertheless, it helps to have an overview of steps involved (see Table 4).

Table 4

**An Overview of Steps in Moving School-Community Partnerships
from Projects to Wide-Spread Practice**

The following outline applies the phases for systemic change to the problem of establishing a large-scale initiative for school-community partnerships. Clearly, such an initiative requires major systemic restructuring at all levels. At each level, a critical mass of key stakeholders and their leadership must understand and commit to restructuring plans. The commitment must be reflected in policy statements and creation of an infrastructure that ensures necessary leadership and resources and on-going capacity building. Such an infrastructure must include a variety of mechanisms for reviewing, analyzing, and redeploying the various funding sources that underwrite current programs and services.

As a guide for planning, implementation, and evaluation, the process is conceived in terms of four phases covering fourteen major steps:

Phase 1: Creating Readiness

- C Build interest and consensus for enhancing school-community partnerships as a key strategy in developing a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum of programs and services
- C Introduce basic ideas to relevant groups of stakeholders (e.g., those involved with schools, agencies, community based organizations)
- C Establish a policy framework -- the leadership groups at each level should establish a policy commitment to enhancing school-community partnerships as a key strategy in developing a comprehensive, multifaceted continuum of programs and services
- C Identify leaders for this initiative at all systemic levels to carry responsibility and accountability for ensuring that policy commitments are carried out in a substantive manner

Phase 2: Initial Implementation

- C Establish a system-wide steering group, local steering groups, and an infrastructure to guide the process of change; provide all individuals involved in guiding the change process with leadership and change agent training
- C Formulate specific plans for starting-up and phasing in the large-scale initiative

Table 4 (cont.)

- C Establish and train resource-oriented groups at each level -- beginning with resource-oriented teams at each locality, then Resource Coordinating Councils for working across a group of localities and for interfacing with Service Area Planning Councils, and finally system-wide bodies
- C Reorganize and cluster programmatic activity into a relatively delimited number of areas that are staffed in a cross disciplinary manner (e.g., delineate a delimited set of programs and services for facilitating healthy development and productive learning and for addressing barriers to development and learning -- spanning concerns for problem prevention, early intervention, and treatment)
- C Create mechanisms for effective communication, sharing, and problem solving to ensure the initiative is implemented effectively and is highly visible to all stakeholders
- C Use Resource Coordinating Councils, Service Planning Area Councils, and system-wide resource coordinating groups to identify additional school district and community resources that might be redeployed to fill program/service gaps;
- C Establish a system for quality improvement

Phase 3: Institutionalization

- C Develop plans for maintaining the large-scale initiative for school-community partnerships (e.g., strategies for demonstrating results and institutionalizing the necessary leadership and infrastructure)
- C Develop strategies for maintaining momentum and progress (e.g., ongoing advocacy and capacity building -- paying special attention to the problem of turnover and newcomers; systems for quality assurance and regular data reporting; ongoing formative evaluations to refine infrastructure and programs)

Phase 4: Ongoing Evolution

- C Develop a plan to generate creative renewal (e.g., continue to expand support for school-community partnerships, enhance leadership training, celebrate accomplishments, add innovations)

Policymakers and administrators must ensure the necessary infrastructure is put in place for

Cweaving existing activity together

Cevolving programs

Creaching out to enhance resources

If the essential programs are to play out effectively at a locality, policy makers and administrators must ensure that the necessary infrastructure is put in place. From a local perspective, there are three overlapping challenges in moving from piecemeal approaches to an integrated approach. One involves weaving existing activity together. A second entails evolving programs so they are more effective. The third challenge is to reach out to other resources in ways that expand the partnership. Such outreach encompasses forming collaborations with other schools, establishing formal linkages with community resources, and reaching out to more volunteers, professionals-in-training, and community resources.

Mechansims

Meeting the above challenges requires development of a well-conceived infrastructure of mechanisms that are appropriately sanctioned and endorsed by governing bodies. Besides basic resources, key facets of the infrastructure are designated leaders (e.g., administrative, staff) and work group mechanisms (e.g., resource- and program-oriented teams).

At the most basic level, the focus is on connecting families and community resources with one school. At the next level, collaborative connections may encompass a cluster of schools (e.g., a high school and its feeder schools) and/or may coalesce several collaboratives to increase efficiency and effectiveness and achieve economies of scale. Finally, “system-wide” (e.g., district, city, county) mechanisms can be designed to provide support for what each locality is trying to develop.

Steering mechanism

All collaboratives need a core team who agree to steer the process. These must be competent individuals who are highly motivated – not just initially but over time. The complexity of collaboration requires providing continuous, personalized guidance and support to enhance knowledge and skills and counter anxiety, frustration, and other stressors. This entails close monitoring and *immediate* follow-up to address problems.

A resource-oriented collaborative body for a local school & neighborhood

Local collaborative bodies should be oriented to enhancing and expanding resources. This includes such functions as reducing fragmentation, enhancing cost-efficacy by analyzing, planning, and redeploying resources, and then coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and strengthening ongoing systemic organization and operations. Properly constituted with school, home, and community representatives, such a group develops an infrastructure of work teams to pursue collaborative functions. To these ends, there must be (a) adequate resources (time, space, materials, equipment) to support the infrastructure, (b) opportunities to increase ability and generate a sense of renewed mission, and (c) ways to address personnel turnover quickly so new staff are brought up to speed. Because work or task groups usually are the mechanism of choice, particular attention must be paid to increasing levels of competence and enhancing motivation of all stakeholders for working together. More generally, stakeholder development spans four stages: orientation, foundation-building, capacity-building, and continuing education.

Based on lessons learned, one good starting place is to establish a resource-oriented team (e.g., a Resource Coordinating Team) at a specific school. Properly constituted, a resource team leads and steers efforts to maintain and improve a multifaceted and integrated approach. This includes developing local partnerships. Such a team helps reduce fragmentation and enhances cost-efficacy by analyzing, planning, coordinating, integrating, monitoring, evaluating, and strengthening ongoing efforts.

To ensure programmatic activity is well-planned, implemented, evaluated, maintained, and evolved, the resource/steering team, in turn, helps establish and coordinate local program teams. In forming such teams, identifying and deploying enough committed and able personnel may be difficult. Initially, a couple of motivated and competent individuals can lead the way in a particular program area -- with others recruited over time as necessary and/or interested. Some "teams" might even consist of one individual. In some instances, one team can address more than one programmatic area. Many localities, of course, are unable to simultaneously develop many new program areas. Such localities must establish priorities and plans for how to develop and phase in new programs. The initial emphasis should be on meeting the locality's most pressing needs, such as enhancing services assistance, responding to crises, and pursuing ways to prevent garden variety learning, behavior, and emotional problems.

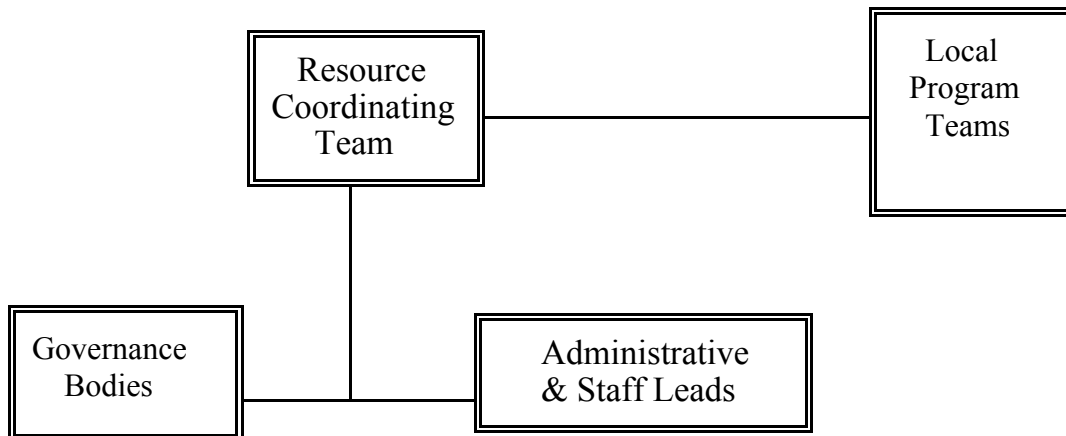
Administrative leads

Most schools and agencies do not have an administrator whose job definition includes the leadership role and functions necessary to accomplish the above objectives. This is not a role for which most principals or agency heads have time. Thus, it is imperative to establish a policy and restructure jobs to ensure there are *site administrative leads* whose job encompasses this responsibility. Such persons must sit on the resource team (described above) and then represent and advocate the team's recommendations whenever governance and administrative bodies meet -- especially at meetings when decisions are made regarding programs and operations (e.g., use of space, time, budget, and personnel).

Staff leads

Finally, *staff leads* can be identified from the cadre of line staff who have interest and expertise with respect to school-community partnerships. If a locality has a center facility (e.g., Family or Parent Resource Center or a Health Center), the center's coordinator would be one logical choice for this role. Staff leads also must sit on the above described resource team and be ready to advocate at key times for the team's recommendations at meetings with administrative and governance bodies.

Besides facilitating the development of a potent approach for developing school-community partnerships, administrative and staff leads play key roles in daily implementation, monitoring, and problem solving related to such efforts.

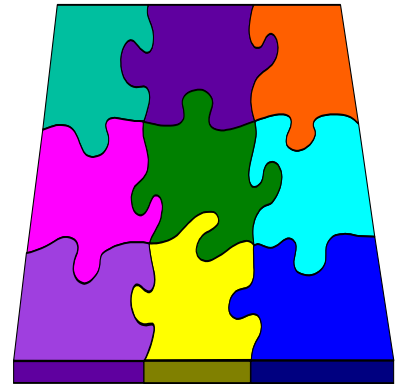


As will be evident on the following pages, conceptualization of the necessary local level infrastructure helps clarify what supportive mechanisms should be developed to enable several school-neighborhood collaborations to work together and what is needed to at system-wide levels to support localities

Lessons Learned

from the New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program

The New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program, approaching community-school connections from the community side of the equation, reports the following eight factors as most affecting the strength of their school-community partnerships.



- (1) The welcome by the school administration, especially the provision of adequate space and liaison personnel.
- (2) The ability of the Managing Agency to provide support and supervision.
- (3) The strength of the Community Board, Advisory Board and connections to community agencies.
- (4) The strength, flexibility and competence of staff who interact with youth and school personnel.
- (5) The strength of parent support for the program.
- (6) The ability and willingness of staff and the managing agency to write grant proposals for special efforts.
- (7) Maximizing the use of state technical assistance.
- (8) Self evaluation and use of all evaluation.

A Multi-Locality Collaborative

Because adjoining localities have common concerns, they may have programmatic activity that can use the same resources. Many natural connections exist in catchment areas serving a high school and its feeder schools. For example, the same family often has children attending all levels of schooling at the same time. In addition, some school districts and agencies already pull together several geographically-related clusters to combine and integrate personnel and programs. Through coordination and sharing at this level, redundancy can be minimized and resources can be deployed equitably and pooled to reduce costs.

Toward these ends, a multi-locality collaborative can help (a) coordinate and integrate programs serving multiple schools and neighborhoods, (b) identify and meet common needs for stakeholder development, and (c) create linkages and enhance collaboration among schools and agencies. Such a group can provide a broader-focused mechanism for leadership, communication, maintenance, quality improvement, and ongoing development of a comprehensive continuum of programs and services. With respect to linking with community resources, multi-locality collaboratives are especially attractive to community agencies that often don't have the time or personnel to link with individual schools.

One natural starting point for local and multi-locality collaboratives are the sharing of need-assessments, resource mapping, analyses, and recommendations for addressing community-school violence and developing prevention programs and safe school and neighborhood plans.

Resource Coordinating Councils

A multi-locality *Resource Coordinating Council* provides a mechanism to help ensure cohesive and equitable deployment of resources and also can enhance the pooling of resources to reduce costs. Such councils can be particularly useful for integrating neighborhood efforts and those of high schools and their feeder middle and elementary schools. (This clearly is important in connecting with those families who have youngsters attending more than one level of schooling in the same cluster.) With respect to linking with community resources, multi-locality teams are especially attractive to community agencies who often don't have the time or personnel to link with individual schools. To these ends, 1 to 2 representatives from each local resource team can be chosen to form a council and meet at least once a month and more frequently as necessary. Such a mechanism helps (a) coordinate and integrate programs serving multiple schools and neighborhoods, (b) identify and meet common needs with respect to guidelines and staff development, and (c) create linkages and collaborations among schools and agencies. More generally, the council provides a useful mechanism for leadership, communication, maintenance, quality improvement, and ongoing development of a comprehensive continuum of programs and services. Natural starting points for councils are the sharing of needs assessment, resource mapping, analyses, and recommendations for reform and restructuring. Specific areas of initial focus may be on such matters as addressing community-school violence and developing prevention programs and safe school and neighborhood plans.

County and Regional
Planning Groups

Representatives from Resource Coordinating Councils would be invaluable members of county and regional planning groups. They would bring information about specific schools and clusters of schools and local neighborhoods and would do so in ways that reflect the importance of school-community partnerships (see box).

System-wide
mechanisms

Local and multi-site mechanisms are not sufficient. System-wide policy guidance, leadership, and assistance are required. With respect to establishing a comprehensive continuum of programs and services, a system-wide *policy* commitment represents a necessary foundation.

Mechanisms that
seem essential are:

Then, system-wide mechanisms must be established. Development of such mechanisms should reflect a clear conception of how each supports local activity. Several system-wide mechanisms seem essential for coherent oversight and leadership in developing, maintaining, and enhancing comprehensive approaches involving school-community partnerships. One is a *system-wide leader* with responsibility and accountability for the system-wide vision and strategic planning related to (a) developing school-community collaborations to evolve comprehensive approaches and (b) ensuring coordination and integration of activity among localities and system-wide. The leader's functions also encompass evaluation, including determination of the equity in program delivery, quality improvement reviews of all mechanisms and procedures, and ascertaining results.

C a system-wide
leader

Two other recommended mechanisms at this level are a *system-wide leadership group* and a *resource coordinating body*. The former can provide expertise and leadership for the ongoing evolution of the initiative; the latter can provide guidance for operational coordination and integration across the system. The composition for these will have some overlap. The system-wide resource coordinating body should include representatives of multi-locality councils and Service Planning Area Councils. The leadership group should include (a) key administrative and line staff with relevant expertise and vision, (b) staff who can represent the perspectives of the various stakeholders, and (c) others whose expertise (e.g., public health, mental health, social services, recreation, juvenile justice, post secondary institutions) make them invaluable contributors to the tasks at hand.

- a system-wide
leadership group

C a system-wide
resource
coordinating body

Matters related to comprehensive approaches best achieved through school-community partnerships appear regularly on the agenda of local school boards. The problem is that each item tends to be handled in an ad hoc manner, without sufficient attention to the "Big Picture." One result is that the administrative structure in the school district is not organized in ways that coalesce its various functions (programs, services) for addressing barriers and promoting healthy development. The piecemeal structure reflects the marginalized status of such functions and both creates and maintains the fragmented policies and practices that characterize efforts to address barriers. Boards of Education need a standing committee that deals in-depth and consistently with these functions so they are addressed in more cohesive and effective ways. Such a committee can help ensure policy and practice are formulated in a cohesive way based on a big picture perspective of how all the various resources and functions relate to each other.

C Board of Education
Standing Committee

Ultimately, it is Boards of Education and community governance and planning bodies that must ensure an enduring policy commitment, resources, and planning for comprehensive and cohesive approaches encompassing school-community partnerships. This calls for formal connections between community planning bodies and boards of education with respect to analyzing the current state of the art, developing policy, and ensuring effective implementation.

Local Management Boards

Collaboration Initiated by the Legislature Across an Entire State

In 1989, the governor of Maryland issued an Executive Order creating the Subcabinet for Children, Youth and Families. In 1990, a Statute was enacted requiring each local jurisdiction to establish a Local Governing Entity now known as Local Management Boards. (§11, Article 49D, Annotated Code of Maryland). By 1997, Local Management Boards (LMBs) were operating in all 24 jurisdictions.

LMBs are the core entity established in each jurisdiction to stimulate joint action by State and local government, public and private providers, business and industry, and community residents to build an effective system of services, supports and opportunities that improve outcomes for children, youth and families. An example of this process for connecting families, communities, and schools is the partnership established in Anne Arundel County created by county government in December 1993.

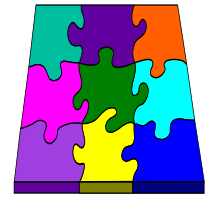
As described by the Anne Arundel Local Management Board (LMB), they are a collaborative board responsible for interagency planning, goal-setting, resource allocation, developing, implementing, and monitoring interagency services to children and their families. Their mission is to enhance the well-being of all children and their families in Anne Arundel County. All of their work focuses on impacting the result of "children safe in their families and communities" with goals and priorities established by the Board Members through a Community Needs process completed in October 1997. The consortium consists of representatives of public and private agencies appointed by the Anne Arundel County Executive who serve children and families and private citizens. Membership includes: County Public Schools, Department of Social Services, Department of Juvenile Justice, Department of Health/Mental Health, County Mental Health Agency, Inc. (Core Service Agency), County Recreation and Parks, County Government, and Private Citizens (e.g., private providers, advocacy groups, parents, and other consumers). Private citizens can comprise up to 49% of the membership. Board Members are appointed by the County Executive for a term of four years.

In pursuing their mission, they (a) foster collaboration among all public and private partners; (b) plan a wide array of services; (c) coordinate and pool resources; (d) monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of programs; and (e) provide a forum for communication and advocacy. For instance, the LMB develops community plans for providing comprehensive interagency services with guidelines established by the Subcabinet for Children, Youth, and Families. Examples of program initiatives include:

- >Positive Parenting Programs >Kinship Care Support Groups >Mom and Tots Support Groups
- >Police "Teen Opportunity Programs" >Safe Haven Runaway Shelter >Juvenile Intervention Programs
- >After-School Middle School Programs for At-Risk Youth >Youth and Family Services
- >Disruptive Youth Program >Mobile Crisis Team >Second Step Curriculum
- >Success by 6 >School-Community Centers Program

For more information: <http://www.aacounty.org/lmb/default.htm>.

Lessons Learned



The following ideas were circulated by the Human Interaction Research Institute* at a conference on the care and feeding of community partnerships. They were derived from a review of the research literature on the effectiveness of partnerships.

(1) Factors Influencing the Success of Partnerships

■ **Environmental Characteristics**

- >there is a history of collaboration or cooperation in the community
- >the partnership is seen as a leader in the community
- >the overall political/social climate is favorable to the goals of the partnership

■ **Membership Characteristics**

- >there is mutual respect, understanding and trust among, the partners
- >there is an appropriate cross-section of members from the community at large
- >partners all see collaboration as in their self-interest
- >there is a reasonable ability to compromise in operating the partnership

■ **Process/Structure Characteristics**

- >partners share a stake in both process and outcome
- >there are multiple layers of decision-making in the partnership
- >there is a reasonable amount of flexibility in how the partnership operates
- >there are clear roles and policy guidelines are developed
- >there is a willingness to adapt the structure and goals of the partnership as needed

■ **Communication Characteristics**

- >there is open and frequent communication among the partners
- >the partners have established informal and formal communication links

■ **Purpose Characteristics**

- >there are concrete, attainable goals and objectives for the partnership
- >there is an overall shared vision of what the partnership aims to do
- >there is a well-defined, unique purpose against other goals of community groups

■ **Resource Characteristics**

- >there are sufficient funds to operate the partnership
- >there is a skilled convener to bring the partners together

(2) Challenges of Partnerships

- Distrust of the partnership process itself among certain elements of the partnering organizations or within the host community
- "Bad history" from previous partnerships in the same community
- Becoming more concerned with perpetuation of the partnership rather than with the issues it was formed to address
- Being the product of a top-down rather than bottom-up creation
- Difficulties in recruiting staff able to work in the complex environment of a coalition
- Difficulties in maintaining viability when a leader or founding partner leaves (regardless of the reason for the departure)

(3) Learnings About Multicultural Aspects of Partnerships

- Strategies for handling cultural stereotypes within the partnership's own leadership are planned and implemented
- Partners develop and share a basic vision rather than merely looking for an exchange of opportunities among different racial/ethnic groups
- There are efforts to build social capital in the community - going beyond specific issue-oriented work

(4) Sustaining Partnerships

The likelihood of partnerships continuing over time is increased by:

- Implementing strategic methods for *conflict resolution* within the partnership, including an open acknowledgment that conflict is both inevitable and healthy in a body of this sort, so it will always have to be dealt with
- Implementing "advance strategies" for dealing with *leadership burnout* and *transition* - again, acknowledging that such shifts are a normal, healthy part of a partnership's life cycle
- Developing and implementing approaches to *long-term resource acquisition* - maintaining the flow of needed fiscal and human resources into the partnership. Funders can help partnerships by earmarking funds for capacity development, or for a planning grant to start up the partnership with attention to these longer-term issues.

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**Barriers to
Collaboration**

*Marginalization is the
fundamental barrier*

Barriers to collaboration arise from a variety of institutional and personal factors. A fundamental institutional barrier to family-community-school collaboration is the degree to which efforts to establish such connections are *marginalized* in policy and practice. The extent to which this is the case can be seen in how few resources most schools deploy to build effective collaboratives.

And, even when a collaboration is initiated, the matters addressed usually are marginalized. For example, many groups spend a great deal of effort on strategies for increasing client access to programs and services and reducing the fragmentation associated with piecemeal, categorically funded programs (e.g., programs to reduce learning and behavior problems, substance abuse, violence, school dropouts, delinquency, and teen pregnancy). However, problems of access and fragmentation stem from marginalization, and this barrier remains a major deterrent to successful collaboration.

*Collaboration is
a developing
process . . .*

*it must be continuously
nurtured, facilitated,
and supported, and special
attention
must be given to
overcoming institutional
& personal barriers*

Institutional barriers are seen when existing policy, accountability, leadership, budget, space, time schedules, and capacity building agendas are nonsupportive of efforts to use collaborative arrangements effectively and efficiently to accomplish desired results. Nonsupport may simply take the form of benign neglect. More often, it stems from a lack of understanding, commitment, and/or capability related to establishing and maintaining a potent infrastructure for working together and for sharing resources. Occasionally, nonsupport takes the ugly form of forces at work trying to actively undermine collaboration.

Examples of institutional barriers include:

Policies that mandate collaboration but do not enable the process by reconciling divergent accountability pressures that interfere with using resources optimally

Policies for collaboration that do not provide adequate resources and time for leadership and stakeholder training and for overcoming barriers to collaboration,

Leadership that does not establish an effective infrastructure (including mechanisms such as a steering group and work/task groups)

Differences in the conditions and incentives associated with participation (including the fact that meetings usually are set during the work day and community agency and school participants salary usually is in effect during attendance, while family member are expected to volunteer their time)

On a personal level, barriers mostly stem from practical deterrents, negative attitudes, and deficiencies of knowledge and skill. These vary for different stakeholders but often include problems related to work schedules, transportation, childcare, communication skills, understanding of differences in organizational culture, accommodations for language and cultural differences, and so forth.

Other barriers arise because of inadequate attention to factors associated with systemic change. How well an innovation such as a collaborative is implemented depends to a significant degree on the personnel doing the implementing and the motivation and capabilities of participants. Sufficient resources and time must be redeployed so they can learn and carry out new functions effectively. And, when newcomers join, well-designed procedures must be in place to bring them up to speed.

*Collaboration
requires creative
problem-solving*

In bringing schools and community agencies to the same table, it is a given that there will be problems related to the differences in organizational mission, functions, cultures, bureaucracies, and accountabilities. Considerable effort will be required to teach each other about these matters. When families are at the table, power differentials are common, especially when low-income families are involved and are confronted with credentialed and titled professionals. Working collaboratively requires overcoming these barriers. This is easier to do when all stakeholders are committed to learning to do so. It means moving beyond naming problems to careful analysis of why the problem has arisen and then moving on to creative problem solving.

Another Type of Barrier

When collaboratives are not well-conceived and carefully developed, they generate additional barriers to their success. In too many instances, so-called collaborations have amounted to little more than collocation of community agency staff on school campuses. Services continue to function in relative isolation from each other, focusing on discrete problems and specialized services for individuals and small groups. Too little thought has been given to the importance of meshing (as contrasted with simply linking) community services and programs with existing school owned and operated activity. The result is that a small number of youngsters are provided services that they may not otherwise have received, but little connection is made with families and school staff and programs. Because of this, a new form of fragmentation is emerging as community and school professionals engage in a form of parallel play at school sites. Moreover, when "outside" professionals are brought into schools, district personnel may view the move as discounting their skills and threatening their jobs. On the other side, the "outsiders" often feel unappreciated. Conflicts arise over "turf," use of space, confidentiality, and liability. School professionals tend not to understand the culture of community agencies; agency staff are rather naive about the culture of schools.

Overcoming Barriers Related to Differences

Participants in a collaborative, must be sensitive to a variety of human and institutional differences and learn strategies for dealing with them. These include differences in

- Csociocultural and economic background and current lifestyle
- Cprimary language spoken
- Cskin color
- Csex
- Cmotivation

In addition, there are differences related to power, status, and orientation. And, for many, the culture of schools and community agencies and organizations will differ greatly from other settings where they have lived and worked. Although workshops and presentations may be offered in an effort to increase specific cultural awareness, what can be learned in this way is limited, especially when one is in a community of many cultures. There also is a danger in prejudgments based on apparent cultural awareness. It is desirable to have the needed language skills and cultural awareness; it is also essential not to rush to judgement.

As part of a working relationship, differences can be complementary and helpful – as when staff from different disciplines work with and learn from each other. Differences become a barrier to establishing effective working relationships when negative attitudes are allowed to prevail. Interpersonally, the result generally is conflict and poor communication. For example, differences in status, skin color, power, orientation, and so forth can cause one or more persons to enter the situation with negative (including competitive) feelings. And such feelings often motivate conflict.

Many individuals who have been treated unfairly, been discriminated against, been deprived of opportunity and status at school, on the job, and in society use whatever means they can to seek redress and sometimes to strike back. Such an individual may promote conflict in hopes of correcting power imbalances or at least to call attention to a problem.

Often, power differentials are so institutionalized that individual action has little impact. It is hard and frustrating to fight an institution. It is much easier and immediately satisfying to fight with other individuals one sees as representing that institution. However, when this occurs where individuals are supposed to work together, those with negative feelings may act and say things in ways that produce significant barriers to establishing a working relationship. Often, the underlying message is "you don't understand," or worse yet "you probably don't want to understand." Or, even worse, "you are my enemy."

It is unfortunate when such barriers arise between those we are trying to help; it is a travesty when such barriers interfere with helpers working together effectively. Conflicts among collaborative members detract from accomplishing goals and contribute in a major way to "burn out."

(cont.)

There are, however, no easy solutions to overcoming deeply embedded negative attitudes. Certainly, a first step is to understand that the nature of the problem is not differences per se but negative perceptions stemming from the politics and psychology of the situation. It is these perceptions that lead to (a) prejudgments that a person is bad because of an observed difference and (b) the view that there is little to be gained from working with that person. Thus, minimally, the task of overcoming negative attitudes interfering with a particular working relationship involves finding ways to counter negative prejudgments (e.g., to establish the credibility of those who have been prejudged) and demonstrate there is something of value to be gained from working together.

To be effective in working with others, you need to build a positive *working* relationship around the **tasks** at hand. Necessary ingredients are:

Cminimizing negative prejudgments about those with whom you will be working

Ctaking time to make connections

Cidentifying what will be gained from the collaboration in terms of mutually desired outcomes -- to clarify the value of working together

Cenhancing expectations that the working relationship will be productive – important here is establishing credibility with each other

Cestablishing a structure that provides support and guidance to aid task focus

Cperiodic reminders of the positive outcomes that have resulted from working together

With specific respect to **building relationships** and **effective communication**, three things you can do are:

Cconvey empathy and warmth (e.g., the ability to understand and appreciate what the individual is thinking and feeling and to transmit a sense of liking)

Cconvey genuine regard and respect (e.g., the ability to transmit real interest and to interact in a way that enables the individual to maintain a feeling of integrity and personal control)

Ctalk with, not at, others -- active listening and dialogue (e.g., being a good listener, not being judgmental, not prying, sharing your experiences as appropriate and needed)

Finally, watch out for ego-oriented behavior (yours and theirs) – it tends to get in the way of accomplishing the task at hand.