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Improving Results for Children and Families by Connecting Collaborative Services with School Reform Efforts

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Communities across the country are engaged in collaborative efforts to help young people learn and develop important skills and competencies they need to succeed now and throughout life. Many of the efforts are centered around schools. Linking the reform of community services to schools stands to benefit young people in several ways. By offering a wide variety of school-linked services and supports to children and their families, communities help overcome nonacademic barriers to learning. Services and supports offered at or near schools can also provide new avenues for parent participation in children's learning and in the life of the school.

The majority of schools in these communities are also working to improve the quality of teaching and learning that goes on in schools in order to assure that all students meet more challenging academic standards. A handful of sites are leveraging these partnerships in ways that assist and inform education improvement efforts. If school-linked service efforts are to realize their full

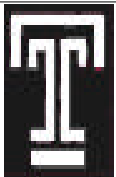
potential to help improve education success for all students, then policy-makers, administrators, service providers, and parents need to learn from these pioneering efforts. What strategies are being used to generate a community-wide commitment to high standards, high expectations, and success for all students? What role are families and other community representatives playing in helping school administrators and teachers connect teaching and learning to real-world concerns? How are partnerships with community organizations and other service agencies helping schools form close-knit and caring relationships with students and their families? How are schools that are undertaking serious and sustainable school reform finding the time and resources to also play a role in assuring that families have access to social and health services and other more informal supports? How are states encouraging and supporting such collaborative efforts? It is in the context of understanding these and related questions that this issue of

The CEIC Review was initiated.

The articles included in this issue were commissioned for a National Invitational Conference report on Improving Results for Children and Families by Connecting Collaborative Services with School Reform Efforts, sponsored by Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE) and the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The articles were written by education leaders and scholars to help develop a deeper understanding of strategies states and communities can use to harness their collaborative partnerships in ways that can reinforce and support education improvement efforts and the policies that support those efforts. The conference had the goals of:

- learning how sites around the country are improving academic achievement by integrating school improvement efforts with community services reform;

(cont'd.)



The National Center on Education in the Inner Cities is a unit in the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education, an interdisciplinary center devoted to fostering healthy developmental and educational success of children and families in this nation's urban communities. Inquiries about the work of the Center should be sent to Information Services, CRHDE, Temple University, 1301 Cecil B. Moore Avenue, Philadelphia, PA 19122-6091. Copyright © 1999

- examining how education and other human service policy is enabling and/or hindering these efforts; and
- providing an opportunity for selected experts on collaborative services and school reform – as well as state and local agency personnel, school and community-based staff, and parents and family advocates – to reconceptualize the challenge of forming school-community partnerships that result in improved academic success for all students.

The conference explored expert, practitioner, and community-based knowledge and perceptions about the factors facilitating or inhibiting successful multi-level partnerships to improve education and other impor-

tant results for children and families by connecting collaborative services with education reform efforts. Conference participants included selected experts on collaborative services and school reform, state and local agency personnel, school- and community-based staff, and parents and family advocates. Participants discussed and exchanged information on: (a) contextual factors that influence the ability of schools to link education reform strategies with collaborative efforts to improve the services and supports available to children and families; (b) the impact these efforts have on educational and other important results for children and families; and (c) action steps that state and local policy-makers, practitioners, and parents can take

to make sure school-community collaborative efforts are producing desired results.

The chapters included in this book were commissioned specially to serve as background material for a national invitational conference sponsored by the Laboratory for Student Success (LSS) and the National Center on Education in the Inner Cities (CEIC) at the Temple University Center for Research in Human Development and Education (CRHDE), in collaboration with the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO). The conference was held on January 28-29 in Washington, DC. The opinions expressed do not necessarily reflect the position of the supporting agencies and no official endorsement should be inferred. ☞

Trends and Lessons in School-Community Initiatives

Atelia I. Melaville; with Martin J. Blank, Institute for Educational Leadership

The idea of the school as the heart of the community and a gathering place for people of all ages to learn, spend time together, and discuss concerns is as old as the one-room schoolhouse and as familiar as the village green. Over the last decade, a rapid and highly diverse groundswell of new school-community initiatives has joined and shaped these earlier efforts. Schools and communities – in partnership with young people and their families – are working more closely than ever before to help students, despite increasingly complex social and economic pressures. But up until recently not enough has been done to learn what these expanding efforts have to teach about making schools a community focal point. Encouraged by community and school leaders, practitioners, policymakers, and funders, the School-Community Mapping Project

was formed to capture these lessons. This project, with funding from the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation, is a joint effort of the Institute for Educational Leadership and the National Center for Community Education, in partnership with the Center for Youth Development and Policy Research, and the Chapin Hall Center for Children at the University of Chicago.

What we learned draws on the experiences of a cross-section of 20 well-regarded school-community initiatives. Through surveys, interviews, and group conversations we hoped to: identify the major types, purposes, and strategies of school-community initiatives; explore the dynamics of implementing, sustaining, and expanding these initiatives across several key dimensions; encourage networks among new and existing initiatives; and recommend ways in which practitioners, policy-makers,

and funders can strengthen and sustain the field as a whole.

We started our research by defining school-community initiatives as simply as possible: as “intentional efforts 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.” These school-linked efforts have their roots in four broader reform and advocacy approaches:

- improved educational quality and academic outcomes for young people (School Reform);
- more efficient and effective health and social service delivery to meet the comprehensive needs of children and families (Services Reform);
- increased recognition of the developmental needs of young

people and the importance of building on their strengths (Youth Development); and

- expanded efforts to strengthen the human, social, and economic underpinnings of neighborhoods and communities (Community Development).

The largest percentages of the school-community initiatives we looked at cited services reform and youth development as their primary purposes, followed by school reform and community development. While most school-community initiatives are aligned more with one reform approach than another, a primary finding of the study is that most initiatives claimed their purposes and strategies have been influenced by *all* of them. Many are working to incorporate new elements without losing site of their original purpose.

What We've Learned and What Needs to Be Done

In our study, we zeroed in on nine key aspects of school-community initiatives which are most often asked about. Following are a few of our findings.

Initiation. Public sector leadership of large scale, often statewide strategies has helped move the concept of school-community initiatives well into the mainstream. The nonprofit private sector has introduced a steady infusion of new ideas and increased broad-based acceptance by preventing these initiatives from being written off as “just another government program.” Increased and continued involvement of *both* sectors is essential.

Governance. In our sample, primary oversight is largely community-based. Nearly half are overseen by collaborative bodies with about one-quarter led by school districts or

other agencies. However, day-to-day management – including implementing and coordinating activities, supervising staff, and evaluating and expanding program efforts – is much more school-centered. Parents, community members, providers, and school staff are most often involved in decision making at the site level, usually in an advisory role. The clear trend across the field is toward much greater community involvement in all aspects of decision making and an emphasis on building strong personal relationships.

Staffing. Nearly two-thirds of these school-community initiatives have a full-time coordinator at the site level responsible for implementing and coordinating activities. The majority of initiatives consider a full-time, on-site coordinator a necessity, although some have opted for part-time coordinators as a way to keep costs manageable while expanding the number of sites involved. In more than two-thirds of these initiatives, coordinators report to and are at least partially supervised by school principals – whether or not they are school district employees – however in the best of situations the principal and coordinator work as partners. A more typical relationship between initiative staff and schools is that of guest and host. As trust and effective working relationships grow and as school staff experience clear benefits, more equal partnerships develop.

Financing. Most school-community initiatives rely on a primary source of core cash funding to provide a significant portion of their operating costs and to ensure some degree of stability. State funds, nonprofit organizations (including United Way, universities

traditional service-delivery organizations, and foundations), and local general-purpose government are the three primary sources of this core support. The majority of initiatives, nearly 60%, provide an average site with \$100,000 or less in cash support each year. Local school districts are not a typical source of primary cash funding, though they are an important source of redirected and in-kind services. Multiple funding sources and heavy reliance on noncash support make it technically difficult and time-consuming for school-community initiatives to determine costs incurred, costs avoided, and benefits on a routine basis.

Activities. Most initiatives provide a broad set of activities connected to all four of the major approaches associated with school-community initiatives. Virtually every initiative provides tutoring and literacy services, parent education, and referral services, while activities related to housing and economic development are offered least. Field experience suggests that initiatives need time to experiment and to mature before they are flexible enough to expand and adapt their major purposes and strategies while staying true to a central mission.

Location. School-community initiatives have made commendable progress toward the vision of a “lighted schoolhouse” available 24-hours a day, year-round for people of all ages to learn, to recreate, and to solve common problems together. In the vast majority of initiatives, the bulk of activities take place on school grounds. But most initiatives also use community locations – churches, neighborhood centers, housing complexes – at

(see **Trends** on page 16)

Community for Learning: Connection with Community Services

JoAnn B. Manning, Laboratory for Student Success, and Lucy Rodriguez, Stetson Middle School

The effort by school communities to create educational opportunities for all students and to prepare them for the challenges that await them in the 21st century requires the best from all of us. However, the fragmented services-delivery system in place for serving children and families in the United States today is inadequate for meeting the physical, social, and learning needs of today's children and youth, especially those beset by significant adversities. Collaboration across health, education, and social services agencies, as well as between the public and private sectors, has become a necessity.

Federal Programs Connecting School, Family, and Community

During the past five years, community members, educators, and other service providers have begun many school-home-community programs. Some of these programs established school-linked, comprehensive service-delivery systems, while others adopted school-based, co-located, comprehensive services. Still others were designed to make community-based learning environments and resources such as libraries, museums, and recreational facilities available to children and families. Programs invited family involvement and regarded the family as a full partner necessary to the fulfillment of program goals. Regardless of their design, these programs harnessed the resources of school, family, and community to achieve their ends. Recently enacted federal policies, such as the Comprehensive

School Reform Demonstration initiative and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative, have advanced the coordination and integration of resources in a coherent manner, and have encouraged an end to separate projects that are "added on" to existing programs or projects in schools.

The Comprehensive School Reform Demonstration (CSRSD) program, new in 1998, is designed to help raise student achievement by assisting public schools across the country in implementing a comprehensive approach to school reform that is based on reliable research and effective practices, and includes an emphasis on basic academics and parental involvement. The focus of the CSRSD program is schoolwide change in schools where there is the greatest need to substantially improve student achievement. This initiative will help expand the quality and quantity of schoolwide reform efforts that enable all children, particularly low-achieving children, to meet challenging academic standards.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program was established by Congress to award grants to rural and inner-city public schools or consortia of schools to promote family-community-school cooperation to enable them to plan, implement, or expand projects that benefit the educational, health, social services, cultural, and recreational needs of the commu-

nity. In 1999, the program will provide nearly \$100 million to rural and inner-city public schools to address the educational needs of their communities after school, on weekends, and over the summers. The focus of this program is to provide expanded learning opportunities for participating children in a safe, drug-free, and supervised environment.

The Community for Learning Program

The Community for Learning (CFL) program was designed to serve as a services-delivery framework for providing more effective school responses to student diversity to ensure student learning success. At the core of CFL is a coordinated approach to services delivery that calls for a shared-responsibility approach to achieving student success by collaborative teams of teachers, parents, and community agencies. The fundamental question that CFL was designed to address is: "What conditions are required to cause dramatic improvements in the learning of children and youth in the nation's inner cities?"

The CFL program consists of seven major components, focusing on (a) the learning needs of students, (b) the organizational and administrative support requirements needed to achieve program implementation, and (c) the staff development needs of school personnel and related service providers. The components are: a site-specific implementation plan, a schoolwide organizational struc-

ture, a staff development plan, an instructional learning management system, an integrated assessment-instruction process, a school-family-community involvement plan, and a school-linked, comprehensive, coordinated health and human services delivery plan.

Implementation of the CFL program seeks: (a) improved achievement of each student, including and particularly those at the margins; (b) a teaching process and patterns of active learning that are consistent with the research base on effective practices; and (c) positive attitudes by students and the school staff toward their school and, most importantly, the expectation that every student has the capacity for educational success.

Findings from program implementation to date show that CFL students tend to have higher levels of aspiration for academic learning and better academic self-concepts than non-CFL students, and that CFL students outperform non-CFL students on math and reading achievement scores.

CFL Implementation in Stetson Middle School: A Case Study

Stetson Middle School is a Title I schoolwide project school in Philadelphia that has been characterized as the most turbulent middle school in the district.

As part of CFL, Stetson students are placed randomly into one of three vertically organized house structures, located on different school floors. The Red House, one of the three houses, has initiated all three components of the CFL program.

Stetson Middle School leadership and staff were early proponents of school-linked services,

and they looked to the CFL program to serve as a framework that addressed this need for a holistic approach to services. Initial implementation of the CFL program began during the 1992-93 school year. A pattern of increased attendance was observed during the initial two years of CFL program implementation. The student attendance rate was 75% in 1992-93 and 79% in 1993-94. By contrast the attendance rate for the Red House was 85% in 1992-93 and 86% in 1993-94.

Several innovative projects have been initiated to increase parent involvement in school activities at Stetson, including biweekly parent workshops on a variety of topics of concern to parents and the community; extension services by neighborhood agencies that provide family counseling, adult education, and job training; and social outings that include both parents and children, ranging from hayrides to museum trips to sporting events.

In addition, several strategies were developed in collaboration with the Philadelphia Free Library to encourage children and families to read. For example, acquiring a library card became easier, a book return system was established in the school, and the school became involved in the planning and support of local library activities and events. Four focus areas – academic, self-responsibility, resiliency, and health – were identified, and projects were categorized as having one to all four of these focus areas.

Findings on Student Outcomes

Because of the unique demographics of Stetson, no

comparison middle school could be identified. However, since not all of the houses at Stetson participated in program implementation during the two initial CFL program implementation years, program versus nonprogram comparisons were carried out to determine program impact.

Student Perceptions of Their Classroom/School Environment

MANOVA (multivariate analysis of variance) revealed significant differences in the students' overall perceptions of their classroom/school learning environments. Students in the Red House showed more positive perceptions on 9 of the 11 subscales. Students felt that their instructional/learning environments were more multicultural, social, active, nontraditional, and interdisciplinary. According to the students, classroom environments offered more affiliation, guidance, teacher support, and participation. In addition, they indicated a higher rate of constructive feedback, higher student aspirations, more positive self-concepts, and a clearer sense of the rules governing class and school learning environments.

Student Achievement

Overall, the mean reading and math achievement scores of the students in the Red House were found to be slightly higher (although not statistically significant) than the mean scores of the rest of the school. It is of interest to note the program's positive impact on students in the bottom and top 20% of the achievement distribution. For both program implementation years, less than 20% of students in the Red House scored in the bottom 20% of the achievement distribution of

(see CFL on page 16)

Schools, Community-Based Interventions, and Children's Learning and Development: What's the Connect?

Katherine K. Merseth, Lisbeth B. Schorr, and Richard F. Elmore, Harvard Project on Schooling and Children

Policymakers, school board members, educational practitioners, social service providers, child and youth advocates, and community activists might agree on their goals for children: that they be literate, learn to think critically and make informed decisions, be able to contribute to their families and communities, hold clear values, and engage the world in a way that enables them to realize their full potential. But once the topic shifts to action plans to achieve those agreed-upon outcomes and how to measure them – and to the allocation of resources, responsibilities, and priorities – these same rational and reasoned professionals and advocates often disagree, sometimes vehemently. These differing perceptions not only compete with each other but also threaten to undermine one another, rather than enhance the collective effectiveness of improving children's outcomes.

Efforts designed to strengthen school- and community-based interventions in the hope of improving educational achievement and other important results for children are reaching historic proportions. These activities seem to reflect wide accord on several characteristics of the problem. First, most informed observers agree that our current schools and school systems are not well positioned to meet the challenge of educating all American children at the high levels required by a 21st century global economy and society. Second, knowledgeable policymakers, social reformers,

and educators note with alarm that the individual schools having the most difficult time meeting rising expectations are those that serve children who are "at risk," where the children live in persistent and concentrated poverty, with high incidences of ill health, inadequate housing, unemployment, crime, fractured families, substance abuse, and alienation. And, finally, regardless of one's approach to the problem, all those who work with children seem to agree on the urgency of the situation.

Given this urgency and the many opportunities to intervene, the most obvious solution would seem to be that all with a stake in children's successful transition to adulthood should take action in each of their respective domains. However, as reformers move from demonstrating that improved outcomes are possible within each of these arenas to efforts intended to affect more than a single school or neighborhood, they come up against the real-world constraints of limited resources and the reality that a reform in one sector may impede or work at cross-purposes to a reform in another.

Approaches to Reform

In trying to puzzle out some of the important questions of resource allocation, priority setting, and the distribution of responsibilities, it is stunning how little is known about the comparative impact of the many varied strategies now in use. The different approaches seem to derive less from experience and empirical data, and more from various

reformers' backgrounds, affiliations, and ideology. At the risk of overstating differences, we hope to illustrate why the community-schools people, the social service reformers, the community builders, the child and youth development advocates, and the school reformers often seem like people from different regions of the country, each speaking the same language, but in a unique dialect.

The Community Schools Voice. The leaders of the "community schools movement" believe that, in populations of disadvantaged students, school achievement will not improve, nor will broader goals valued by many citizens be reached, in the absence of significant improvements in the accessibility of effective services and of family and community support for school learning. Some believe that all schools should become "full-service community schools" in which school administrators and program coordinators jointly administer the delivery of quality education and the health, social, and cultural services required in the community. The Emerging Coalition for Community Schools envisions schools that increase children's well-being by using five essential and connected strategies: quality education, youth development, family involvement, community development, and family support (with the last defined as coordinated health, mental health, and social services, parent education, and leadership development). The argument for this position rests on the belief that, if the noneducational needs that

poor children bring into the classroom go unaddressed, the children will not succeed at school no matter how effective the instruction.

The Social Service Voice.

Social service reformers are enthusiastic supporters of placing social services at the school site and have become, in many instances, the backbone of the community schools movement. They point out that school buildings and grounds are often the only functioning facility with an avowed public purpose remaining in a depleted neighborhood. They have an intense interest in finding ways to use school buildings during nonschool hours in order to make the schools the physical centers for providing the services and supports that might otherwise be unavailable or inaccessible.

The Community Builder Voice.

Leaders of community revitalization efforts see schools as an engine to build community cohesion and social capital to improve outcomes for children growing up in depleted neighborhoods. Some recent research supports a greater use of schools as the hub for rebuilding communities and suggests that children fare far better in neighborhoods rich in shared attitudes, norms, and values that make up social capital, and that social capital grows best through deliberate efforts. One review of urban school reform strategies concludes that the crisis of urban education can only be successfully addressed by renewing the school-community link.

Youth and Child Development Perspective. An additional argument for broadening the mission and activity of the schools comes out of the traditions of youth and child development and experiential learning. Advocates who would relate “primary services” – such as

Boys and Girls Clubs, Little Leagues, and church choirs, designed to engage young adolescents – more closely to schools believe that these services offer unique opportunities for the development of more “authentic and supportive relationships” between adults and youngsters than is characteristic of schools. They also believe that greater learning is possible by offering hands-on opportunities to apply and develop academic skills in real-world settings.

The School Reform Voice.

Many education reformers agree with the contention of service reformers, community builders, and youth development advocates, that school success depends on improvement in the condition of children, families, and neighborhoods. But other school reformers, while acknowledging that children from disadvantaged families and neighborhoods are likely to have multiple unmet needs, insist that efforts to meet these needs must not interfere with the schools’ primary academic mission. The Consortium for Policy Research in Education (CPRE), for example, contends that schools and school systems can achieve dramatic and sustained successes with disadvantaged students when they put a laser-like focus on academic learning. This contention grows from the belief that, for populations of disadvantaged students, school achievement will not improve in the absence of significant improvements in classroom instruction, which is most likely achieved in schools and school districts that adopt a school ethos that clearly – some would say exclusively – focuses on academic achievement.

Can parallel reform efforts aimed at improved services and supports, at youth and child

development, and at community revitalization coexist, interact, and enhance those activities targeted at improved academic instruction? Indeed, there are many reformers who take a BOTH-AND position, contending that, in populations of disadvantaged students, school achievement will not significantly improve in the absence of BOTH better classroom instruction AND enhanced availability and accessibility of effective services, family and community support for school learning, community cohesion, and growth in social capital.

Policy Implications

Rather than argue questions about reform ideologically, reformers and researchers should try to shed some light on how competing strategies actually link to outcomes by systematic observation and analysis of the differential impact of a variety of strategies. If the empirical data support our hypotheses that school-based outcomes – including attendance, school completion, and school achievement – are most likely to improve when the school and school district put their highest priority on improving instruction, and that the non-academic services are best accomplished when community-based organizations and agencies take responsibility for initiating, organizing, and sustaining the needed services and supports, then several policy and practice implications become clear:

- Community-based organizations and agencies other than schools should take primary responsibility for organizing and sustaining the services and supports needed to bolster schools and school learning.

(see **Schools** on page 17)

Furthering Education: The Relationship of Schools and Other Organizations

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Children today face markedly enhanced expectations and substantial challenges in meeting them. For the first time, children have to develop a mix of complex intellectual and interpersonal competencies in order to find productive employment in an information economy and to contribute to the functioning of a democratic society and of communities within it.

At the same time, children are confronted with increased challenges that often impede learning and development. The changing structure and diminished stability of families, along with patterns of parent employment, translate into fewer, less consistently available resources and supports for children. And compared with any other age group, a greater percentage of children are living in poverty and facing the obstacles to daily life and development that poverty imposes.

Related expectations and challenges confront the institutions with a stake in children. Beyond attendance, public schools in the United States are now accountable for increasing the achievement of all students. Schools are also expected to deal with, or succeed despite, the challenges in children's lives that accompany them into the classroom. Other sectors serving children, including health care and social services, are also experiencing substantial and sustained pressure, internal and public, to function more effectively. In many cases, this is accompanied by, or even seen to depend on, movement toward a coordinated, cross-sector response to children's needs.

To meet this complex set of conditions, public policies and public pressures have stimulated an increasing number and variety of alliances among schools and other organizations. With such increasingly familiar names as full service schools, community schools, and school-business partnerships, ever greater numbers of schools are creating formal connections with other organizations, including health and social service agencies, community-based organizations, civic and religious groups, businesses, and others. Schools are serving as sites for the delivery of integrated services; as stimulants, lending their leadership and resources to initiatives on behalf of children, families, and the larger community; and as community institutions that are – or are being pressured to be – both respectful of and responsive to the perspectives of local interests and actors.

Despite increasing investments in school-organization connections, little is known about the range of purposes for which they are being made, the mix of organizations involved, the trajectories along which they develop, or their actual as compared to their intended effects. Connections between schools and other organizations are thus being formed at a rate that has caused action on them to outstrip knowledge about them.

Our research on school connections is anchored in our interest in understanding the distribution of social responsibility

for the learning and development of children as it is now shared among schools and other organizations and as it might be. By social responsibility we mean how each of the institutions and organizations in children's lives is accountable for contributing to their development, how much separate institutions – families, schools, faith-based organizations, health and social service providers, businesses, and others – are expected to enhance particular aspects of children's learning and development, and how they are, or should be, responsible for extending the opportunities for learning and development beyond these limits.

It might appear that there is a straightforward division of responsibility for children in our society, with families having responsibility for caring for children and youth, schools for their education, services for addressing their problems, and businesses for hiring them. But these distinctions are not so clear in reality. Nor is it clear that they should be, as each of these institutions can and often do fulfill a range of these responsibilities. In this research, connections provide a lens for examining how this responsibility is being distributed and with what benefits for children. An overarching question informing this study is what mix of contributions best leverages the resources of each of the institutions and organizations

in children's lives and which is the optimal mix for the learning and development of children.

Over the last two years, we have examined the range of connections forged between urban public schools and the organizations around them. By a "connection," we mean an intentional and ongoing relationship between a school and one or more external organizations designed to directly or indirectly enhance children's learning and development or address obstacles that impede it. To study more interactive connections, we drew some boundaries around the connections of interest. Thus, we learned more intensively about connections in which schools and other organizations actively work together, in which more than information is exchanged or equipment donated.

Because our intention was to illuminate the multiple ways in which schools and other organizations are working together, we set out to identify the broadest possible range of these relationships. Toward this end, we identified and have learned about 249 school connections and intensively studied 60 of them, distilling the principal purposes and patterns that distinguish them, tracing their origins and development, and examining what is known about what they achieve.

In this research we have studied what connections provide to individuals, what is exchanged among organizations, and what is offered to and from communities and schools.

Through connections, individuals have access to provisions of two kinds: services designed to alleviate or resolve problems and developmental opportunities that aim to develop or extend a range of

individual competencies. Outside organizations operating in schools provide services to students, parents, and other residents. These services include health care, social services like counseling, and assistance with basic needs like food, clothing, and shelter. Schools and other organizations collaborate to provide developmental opportunities that aim to build individual competencies including academic skills; personal, social, and civic competencies; vocational preparation; and creative expression.

In addition to the provisions offered to individuals, all connections also involve the exchange of a range of resources among organizations. These include physical resources such as access to space, equipment, and supplies; program resources such as curriculum and training; and human resources such as individuals from one organization working with or in another.

Connections can also involve provisions to and from communities and schools. Opening school buildings for the programs of local organizations, and the networking among individuals who participate in them, is a pervasive aspect of most connections. Fewer connections also provide activities in which schools and other organizations are involved in strategically promoting a particular aspect of community development such as economic support (e.g., through local employment and purchasing), physical development (e.g., of housing, parks, play spaces, and other aspects of the physical infrastructure), and community building (e.g., mobilizing community residents around issues facing the community). Finally we found just a few connections that see the

neighborhood around the school as an intentional locus of action, seeking contributions from local organizations and individuals toward a specific learning goal for children, like ensuring that all students read at grade level by third grade.

In looking at what is given and gained among schools and other organizations, we found that schools are involved in connections with external organizations that address the full range of their functions. An array of organizations is engaged in assisting in the operation of schools, in improving the schools' curriculum, and in directly teaching students. We also found that schools are moving beyond their usual boundaries to use the facilities and staffs of other organizations as sites for and sources of teaching and learning. However, by and large, we did not find exchanges of like kind in the other direction. What schools principally provide in these connections is use of their space and, through it, access to children, rather than direct involvement in the programs of other organizations or in efforts to link the content of these programs with the curriculum of the schools.

Beyond describing the full range of existing school connections, we focused on a substantive area not much examined in other work to date: the dynamic character of these connections. While we initially expected to find established, more or less static models of school connections, we found, instead, that one of the principal characteristics of

(see **Furthering** on page 17)

Lessons from the Evaluation of New Jersey's School-Based Youth Services Program

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For many early advocates of school-linked services and full-service schools, the primary rationale for these arrangements was nonacademic: to address the fragmentation of and inadequate access to important services for children in need. Through using the school as a satellite location, service providers (whether health, mental health, or employment preparation) could furnish students with an integrated array of services in one easy-to-reach location.

However, as school-linked services and community-school collaborations have increased, expectations have grown that these service arrangements can address noneducational problems, usually associated with poverty, that act as barriers to student learning. As a result, school-linked programs face increased demands to produce educational outcomes as the pressure intensifies for schools to meet more stringent performance standards.

This paper will use the evaluation of one of the earliest school-linked service integration programs – the New Jersey School-Based Youth Services Program (SBYSP) – to explore the potential benefits and challenges of expecting educational outcomes from service-focused school-community collaborations.

The School-Based Youth Services Program

In 1987, the New Jersey Department of Human Services

initiated the School-Based program, the first statewide initiative in the country to integrate a range of services for adolescents in one location at or near schools.

By creating partnerships between schools and community agencies, the program sought to provide young people with the services and supports they needed to navigate the adolescent years and “complete their education, obtain skills leading to employment or additional education, and lead a mentally and physically healthy life.”

With ongoing help from a School-Based support team in the state department of human services, the projects began their first full year of operation in 1988 in 29 New Jersey communities. As an early model of service integration, the program has won prestigious national awards for excellence in public policy.

The basic SBYSP model has five core areas of activities and services: recreation, health, mental health, employment counseling and preparation, and substance abuse treatment and prevention.

As a whole, SBYSP services and activities, offered year-round, are designed to treat existing problems, prevent the emergence of negative youth behaviors, and promote positive youth development.

In 1995, the Academy for Educational Development (AED), an educational evaluation and technical assistance organization, was selected to conduct an evaluation of SBYSP, including an outcome-based study of the program at six sites, designed to increase

understanding of how individual projects operate and their impact on the young people who use them. The effort that SBYSP projects invest in developing activities in collaboration with school staff has helped many projects become integrated into the life of the school, avoiding the “we-they” stance that sometimes characterizes school-community collaborations in their early stages.

The most frequent activities that School-Based staff take part in include: participating on numerous school committees (including the principal's cabinet, the child-study and crisis management teams, and the conflict resolution and school safety committees); planning and executing school events (such as freshman orientation activities, alcohol- and drug-free post-prom and graduation parties, and food drives); conducting classes, workshops, and in-service sessions for both students and teachers (on topics such as the negative impact of stereotyping, contraception, AIDS, depression, and sexual harassment); advocating for and supporting special groups of students (such as special education students and teen parents, including on-site child care); and providing substance abuse prevention and crisis management activities.

The arena in which most School-Based projects work is carefully circumscribed by the promise made at the program's initiation that the program would not do anything the school could or should be doing. In addition,

SBYSP directors often have more than enough to do just fulfilling their central mission: helping individual students.

Despite this limitation, the positive impact of SBYSP projects on the school is evident at many sites. Teachers interviewed during visits to projects were quick to express appreciation for the counseling available to students and relief that there was somewhere to send students in difficulty, while in the past the only recourse was often punitive.

Teachers and administrators also recognized that School-Based's ability to meet students' personal needs helped free up both teachers' and students' attention and energy for teaching and learning.

Findings from the Outcome-Based Study

To measure the outcomes that students derive from participation in SBYSP activities and/or use of SBYSP services, AED has followed for two years the cohort of students who entered ninth grade in September 1996. Students completed specially designed confidential surveys at three points (fall 1996, late spring 1997, and late spring 1998), and AED collected school data and tracked a small sample of students from each school via individual interviews and focus groups. Using the quantitative data, we were able to compare the outcomes for students who had taken advantage of SBYSP to those who had not, controlling for initial differences in students' behavior, background, and situational characteristics. A total of 1,509 youth (84% of the cohort) responded to the baseline survey, a total of 1,205 students took the follow-up survey, and a total of 922 students took both. The results reported below are based

on those 922 students who took both. Of the 922, a total of 402 (44%) students had used an SBYSP service or participated in an SBYSP activity at some point during their first or second year in high school, and a total of 520 (56%) had not. The analysis of the baseline verifies what the practitioners had long suspected: the students they served on a regular basis were at greater risk than the rest of the student body. Users reported much higher levels of family stress, including divorce, residence in unsafe neighborhoods, frequent moving, and financial, drug, and alcohol problems. Fewer users than nonusers affirmed their intention to avoid pregnancy during high school, while more users than nonusers reported that they had already had sexual intercourse. More users than nonusers reported frequent feelings of unhappiness, sadness, depression, tension, being worried, anger, and destructiveness. More users than nonusers reported that they had been involved in violent behavior, and substantially more users than nonusers reported that they had experimented with cigarettes, alcohol, or marijuana in the two months prior to the survey.

Overall, the responses to the baseline survey clearly demonstrated that SBYSP is attracting those students most in need of assistance if they are to avoid more serious problems in both personal and educational domains.

Responses to the follow-up survey, administered at the end of the second year in high school, showed an overall worsening pattern for all students – though, in many outcome areas, without controlling for initial differences, SBYSP users appeared to lose more ground than nonusers. This is

not surprising, considering SBYSP users were more at risk and engaged in more risky behavior than nonusers at the baseline survey. Despite this, users appeared to make gains compared with nonusers in a few areas. Specifically, users showed greater improvement from the baseline to the follow-up survey than nonusers in average daily attendance, grade-point average, being sent to the office for discipline, multiple suspensions, and use of tobacco and alcohol.

Controlling for baseline differences between users and nonusers revealed that participation in SBYSP reduced the gap between the two groups with positive effects on 31 of 37 outcomes and statistically significant positive effects on: damaging, destroying, or marking up somebody else's property on purpose; using contraceptives to prevent pregnancy; using condoms for STD prevention; smoking cigarettes; having trouble going to sleep or staying asleep; feeling angry and destructive; worrying too much about things; feeling unhappy, sad, or depressed; and thinking about killing oneself.

Users also showed improvements in the areas of expressing higher educational aspirations and accumulating credits toward graduation. The results suggest that those students who took advantage of SBYSP services and activities did indeed benefit from them in quite important ways that reduce their risks of a range of negative outcomes and increase the probability of positive outcomes.

The lack of broader educational outcomes for SBYSP is not

(see **Lessons** on page 18)

State Education Agency Support for School-Community Collaboration in the Mid-Atlantic States

Shelly Hara, Council of Chief State School Officers, with William Boyd, Laboratory for Student Success

Schools can no longer afford to operate in isolation as they work to guarantee educational success and contribute to the overall well-being of children and families and the communities in which they live. School-linked and school-based health and human services programs have sprung up around the country in response to the many pressing problems facing children and youth in our schools today. Such programs seek to build connecting mechanisms for effective communication, coordinated service delivery, and more efficient mobilization of community resources. The goal is to play a role in strengthening families and communities, while working to reduce and prevent barriers to school success and healthy development, such as dropping out of school, substance abuse, juvenile delinquency, and teen pregnancy.

Schools are also involving and reaching out to parents, community organizations, and businesses to improve student achievement, transform themselves into more vital and effective learning communities, and better meet the special educational needs of their students. They do this by involving community partners in decision-making and school-improvement plans and by bringing additional supportive services onto school campuses.

State education agencies play a role in supporting many of these school-community collaborations, but the nature of state involvement in local efforts varies

depending on how closely the goals of those efforts are connected to the mission of the state education agency, the nature of the funding, and who or what entity has programmatic responsibility. At the same time, at the state level, state education agencies can work alongside other state agencies as partners in larger, more comprehensive efforts to improve services and supports for children and families.

The mid-Atlantic states of Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania are no exception. This paper examines the role of state education agencies in these four states in supporting school-community collaborations. The findings are based on site visits and interviews conducted in 1996-97 with state education agency staff and staff representing other state agencies that address the needs of children and families.

School-Community Collaboration

A number of factors set the context for collaboration, and make it difficult to generalize about the nature of support for school-community collaboration across states. These factors include:

- *state context* – including geographic size, population, history, industry and economy, and politics;
- *policy context* – including the extent to which local, state, and federal programs promote collaboration and more comprehensive community-based approaches to serving children

and families, and the amount of flexibility they allow;

- *political factors* – encompassing turnover in leaders, anti-government sentiment, and the public's general dissatisfaction with public schools and increased demands for accountability;
- *the changing role of the state education agency* – encompassing a growing tension between adherents of schools needing to attend to the holistic needs of children and families and those believing the push for vouchers, school choice, etc., requires a strict focus on academic achievement only, and the implications of these broad education missions for state education staff support and enforcement roles; and
- *the definition of collaboration* – which varies by community in terms of stakeholders involved and what level of commitment is required of stakeholders.

State education agencies vary in their support of school-community collaboration in the degree to which they view collaborative activities as integral to their mission of ensuring student success. Most have initiated programs that involve collaboration between educators and service providers or partnerships between schools and outside organizations or parents. These programs run the gamut and include, but are not limited to,

prekindergarten programs, teen-pregnancy-prevention initiatives, school-based or school-linked health centers, family service/resource centers, discipline or violence prevention programs, family-involvement initiatives, student-assistance programs, and school-to-career programs. Each of the mid-Atlantic states has some form of cross-agency collaborative activity focusing on children and families. Many state education agency staff participate in numerous interdepartmental working groups and task forces that may include some outside state government, such as university researchers or non-profit organizations.

State education agencies may support or encourage school-community collaboration as a part of a school improvement effort. In some cases, the state education agency may require that low-performing schools adopt an improvement plan that includes providing supportive services for students and families. Increasingly, schools are working with community partners and engaging parents in their efforts to improve student achievement.

State agencies vary in size and in the number of bureaucratic layers that exist within them, and therefore vary as to the ease with which collaboration is possible. In spite of the fact that state education agencies are increasingly involved in collaboration, they continue to be organized or staffed around specific federal programs and funding streams, state-run programs, or programs that utilize a combination of state and federal funds.

The funding streams that support school-community

collaboration include, among others, Compensatory Education, Special Education, Safe and Drug-free Schools, and School-to-Work. In each of the mid-Atlantic states, the bulk of collaborative activities and staff participating in them resides in a single branch of the state education agency.

Having an individual or unit that works solely on interagency initiatives may help to create the expectation of interagency cooperation or collaboration for the state education agency, but it also may allow those outside these units to assume that they do not have to participate in such activities.

Challenges and Barriers to School-Community Collaboration

While state education staff generally agree that collaboration is the requirement of the day, there are still many barriers and challenges to be overcome, including:

Bureaucratic and Cultural Differences Between Education and Collaborating Agencies. Interviewees cited a number of practical barriers that evolved from bureaucratic and cultural differences among agencies and service sectors. Those involved in collaborative efforts, from state education agency staff to school personnel to service providers, lack a common language with which to work together. "Turfism" – that is, agencies wanting to protect their own service domains and funding – and duplication of services due to turfism were also commonly cited as barriers.

Pressure on Educators to Be Accountable for Discrete

Educational Results. State education agency staff find it difficult to address the extra-educational needs of students while juggling the many demands of education reform, including standards and assessment, special education, state-takeover schools, and other politicized and public issues such as violence in schools, school choice, and desegregation.

Collaboration Takes Time, Money, and Frequent Contact to Build Working Relationships. In light of recent downsizing, many state education agency personnel believe their departments are understaffed, and collaborative responsibilities are often undertaken as additional work beyond regular duties. While building relationships is key to any collaborative effort, turnover among collaborative partners requires constant reeducation and time to build new relationships. Because it may take some time for an initiative to show results, partners can have difficulty sustaining it through a change in leadership.

Changing and Balancing Roles. Education maintains a strong history of local control with formal governance bodies in place, while health and human services agencies increasingly are devolving authority once held at the federal and state levels to the local level. This growing emphasis on local governance requires state education agency staff to work harder at maintaining a balance between providing some oversight while respecting local authority and decision making.

(see **State** on page 18)

Enhancing Federal Support for Connecting Educational Improvement Strategies and Collaborative Services

Meredith I. Honig, Stanford University and Jeanne D. Jehl, Consultant

Educators – particularly those working in high-poverty, urban neighborhoods – increasingly recognize that students’ opportunities to learn may be enhanced by various partnerships between schools and public and private youth-serving agencies in their neighborhoods (e.g., social services agencies, Boys and Girls Clubs).

While school-community partnerships have long traditions in many cities and neighborhoods, the federal policy context in which these initiatives operate has changed markedly over the past 10 to 15 years. Particularly in education, federal funding sources place fewer restrictions on planning, administration, and use of federal funds – flexibility that schools and school districts could use for school-community partnerships. An increasing number of programs require some participation by agencies and individuals outside schools (e.g., youth organizations, social service providers, parents) in planning for and implementing various education reform strategies.

In this paper, we illustrate that recent federal policy developments in education suggest important opportunities for schools, school districts, and states to enhance school-community collaboration for improved student learning and a growing capacity at the federal level to support it. We argue, however, that these developments may be limited in fundamental ways. We conclude with several recommendations for how the U.S. Department of Education (ED) in particular can move beyond

waivers and build on its growing capacity to support such collaboration.

Defining School-Community Connections for Improved Student Learning

School-community collaboration comes in many forms. What does school-community collaboration look like – how is it designed, how does it operate, what are youths’ experiences at such sites day-to-day – when it improves youths’ learning specifically? Individual studies and syntheses of research suggest that many partnerships between schools and community agencies generally focus on improving learning outcomes as one of their many goals. When they do focus on learning, they generally aim to *remove barriers* to youths’ learning by improving other outcomes such as health and basic needs, thereby enabling students to “really learn” and teachers to “really teach” – though research to date does not support the assumption that addressing students’ nonacademic needs by itself will lead to improvements in academic measures. School-community sites must proactively *enable* learning, both in and out of school.

One primary goal of a recent research review by Honig, Kahne, and McLaughlin was to highlight that removing barriers to learning does not by itself mean that learning is enabled. They developed a working definition of how school-community collaboration may relate to learning outcomes. Their research yielded the following definition of “school-community connections for opportunity to learn” that addresses both barriers to learning and factors that enable it.

Accordingly, this paper is concerned with how federal policy can support initiatives that can be described as follows.

School-community connections for improved student learning are:

- focused on “whole youth”
- focused on all youth
- strengths-based/pro-social
- responsive to specific youth and neighborhoods
- youth-centered, not organization-centered
- developmental

Current Federal Policy Efforts

The review by Honig, Kahne, and McLaughlin suggests that school-community connections is a distinct type of policy problem that may be characterized by the following features and challenges:

- The framing of the problem matters significantly to how we think about possible solutions.
- Supportive policy advances a set of principles of best practice.
- Implementation of principles of best practice requires new supports and roles throughout the policy system.

Our analysis suggests that a policy approach in support of school-community connections should frame the need for school-community connections around enabling learning, and should focus on principles of best practice. Beyond that, it suggests that supportive policy goes beyond formal policy to include a range of supports to enable practice at school-community sites.

While the scope and substance of efforts to use policy to support school-community collaboration vary greatly, policymakers at the federal and state levels have generally used three types of policy strategies to facilitate connections between schools and communities: (1) use of the bully pulpit, resource centers, and other vehicles outside the formal policy-making process to advocate for or otherwise steer schools and school districts toward school-community collaboration; (2) new funds for collaboration; and (3) waivers and regulatory relief.

Through these approaches, ED calls attention to the importance of school-community connections to achieve the broad purposes of schooling. But the following observations suggest that the current federal provisions will continue to tinker only at the margins of schools and school districts without a stronger and broader frame around enabling learning, enhanced funding for collaborative work, and support to local and state educational agencies in using the new flexibility to expand school-community collaboration for learning.

- *Federal provisions may not frame the need for connections around enabling learning or adequate conceptions of when and where learning takes place.*

Efforts to use federal policy to facilitate school-community connections have emphasized three roles for “community” with regard to learning: (1) youth organizations, service providers, and others – particularly when linked with schools – can improve the safety, health, and social and emotional status of youth so that they might come

to school more ready to learn; (2) these organizations can extend academic time into after-school hours; and (3) other federal efforts involve parents in planning and reviewing the use of funds, determining content and performance standards, and otherwise participating in various aspects of school governance. These roles for community signal that ED has begun to take an important leadership role in focusing attention on the significance of youths’ time and resources out of school on their performance in school, and on the fact that schools may have partners in their neighborhoods for realizing the broad purposes of schooling. Beyond that, research has found that youth organizations themselves provide essential settings for learning and for building the skills and competencies necessary for school success. Such conceptions of what learning is, where learning takes place, and the types of experiences that may prepare youth to engage in school generally have not framed the purpose, design, or implementation of ED’s collaborative programs.

- *Federal provisions may not provide schools, school districts, and state educational agencies with adequate incentives for using, or signals that they can and should use, these waiver provisions to initiate and implement school-community connections.*

There is little evidence to

date that the availability of waivers has meant that they have been sought and/or used to initiate changes in schools or in the relationship between schools and community agencies. Applying for federal waivers is a time-consuming and often difficult process that can require technical knowledge of federal, state, and local educational programs and education codes and laws.

- *Just because schools, school districts, and states have new opportunities for collaboration through waivers and discretionary grants, this does not mean they will have the capacity or the readiness necessary to use them to initiate and enhance school-community collaboration that improves student learning.*

By design, waivers and discretionary grant programs place the onus for devising reforms and identifying, applying for, and managing appropriate waivers on local agencies – usually school districts and sometimes schools. The administrative apparatus and knowledge necessary to apply for waivers and use discretionary grant programs for the essentially entrepreneurial work of school-community collaboration may simply not exist in most school districts. The General Accounting Office found that “although information-related issues are very important to school district officials, the recent flexibility initiatives increase the amount of information districts need, rather than simplifying or streamlining information on federal requirements.”

(see **Enhancing** on page 19)

Trends

(continued from page 3)

least sometimes. Every initiative provides a range of after-school activities, programming continues into the evening hours in about two-thirds of the initiatives, and just over 30% conduct weekend activities.

Participation. All initiatives are focused on young people, but in most initiatives the majority of activities involve parents and family members as well. In most cases, anyone who lives in the neighborhood or district surrounding each site is welcome to participate in at least some of its activities. Although expensive services like case management, health care, and mental health counseling are usually targeted at high-risk groups, the direction within the field is toward making activities universally available to the entire community.

Accountability. In most school-community initiatives, results-based accountability is still in its beginning stages. Much more needs to be learned about what initiatives are accomplishing, for whom, under what conditions, and at what cost. Substantial research efforts conducted by a variety of outside evaluators are currently taking place in several of these initiatives.

Technical Assistance. Every initiative we studied has benefited from an available source of technical assistance. Nearly 90% were interested in related technical areas: designing results and accountability systems, and developing long-range funding. An equal percentage also wanted help in engaging public support, while over 80% wanted help building parent participation and professional development.

Recommendations

A variety of recommendations flow from our study's findings, including:

- intensified involvement of the private sector in the creation, oversight, and management of school-community initiatives to ensure the field's diversity, innovation, and broad-based acceptability.
- expanded public-sector leadership at all levels of government to provide incentives and support for increasing numbers of local efforts to cover start-up costs, provide sustained core community initiatives at levels needed to reach large numbers of children.
- expanded development of community-based collaborative bodies to provide oversight, ensure complementarity among separate-but-related reform efforts, strengthen public understanding, and formulate sustainable financing strategies.
- organizing site selection and expansion plans around school clusters that include elementary, middle, and secondary schools to ensure services, supports, and opportunities appropriate to all age groups, including older adolescents.
- more activities during underserved times by increasing the location of activities at community-based locations, especially during weekends.
- substantial and long-term technical assistance from all levels of government and the philanthropic community focused especially on helping initiatives and sites work with key state and local partners to develop the key elements of a results-based accountability system.
- a comprehensive range of training and technical assistance to help initiatives develop purposeful and

coherent ways of integrating purposes, strategies, and activities across services and reform approaches.

- increased communication, peer-to-peer technical assistance, and networking among initiatives and sites to increase the rate at which communities can learn from and assist each other.

With additional support from funders, more targeted training and technical assistance, and the "relentlessness and passion" that characterize every one of the initiatives in this study, schools and communities will continue to transform themselves, enrich young people's lives, and strengthen our collective future. ☘

CFL

(continued from page 5)

Stetson in reading and math, and a larger percentage of Red House students than non-Red House students scored at the top 20% of the achievement distribution of Stetson in both reading and math.

Long-term Program Impact

Findings from a follow-up study of students who were in the CFL program at Stetson Middle School who then attended the comprehensive high school that serves Stetson students and other feeder middle schools in the neighborhood show a long-term impact of the CFL program on student achievement. Although the CFL program was not implemented in that particular high school, students who participated in the CFL program in their middle-school years were able to maintain the positive outcomes of the CFL program in high school.

CFL students showed a significantly lower high-school dropout rate (19%) than their peers in the same high school (60%); and 48% of the CFL eleventh-graders, compared to only 26% of non-CFL eleventh-graders, were performing at grade level.

Conclusion

The CFL program represents one attempt to find ways to reduce the co-occurring risks that surround many children and families; it provides a powerful instructional program that draws on multiple learning environments and is supported by a comprehensive services-delivery system. Although students' academic accomplishments are central to the program's success, school, family, and community resources are also invested in meeting a variety of other goals. As a site-based program, it is sensitive to the needs and preferences of students, the local neighborhood, and the school staff. It employs a program of staff development that is data-driven. Instruction in the CFL program relies on research-based, effective practices. Most importantly, it provides for collaboration among parents, community members, and teachers in harnessing resources to promote educational resilience and student learning. As a next step, we need to develop a knowledge base on how to expand what works at the school level to a system-wide reform effort to achieve the ultimate goal of establishing comprehensive school reform that is feasible and sustainable. ☞

Schools

(continued from page 7)

- Schools should take responsibility for their contribution to improved services and supports at the school-community intersect by putting their facilities at the disposal of community-based organizations during nonschool hours and providing school personnel with the training to enable them to make optimum use of nonacademic services and supports.
- Schools should invite parents and other community members and stakeholders to hold the school accountable for the achievement of their academic priorities.

As the various groups of school reformers, child and family advocates, community builders, and social service providers work to make the world a better place for children, it is worth remembering our common language and common purpose. Each group sincerely seeks to improve the world of the child and each group possesses a unique set of skills, capacities, and understandings that are central to the task at hand. What remains is for everyone to enter into this task with a strong commitment to shared goals, and to acting on an ever-deeper understanding of "what works." ☞

Furthering

(continued from page 9)

connections is their changing nature over time. As we traced their origins and trajectories, we identified factors that appear to affect the development of connections and what they are able to achieve. These factors include the

competence of the participating organizations and the formation of relationships among staff in them.

This research illuminates what appear to be both notable benefits and significant costs associated with school connections. The benefits correspond, for the most part, to the purposes for which connections are made. These include increasing the resources and perspectives available to support children's learning and development, and seeking to reduce the obstacles to learning and development presented by the problems affecting children and families, as well as those confronting schools and other organizations.

There are also significant costs associated with these arrangements, among them the substantial drain on time, attention, and other organizational resources they require, and the potential for distraction from an organization's core mission, from classroom teaching and learning in the case of schools.

In concluding, we analyze implications associated with the rapid spread of this approach to serving children and suggest ways to consider altering or expanding connections in order to increase reciprocity among schools and other organizations – not on the grounds of fairness, but with an eye toward enhancing the benefits for children. We also raise the importance of broadening the policy debate to consider alternatives to these tightly coupled connections, both to maximize the educational opportunities and problem-solving resources for children across schools and other organizations,

and to increase the synergy among the organizations involved. These kinds of alternatives include: (1) strategies that facilitate and credit young people for learning that takes place in schools and other organizations, (2) approaches that take into account the nature and variety of learning opportunities in schools and other organizations, and (3) ways like the development of forums – councils, associations, networks – that can facilitate less formal and more flexible relationships among organizations.

Finally, we raise questions about what more needs to be known – particularly about the impacts of connections – to inform effective policy and action. Too much weight now rests on connections with too little known about their impacts, first and foremost for children, for the organizations involved, and for the communities in which they are located.

Given the challenges facing children and the institutions that serve them, better understanding of connection impacts is critically needed as ever greater investments of limited resources are being made in connections of the kind described in this study. ❧

Lessons

(continued from page 11)

surprising, given that it is primarily a school-linked service model, with strong components in health, mental health, employment preparation, substance abuse prevention, and recreation, but a relatively weak educational component. To achieve the improved educational outcomes

so urgently demanded by today's educational authorities, collaborative service programs need to be matched to appropriate educational strategies that address students' academic problems in a major way.

Conclusions and recommendations include:

- Collaborative service programs provide a strong foundation for building programs that include academic strategies to help at-risk students succeed.
- Securing official support for collaboration from both sides of the organizational divide is critical to both the initial and continuing strength of the partnership.
- School-community collaborations benefit from the support of an intermediary agent.
- Community-school collaborations that focus on linking the school to vital services would be well advised to address the full age-range of young people.
- Community-school collaborations, however well designed and implemented, cannot substitute for reform of the schools, nor can a program succeed if it is simply an add-on to a failing school. ❧

State

(continued from page 13)

Promising Practices

Support for a child and family agenda at the highest levels, through ongoing collaboration and opportunities to do so, can help support collaborative efforts in communities. A structured forum or formal structure, such as a children's "cabinet," can facilitate

that collaboration and establish collaboration as an expectation. For example, members of Delaware's Family Services Cabinet Council stated that Governor Thomas R. Carper's commitment to children and families and to the Cabinet Council itself was very important to their ongoing collaborative efforts. But state education agency staff must also find mechanisms and tools that support coordination and collaboration at the school-community level, where assessment of community needs and decisions about school improvement are made.

Many educators agree that, for schools to meet tough new standards set out by the state and to improve student achievement, schools must involve parents and community partners in needs assessment, school governance, and improvement planning.

One of the most productive state roles might be to facilitate local-level decision making by providing flexibility and opportunities to plan comprehensively. Schools and districts are now able to engage in more comprehensive planning through the consolidated planning process authorized in the Improving America's Schools Act.

Future Directions

State education agencies can support comprehensive approaches to serving children and their families by: maintaining at the state level a vision for their well-being, making the connection between comprehensive approaches to supporting them and student achievement, and providing the funding and flexibility for schools and communities to determine how best to meet their own needs. The state agencies are seeking sound evaluation data, which shows the linkages between school-community collaboration and

improvements in student achievement levels and student well-being. This data strengthens state education agencies' capacities to provide funding and support for research-based approaches to improving student achievement. State education agency staff are also striving to create financing strategies for establishing and sustaining school-community collaborative partnerships. ❧

Enhancing

(continued from page 15)

Additionally, many educators may remain skeptical of the potential for this kind of collaboration to improve teaching and learning for all students.

Recommendations

Among the strategies employed by ED to advance the notion that school-community collaboration may enhance youths' learning are: focusing attention on the importance of out-of-school resources to youths' performance in school, providing some additional funding for collaboration, and allowing waivers of certain federal restrictions. We have also suggested that, while these strategies may represent the start of a growing federal capacity to support school-community collaboration, ED could strengthen its efforts in three broad ways: expanding how it frames when and where learning takes place for youth; providing better incentives and signals; and helping grantees use federal waiver provisions and discretionary grant programs for collaboration around students' learning. In conclusion, the following are several specific recom-

mendations for how ED might expand the scope and type of its current efforts to support school-community collaboration.

Broadening the frame.

A federal strategy to support enhanced school-community connections for students' learning will require a stronger and broader articulation of how school-community connections relate to students' learning. In particular, this broader frame should include recognition that high quality youth organizations and other community agencies that provide alternatives to classroom instruction themselves are important settings in which youth may develop the skills necessary to succeed in school. The broader frame also should emphasize the additional and essential role for community agencies as organizations that move beyond removing barriers to learning and proactively enable learning.

Strengthening the incentives and signals. Increased funding, broader eligibility for receipt of funds, and model partnerships can provide important incentives and signals to schools, school districts, and states to utilize school-community collaboration.

Ensuring SEAs, LEAs, and schools use the flexibility provisions to enhance school-community collaboration. Efforts by ED to ensure that state educational agencies (SEAs), local educational agencies (LEAs), and schools use the flexibility provisions in waiver and discretionary grant programs should involve research, policy development, and technical assistance by the Department. Waiver provisions could provide better hooks to encourage states and districts to apply for them.

Stronger support for using these waivers might include allowing state educational agencies, rather than the federal government, to approve waiver requests. ❧

The CEIC REVIEW

Robert Sullivan
Editor

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