

Core Principle 7: Community
Deb Elder, Nan Harper, Charlie Huette and Mike O’Conner

The seventh of the core principles on which the State Board of Education bases its consideration of redesign of the system is: *The community, through the local board of education, must be involved in establishing the expectations and determining the structure of the system and receive regular reports on its progress.* The following principle and indicators will be addressed in this paper:

The community, through the local board of education, must be involved in establishing the expectations and determining the structure of the system and receive regular reports on its progress.

- (a) Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families and student learning.
- (b) Each school district engages the local community on a regular basis in decisions on learning expectations and the system structures needed to ensure learning for all.
- (c) Each school district reports to the local community at least annually on the progress of the system to meet student learning expectations.
- (d) Members of the community are actively recruited to directly participate in the schools to assist in helping all students learn.

Introduction

Kansas has adopted many policies to integrate community and education, but in nearly all cases the impetus came from the schools, not from the community. As described by Doug Anderson of the Kansas Learning First Alliance, local site councils became a requirement for Kansas schools in 1994 to ensure parent involvement in school policy. In 1999, a Community/School Partnership Curriculum was developed to improve communication between school personnel and stakeholders, and, in 2002, the Kansas State Board of Education (KSBE) formally endorsed the National PTA’s standards for parent and family involvement in school programs (1997).

In 2001, KSBE adopted three strategic goals to guide educational efforts in the 21st century. The third goal called for the redesign of Kansas schools and learning environments for a new century. Additionally, in 2002 and 2003, the Kansas State Department of Education (KSDE) sponsored a series of presentations, each of which led to the conclusion that education in the 21st century will require active partnerships among educators, students, families and the community. A series of statewide forums recommended a focus on “home-school-community connections” and a move toward making real world connections a part of the classroom. As a result, the Kansas State Board of Education adopted seven core principles, including “The community, through the local board of education, must be involved in establishing the expectations and determining the structure of the system and receive regular reports on its progress.”

Research

Community Outcomes for Community-School Partnerships

In education circles, the word "outcome" has become nearly synonymous with letter grades or the numerical scores generated by standardized assessments. When programs that link schools and communities are evaluated using these outcome criteria, the evaluations are not flattering. In fact, across most varieties of community-school partnerships, research generally shows no significant academic differences between students who participate in community-linked school programs and those who do not (Nance, et al. 1999; Dryfoos, 2000). The notable outliers are certain varieties of service-learning programs, which, if done correctly, can be linked to gains in academic achievement, including both grades and test scores (Billig, 2000). But, in general, community-school partnerships have not been widely cited as the most effective means toward achieving academic ends. Yet, in spite of this fact, communities across the nation and state provide ongoing support—and in many cases increasing support—for community involvement in education.

Only 19 percent of Americans think public schools prepare students "very well" for life after graduation (Lake, Snell, Perry and Associates, 2003). This is less a critique of what schools do than an indication of what schools do not do. Academic knowledge is important, but it constitutes only a single component of a much larger set of skills, traits, and abilities that will help develop both individuals and communities for the 21st Century (Pittman, et. al., 2004; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003). Communities desire from their children not only individual academic outcomes—those important skills measured by traditional evaluations—but also many non-academic and community outcomes. These include the following:

Non-academic outcomes or soft skills (Miller, 2003; Partnership for 21st Century Skills, 2003)

- Communication
- Collaboration
- Curiosity
- Problem identification
- Creativity
- Global awareness
- Intellectual flexibility

Community outcomes (Pittman, et. al., 2003; Butin, 2003).

- Volunteerism
- Civic responsibility
- Engagement in community affairs
- Connectedness
- Social responsibility

Education in Community Through Service-Learning: One Research-based Model to Facilitate Education in Community

The Search Institute provides one model with a strong research base, a model that has been used and applied in Kansas over a number of years. The Kansas Health Foundation, for example has funded applications of the Search Institute's Assets model. The Search Institute has identified 15

benchmarks for communities that seek to raise healthy youth and to support community vitality. These research-based "Characteristics of Asset-Building Communities," [see Appendix for full list] address many of the "soft skills" and community outcomes listed previously, and offer a good starting point for educators, community members, and policy makers to begin thinking about the possibilities of education in community. As part of this paper's recommendations, two assumptions were made: first, that these 15 characteristics offer enough breadth to encompass the needs of many different communities; and secondly, that communities, when given the opportunity, would strive to develop these assets.

While Education in Community has assumed many forms, traditional "service-learning" models offer perhaps the most illuminating examples to demonstrate the many successes of Education in Community. Taylor (2002) described the enormous problems that confront many neighborhoods, particularly in the inner cities, and noted that education can play a vital role in helping to solve these problems, if that education is grounded in real-life, local problem-solving, and is clearly relevant to students' lives. This sort of education involves not only the purposeful acquisition of academic skills required for problem solving, but also a clear purpose for education: to enable individuals to contribute to the well-being and advancement of their own friends and families, to help foster the sorts of characteristics identified in the Search Institute's research.

"Learning-centered communities work to ensure that all children meet high academic standards, develop a sense of civic duty and community connection, and acquire the capacity for lifelong learning" (Tagle, 2003). Following are examples of literature and research that support the ways current Education in Community practices address themes found in the Search Institute's 15 Characteristics. Each point describes the benefits these practices provide to students, schools, and communities. Service learning was chosen to be emphasized not because it is recommended over other approaches but because the research in that field is most indicative of the sorts of individual and community gains that can be expected from Education in Community.

1. *Education in Community encourages all children and teenagers to frequently engage in service to others.* This, of course, reflects the aspect of community service and service-learning that encourages service to others for its own sake. It is most helpful to think of all Education in Community activities as located somewhere on a continuum between service and learning; that is, these projects should help other people, but they should also be academically rigorous and challenging for students. Each project will tend to strike a unique balance between these two poles.
2. *Education in Community helps the community to think and act intergenerationally, and helps schools promote caring and sustained relationships between youth and adults.* Students typically interact with adults in completing service-learning projects in ways that classroom-based education cannot offer. This is a central tenet of Taylor's ideas: schools and students actively engage the community in service-learning projects. Students thus interact with adults in the community, many of whom can serve as occupational role models and mentors. These working relationships can develop into sustained mentor relationships, and promote the idea that schools are positive assets to the larger community, thus encouraging more support from local leaders and businesses. Through these relationships, students come to

realize their own responsibilities regarding their communities. Additionally, as grandparents become more involved in the care and education of children, schools and communities begin thinking beyond traditional generational boundaries. Active collaboration helps make this happen.

3. *Education in Community helps build caring, supportive, and safe neighborhoods.* Many service-learning, community service, and afterschool projects center on improving neighborhoods. Renewal projects, like removing graffiti, broken windows, and other signs of urban decay, have tended to reduce crime in large cities. Students in these projects also often develop a sense of personal ownership and responsibility for their neighborhoods and community, developing a kind of stewardship that makes these neighborhoods better and safer places to live. The Pew Partnership for Civic Change compiled current research on the most effective strategies to promote and ensure healthy families and children, thriving neighborhoods, living-wage jobs and viable economies. Afterschool programs are number three on the partnership's Top Ten List for Community Success (Pew Partnership's Top Ten List for Community Success).
4. *Education in Community helps involve a community's youth in one or more clubs, teams, or other youth-serving organizations that see building assets as central to their mission.* This is clearly an area where educational policies, school districts, and community groups have a proactive role to play in strongly encouraging (though not necessarily requiring) service-learning in all schools, among all age groups. Additionally, community-based programs such as 4-H, Junior Achievement, and YMCA afterschool help students of all ages get involved in activities that are both academically rigorous and successful in building community assets. These programs typically empower youth with opportunities to serve, lead, and make decisions autonomously, a condition consistently linked to social and personal responsibility.

Research has demonstrated that community- and school-based cooperative and service-learning programs have enhanced student outcomes in the following areas:

- personal and civic responsibility,
- communication skills,
- sense of educational competence,
- civic responsibility,
- social competence,
- self-esteem,
- behavior in school,
- multicultural awareness and acceptance,
- career awareness, and
- academic achievement, including grades, standardized test scores, and attendance (Billig, 2000).

Kansas boasts two recent Education in Community successes in El Dorado and Abilene. El Dorado expanded its artist-in-residence program into a cinema academy for middle school students. Six teams of middle school students worked hand-in-hand with community members to write, direct, shoot, and edit short films that focus on community issues, local problems, and

everyday El Dorado. In this instance, the community was not only part of the arts curriculum, but also the primary inspiration. In Abilene, a Navy Admiral requested research assistance regarding the USS Eisenhower from local high school students, who ultimately presented their findings to local civic organizations. Both of these programs have exposed students to both academic subject matter and to important community connections—connections that will help youth recognize their community’s vital role in their development and future.

Structural Models and Goals from Other States

Across the nation, states have begun to establish policies and practices to help communities develop these assets, and communicate their importance. The following state examples demonstrate that community vitality relies upon an organized cooperation among all its interests and components. Not only the school, but the municipality, county, as well as services and organizations must work collectively to meet changing educational, economic, and community needs.

Kentucky:

Kentucky recognizes the strong link between school and community, and has moved to support this link at the state level. The Kentucky Department of Education institutionalized statewide community education that encompasses five components:

- Expanded utilization of school facilities: the school is to be the learning center of the community, for community members of all ages and at all times of the day, week, and year.
- Lifelong learning opportunities: the school should respond to both the formal and informal educational needs and desires of all age groups in the community.
- Volunteer programs: parents and other community members should be engaged in educating students.
- Learn and serve: provide curriculum-based, experiential education that engages students in real-life experiences that address community issues and needs.
- Collaboration: successful interagency coordination led by Community Education Directors located in each community or county.

Wisconsin:

As part of the "New Wisconsin Promise," a systematic set of recommendations for education reform, Wisconsin has acknowledged the necessary role community involvement plays in student success and the "long-term security" of the state and its citizens. These recommendations include:

- Form local and regional partnerships: support access to technology and increased technological skills among community members, local businesses, agencies, and community-based organizations.
- Develop youth assets: including entrepreneurship, community activism, leadership, and a sense of place in young people by providing them with the skills and opportunities to contribute to their communities.

- Promote community: by connecting schools and youth to local businesses, community-based organizations, non-profits, senior centers, and individuals.
- Bolster local economic sustainability: by fostering microenterprise development, and by utilizing technology to reach new markets across the region.
- Enhance community viability: strengthen individual and collective strength of communities by enhancing linkages among communities across regions and the state.

South Carolina:

As part of its effort to expand education so that it involves a shared community responsibility, South Carolina has established:

- An office of adult and community education that has as its mission to identify "community needs and resources in organizing school/community based educational programs designed to provide lifelong learning, health, and service opportunities for all, and to provide the necessary leadership and resources for the development of those programs."
- The Healthy Schools Program which links schools with the communities they serve and assists in developing support structures, resources, and opportunities. Additionally, the program strives "to build a capacity and climate for the promotion of physical, emotional and social health, academic success and the future productivity of South Carolina students."

Vision

More than a decade ago, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) issued a call for community collaboration in the education of America's youth. Reform in education proceeds slowly and it is now long overdue to institute the policies proposed 14 years ago.

The issue is simply; traditional schools and local systems of education were neither designed for nor are structured to teach everything that an adult American needs to know especially in the 21st century. Schools' primary obligation has been centered on cognitive or academic growth. However, traditional education systems cannot be responsible for everything. "Our national investment in the development of children and youth," wrote the authors of the CCSSO document, "must transcend the school's traditional focus on cognitive development." (1992).

Thus the vision for Kansas is a state in which community educational, health, and social services are provided by local, county, state, and federal resources which are fully integrated at the county/community level. Academic knowledge, and the skill developed in its acquisition and use, constitutes the great societal equalizer. Those who possess this knowledge and these skills also hold the power to use it as they please. The primary purpose of education is to transmit this knowledge to students, and to provide opportunities for its application. From this perspective, communities should be involved in schools in order that schools better achieve this end.

The Kansas vision must look at the growing disjoint between the demands of school and the demands of society, as a larger gap is indicated in the conception of both education and its role in

society. While the primary purpose of education must be to foster growth of knowledge through an interaction with problems, contexts, situations, individuals, and experiences, this knowledge, in addition to developing academic skill, must contribute to a person's sense of well-being, productivity, and happiness. This perspective not only assumes, but requires a collaborative relationship with something outside the schoolhouse in order to lend relevance to this growing knowledge. From this perspective, communities should be involved in schools in order that schools help the community, and its members, better achieve their own ends.

Regardless of overwhelming acknowledgement that the present education system rests upon a century-old framework, the world cannot be stopped to redesign it. In fits and starts, school districts adopt electronic textbook series and integrate technology into every traditional classroom. New mandates from state and federal education agencies respond to increasing demands for accountability, brought on by the technology revolution and the public's responses to it.

Such changes are important, but they do not address the fundamental questions brought upon by the information explosion:

- What should 'education' encompass?
- What does every adult American in the first quarter of the 21st century need to know?
- Who should be responsible for imparting that knowledge?

Responses to these questions raise issues that must be confronted – notably the fact that knowledge expands exponentially, but time remains constant. The issue of the amount of time in the day, and time in the year that is devoted to education must be addressed. For decades, the public has relied on school districts to formulate answers to these educational questions. The public and the communities in which education resides need to share the responsibility for answering these pressing questions. The vision is that this is a collaborative responsibility in which the entire community holds education—this most important mandate—in common.

Recommendations for the Kansas State Board of Education to Consider

To reach the vision outlined above, nine recommendations are proposed for Kansas Education in Community based upon the following objectives established by KSDE:

- Community resources are used to strengthen schools, families, and student learning.
 - Each school district engages the local community on a regular basis in decisions on learning expectations and the system structures needed to ensure learning for all, and that the goals of the school help meet the goals of the community.
 - Each school district reports to the local community at least annually on the progress of the system to meet student learning expectations.
 - Members of the community are actively recruited to directly participate in the schools to assist in helping all students learn.
1. It is proposed that Kansas build upon the Kentucky, Wisconsin, and South Carolina models with long-term plans to help local communities answer the Education in Community questions for themselves. The conversations would involve policy makers at every level, local school boards, faith-based communities, elderly who know the area's history, workers in workplaces, teachers, students, administrators, parents, real estate agents, and many others. It is also proposed that the widest-possible involvement be engaged to ensure that these meetings bring education to the community's table—not, as is the current model, to bring community to the education table. It must be clear that these conversations are to address larger community needs, not only educational needs.
 2. Further research must also be expanded to include study committees, timelines, other stakeholders, and pilot project planning.
 3. A state-level (small) office should be established that is charged with guiding the collaboration among public and private agencies for shared and integrated resources to support Education in Community. The office would provide such resources as training, evaluation and assessment tools, statewide communication resources, and dissemination of best-practice ideas and research.
 4. Wide collaboration among all the potential stakeholders, at the state and local levels, must be developed to generate planning funds and grants, if necessary, or facilitate training and support.
 5. State and county government should provide policies that empower and improve the quality of life for all citizens.
 6. KSBE would recognize Education and Community as valid, meaningful, and important complements to the vital Kansas curriculum standards. The integrity of community decision making relies upon local autonomy and state-level validation.
 7. Policies would be in place that provide a variety of public and private incentives for long-term Education in Community planning, and for launching the strategies generated locally.
 8. A network of local experts charged with guiding the local effort for Education in Community would be funded publically or privately.
 9. A regular state-wide celebration of this vital Education in Community work would be held. This celebration should include public recognition and dissemination of each community's successes.

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APPENDIX

The Search Institute: 15 Characteristics of Asset-Building Communities:

1. All residents take personal responsibility for building assets in children and adolescents.
2. The community thinks and acts intergenerationally.
3. The community builds a consensus on values and boundaries, which it seeks to articulate and model.
4. All children and teenagers frequently engage in service to others.
5. Families are supported, educated, and equipped to elevate asset building to top priority.
6. All children and teenagers receive frequent expressions of support in both informal settings and in places where youth gather.
7. Neighborhoods are places of caring, support, and safety.
8. Schools-both elementary and secondary-mobilize to promote caring, clear boundaries, and sustained relationships with adults.
9. Businesses establish family-friendly policies and embrace asset-building principles for young employees.
10. Virtually all 10 to 18 year olds are involved in one or more clubs, teams, or other youth-serving organizations that see building assets as central to their mission.
11. The media (print, radio, television) repeatedly communicate the community's vision, support local mobilization efforts, and provide forums for sharing innovative actions taken by individuals and organizations.
12. All professionals and volunteers who work with youth receive training in asset building.
13. Youth have opportunities to serve, lead, and make decisions.
14. Religious institutions mobilize their resources to build assets both within their own programs and in the community.
15. The community-wide commitment to asset building is long-term and sustained.

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