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## UNIVERSITIES AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

*A Publication of the University of Pennsylvania*

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## Statement of Purpose

*Universities and Community Schools* will not duplicate the work of any existing publication or association. Its unique purpose is to help establish an international informal “visible college”—or network of—academics and practitioners working, in different places and ways, to increase the contributions universities make to the development and effectiveness of community schools. Establishing such a systematic, sustained network is mandatory, we believe, for the university-school connection to function positively and significantly. (“University” is broadly conceived, i.e., all “post-secondary” institutions of “higher education.”)

We envision Universities and Community Schools as helping to spark a worldwide informal movement which aims to overcome major community and societal problems by developing mutually beneficial, innovative partnerships between universities and schools.

There is no subscription price for receiving *Universities and Community Schools*. We would like all those interested in the focus and purpose of this journal to receive copies. We, therefore, encourage those on our mailing list to contact us. Please write or call us at the following address and phone number.

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## Introduction

For more than 30 years, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships has developed university-assisted community schools in collaboration with its West Philadelphia school and community partners. Seeking to transform local public schools, university-assisted community schools (UACS) help education, engage, empower and serve all members of the community in which the school is located. As the same time, working with community members to create and sustain university-assisted community schools provides a powerful means for universities to advance teaching, research, learning, and service, as well as the civic development of their students.

The Netter Center has worked to advance the university-assisted community schools nationally by supporting replication/adaptation of the model, hosting training workshops, site visits and conferences, as well as visits to local partnerships. Further, with a major gift to the Netter Center, regional training centers on the model have been established the southwest (sponsored originally at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa and sustained by the Higher Education Forum of Oklahoma), the midwest (sponsored by Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis), and New England (sponsored by the University of Connecticut).

The articles featured in this journal are by colleagues who are part of a growing network of universities and colleges that are committed to the UACS approach. A number of the authors, Hal Lawson, Dick Ferguson and Brother Raymond Fitz, and Monica Medina, were part of the early university-assisted community schools' adaptation work of the Netter Center that was funded by the Wallace Foundation (then the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund) and the Corporation for National and Community Service. The interest in university-assisted community schools continues to grow. A new UACS network was formed in 2015 that was organized by the Coalition for Community Schools, Rutgers University-Camden and the Netter Center. Over 50 institutions of higher education and more than 100 people have joined the network. Monthly calls are hosted to share best practices and challenges.

The authors describe their journeys in the development of university-assisted community schools and the transformation needed at the school and at the university. Leaders from the University of Dayton, the University at Buffalo, University of Tennessee-Knoxville, Florida International University, and Seattle University present case studies on the community schools work they have implemented with their school and community partners. Four of the authors from the University of Maryland, University at Albany, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, and Australian Catholic University focus on the role of professional schools including Social Work and Education. Each of the articles shares Jude Butcher's (Australian Catholic University) insight that this work is based on "personal and professional commitment to the dignity and rights of all people, and awareness of the diverse educational, social, religious, cultural and economic contexts in which they live."

The statement of purpose for this journal notes that Universities and Community Schools is to "to establish an international informal 'visible college'—or network of—academics and practitioners working in different places and ways, to increase the contributions universities make to the development and effectiveness of community schools;" these articles and the significant work being done across the country indicate how far we have come—and the potential to do so much more.

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**Dayton's University-Assisted Neighborhood School Centers:  
Adapting to Local Realities**

Dick Ferguson  
Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., Ph.D.  
University of Dayton

## Abstract

This article reviews the eight-year history of Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers, highlighting both successes and failures, lessons learned, and observations regarding the sustainability requirements of community schools. Special attention is given to the initiation of the community schools effort in Dayton, on one hand, and the current situation and challenges, on the other. The organizational response to leadership changes in Dayton Public Schools is described. Highlighted is the role of the University of Dayton (UD), especially the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community. The University of Dayton is a major Catholic university of 11,000 students located in the city of Dayton, Ohio. It has a long history of significant community partnerships. The Fitz Center plays a pivotal role in implementation of this highly collaborative effort, including initial project leadership; community organizing; coaching of five site coordinators at neighborhood school sites; faculty-mentored student interns to assist with programming for student success, family support, health and team sports, and extensive university student engagement. The authors are hopeful that communities attempting to grow their community schools from a few to a system-wide program and those exploring the potential role of local colleges and universities will benefit from the information, insights, and ideas shared.

## History

In 2004, the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community at the University of Dayton (UD) was awarded a \$250,000 grant over two years (2004-2006) from the Dayton Foundation and asked to lead planning for Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers (NSC) project. In 2006, a three-year pilot (2006-2009) was initiated with a total budget of \$1.2 million using the community school concept advocated by the Coalition for Community Schools. The Dayton Foundation, Dayton Public Schools, City of Dayton, Montgomery County, and 16 local foundation and corporate supporters joined the Fitz Center in a bold initiative to reconnect five Dayton public elementary schools to their neighborhoods after more than 30 years of court-ordered busing and to create full-service, year-round opportunities for neighborhood families and youth at these new neighborhood schools. All new school buildings, funded by a local levy and matched by tobacco lawsuit settlement funds awarded through the Ohio School Facilities Commission, opened through 2010, but the programming began in fall of 2006.

## A community's project

Our shared community vision was simple: *New public schools are the centers of their Dayton neighborhoods, serving as healthy places of learning for children and families.* Our Neighborhood School Centers' mission was more complex: *Committed to children and families, we work with many partners to develop inventive, enduring relationships to create environments where students will excel and neighborhoods will flourish with schools as their centers.*

Our objectives for the three-year pilot were:

- Secure start-up funding,
- Achieve strong involvement,
- Identify and remove policy barriers,
- Identify and leverage neighborhood assets,
- Plan and open new schools, and
- Align with academic outcomes.

Over the next five years, our objectives were:

- Improve quality of life in the neighborhoods,
- Attract families with school-aged children,
- Improve student performance,
- Realign community resources to support youth achievement,
- Sustain leadership and support for Neighborhood School Centers, and
- Serve as replicable national model.

In practice, the Neighborhood School Centers focused on three outcomes: young people succeeding, neighborhood schools as the first choice of residents, and neighborhood schools as centers of community involvement. The Neighborhood School Centers' operational plan was initially developed to sustain the relationships critical to successful outcomes. Partners played various roles in guiding and managing the project. It was truly the community's project.

Community schools, in general, and Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers, in particular, are ideal for the work of community building. The opportunity to adapt the community school model in Dayton arose from the reality that Dayton neighborhoods were and still are highly segregated racially (See Appendix A). Court-ordered busing to achieve racial integration of schools was in place for more than 30 years. The order was lifted in 2002 due, in part, to the fact that the Dayton Public School system had become predominantly African American and local leaders and the federal district court saw nothing further to be gained from mandatory busing.

The Board of Education and Dayton Public



Schools leadership offered the community a return to neighborhood schools (by choice, but not forced busing) in exchange for passing a school building levy. If approved, funds from this capital levy would be matched by the State of Ohio and enable the construction of new buildings throughout the district. The levy passed, in part due to the promise of neighborhood schools, but there was no plan in place to deliver on the campaign promise that schools would once again be centers of neighborhoods and would be available for community use. Dayton Public Schools appealed to the Dayton Foundation for help. The Foundation turned to the University of Dayton Fitz Center because of its capacity for community building in urban neighborhoods. The Center staff members had many years of collective experience in Dayton as organizers and facilitators.

### Not school reform

A key challenge at the outset was to distinguish the effort to reconnect schools and neighborhoods from other “school reform” initiatives. While the academic achievement of Dayton Public School students was and still is below local expectations and statewide standards, the Neighborhood School Centers did not promise to improve standardized test scores. While effective after-school programs, improved early childhood education, healthier students, and safer neighborhoods could be expected to help student achievement, project leaders distinguished the initiative from school reform efforts such as the creation of charter schools that are popular and numerous in our urban community.

The Fitz Center accepted the leadership role while insisting the project become something more than the latest school reform initiative – the acknowledged agenda of many of the sponsors and community leaders. Previous experience in developing a partnership with Patterson-Kennedy Elementary School, supported by a West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation (WEPIC) Replication Grant, taught many at the University of Dayton the importance of defining the University’s role as partner versus expert advisor or reformer. Teachers, administrators, and parents of elementary school students had experienced wave upon wave of reform efforts and had grown both skeptical of and resistant to change proposed by outsiders including community leaders, foundations, and universities. Clearly, any significant change had to come from within the Dayton Public Schools with the support of parents and the community. The Fitz Center had an insight to the development of Neighborhood School Centers that was the result of work on dozens of other community

projects. The school levy promise to connect Dayton Public Schools to neighborhoods and rebuild schools was an opportunity to build what Robert Putnam and others describe as “bonding” social capital within schools and neighborhoods and, simultaneously, to develop “bridging” social capital with hundreds of agencies and associations committed to urban children, their families, and the neighborhoods.

### Community building precedes programming

The creation of effective community partnerships that operate democratically and are highly inclusive is a daunting challenge. It is our opinion that most community collaborations fail because they do not pay adequate attention to building and sustaining relationships. Strong community partnerships resemble good friendships. Widely shared visions supported by citizens and professionals who enjoy working together are essential. To achieve a shared vision, citizens and professionals alike usually have to relinquish some aspect of their own beliefs and practices. Citizens do not simply accept what professionals identify as “best practices.” Professionals, in our experience, struggle to give voice to ordinary citizens and to acknowledge practical wisdom.

There is a not-so-obvious reason why the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community was asked to lead this effort. It is not because we were experts, advocates, or even thoughtful critics of public urban education. It is because we approached all of our work as a challenge of community building. The Fitz Center defines its mission as *community building in urban Dayton for the purposes of increasing the community’s capacity for change and providing a rich context for experiential learning for University students and faculty*. “Consensus organizing” techniques, as described by Michael Eichler (2007), are used in a variety of community settings. Dozens of Fitz Center projects are in progress in Dayton at any given time. Each emphasizes one or more of the five community building principles identified through staff experience over the past four decades. These principles have informed the University’s role in the Neighborhood School Centers. Each is described in detail in books by the authors noted below.

- *Developing community assets*. John McKnight and John Kretzmann (1993) of Northwestern University’s Center for Urban Affairs and Policy Research initiated a national movement to focus on a community’s assets instead of its needs when developing devastated communities. The

same thinking informed the Search Institute's developmental assets for youth. Appreciating is leading.

- *Strengthening social capital.* Harvard's Robert Putnam (2000) documented the loss of social capital in the United States in his book *Bowling alone: the collapse and revival of American community*. Trust, information sharing, reciprocity, and some shared norms characterize this illusive form of capital that, according to Putnam, is essential to strong communities. Trusting is leading.
- *Balancing inquiry and advocacy.* In *The fifth discipline: the art and practice of the learning organization*, Peter Senge (1990) describes conversational skills that build relationships and improve understanding. Good questions, it seems, may be as important as good arguments. Asking is leading.
- *Cultivating leadership for adaptation.* Reviving communities means people and institutions must change. The style of leadership that helps communities hold on to what is precious and let go of the nonessential is described by Harvard's Ronald Heifetz (1994) in *Leadership without easy answers* as "adaptive." Learning is leading.
- *Finding a shared vision based on mutual self-interest.* Community organizing, long associated with the conflict organizing techniques of Saul Alinsky, has a new style described by its champion Michael Eichler (2007) in *Consensus organizing: building communities of mutual self-interest*. This style works toward a shared vision as opposed to the vision of a dominant group or individual. Listening is leading.

We have taken the best insights of these creative thinkers and experimented with them in our work. The process does require new thinking on the part of experienced community leaders and constant practice by the citizens and professionals doing the work at the neighborhood sites. Compromise is essential. The Fitz Center uses the skills of consensus organizing to build community. Consensus organizers identify mutual self-interest to build and sustain community work. Community building, for the Fitz Center, is the art of co-creating a desired community future based on a widely shared vision. We use consensus organizing to get to the shared vision.

## The Challenges of the Present

In 2012, recognizing that Dayton Public Schools were the single largest investor in the Neighborhood School Centers and that, in fact, the school board was the most accountable governing body for student

outcomes, the leadership of the Neighborhood School Centers shifted from the Dayton Foundation to Dayton Public Schools. Administrative staff, in addition to the superintendent and principals who had been invested from the beginning, became more directly involved and responsible for the success of the Neighborhood School Centers. Parent and community engagement became a deputy superintendent responsibility.

Even as the national economy rebounded, the City of Dayton and the Greater Dayton Region continued to experience a very difficult economic situation in terms of job loss and subsequent unemployment. This economic situation, which continues into 2015, has in turn created very difficult challenges for families and children in almost every Dayton neighborhood. In the City of Dayton, almost half of its 38 census tracts have poverty rates of 30% or higher. Sixty-three percent of children in the City of Dayton live in these high poverty neighborhoods; 83 percent of Dayton's poor children live in high poverty neighborhoods (See Appendix B).

This prevalence of high poverty students from high poverty neighborhoods with little or no middle income families presents a major challenge for Dayton Public Schools. To address this challenge, Dayton Public Schools Superintendent Lori Ward, the third superintendent since the initiation of Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers, outlined the elements of her REACH (Raising Educational Achievement of Each Child Higher) model in December 2012 (See Appendix C). The REACH model focuses on enhancing the ability of Dayton's young people to be college and career ready at the point of their high school graduation. To achieve this goal, the district and the community working together must provide excellent academic programs and remove the barriers to learning that families and children experience in many of our neighborhoods. The REACH model calls for a new partnership within our community.

One approach to implementing the REACH model is to give new attention to the Neighborhood School Center partnership. Initiated and led by the Dayton Foundation from 2006-2011, the Neighborhood School Centers are now an innovative educational partnership led by Dayton Public Schools. This partnership continues to bring together the original five preK-8 public schools, non-profit agencies, Montgomery County agencies, City of Dayton departments and the Fitz Center with the aim of improving the success of young people navigating the critical transitions necessary to obtain a post-secondary credential. The partnership links schools with lead

non-profit agencies (Cleveland – YMCA, Edison -- YMCA, Fairview – Good Samaritan Hospital, Kiser – Salvation Army of the Greater Dayton Area, and Ruskin – East End Community Services). Funding for the partnership is provided by DPS, Montgomery County, the United Way of the Greater Dayton Area and the University of Dayton.

Superintendent Ward initiated a conversation among the partners that called them to “rededicate, reimagine, and realign” their efforts to bring the Neighborhood School Centers to new levels of effectiveness for the children, families, and neighborhoods of Dayton (Handbook, 2014). The Dayton community has always been able to innovate to meet new challenges. Innovation in Dayton includes everything from advanced science and technology to public policy, the arts to the environment, social services to recreation. Education and economic development clearly share the spotlight at present and, as in most communities, are linked as priorities.

### **New start to the Neighborhood School Centers partnership**

To give the partnership a renewed purpose, a theory of action was developed for the implementation of the REACH model through Dayton’s Neighborhood School Centers. The theory of action includes the shared vision, key outcomes, and the roles that are played by the partners. This, in turn, was used as a framework for creating a *Handbook for the Neighborhood School Centers Partnership* which details the roles and responsibilities of each of the partners.

Adapting the definition of a community school from that of the Coalition for Community Schools, we believe that a DPS Neighborhood School Center is “both a place and a set of partnerships between the Dayton Public School in a Dayton neighborhood and a variety of other community resources (Handbook, 2014).”

Supporting the five centers, “the DPS Neighborhood School Centers partnership is a collaboration lead by Dayton Public Schools that aims to improve student learning, to build strong families, and to develop healthy neighborhoods. The neighborhood school becomes the center for the neighborhood and is open to everyone – during the school day, evenings and weekends (Handbook, 2014).”

The vision is bold – “by 2020, DPS Neighborhood School Centers will provide children and youth in their neighborhoods with access to great schools and strong systems of family and community

support that will prepare them to attain an excellent education, successfully transition to college and career and to become civically engaged (Handbook, 2014).” This vision statement was adapted from the Promise Neighborhood Vision proposed by the U.S. Department of Education. The concept of civic engagement was added.

To realize this vision, the Neighborhood School Centers partners at each site endeavor to realize the outcomes listed below. These are aligned with those of the U.S. Department of Education’s Promise Neighborhoods application. While not all of these outcomes can be addressed in the short-term, they should eventually be addressed as the partnership evolves and expands. These outcomes are prioritized by each building’s leadership team.

- Children are healthy and ready to enter kindergarten.
- Students attend school consistently.
- Students succeed academically.
- Students are actively involved in learning and in their communities.
- Families are increasingly involved with and supportive of their children’s education.
- Schools are engaged with families and communities.
- Children are healthy – physically, socially, and emotionally.
- Students live and learn in a safe, supportive and stable environment.
- The neighborhood is a desirable place to live.

### **Partner roles**

The partners were redefined to include only those playing an active role in the delivery of Neighborhood School Centers programs. The partners each play a specific role in helping to accomplish the key outcomes. Using the language of the REACH model for all neighborhood schools, “the Excellent Neighborhood School provides an exciting and engaging environment for learning. The Excellent Neighborhood School is characterized by strong principal leadership, a culture of high academic achievement, highly effective teachers, and a spirit of hospitality that welcomes parents and community as partners in learning. A DPS neighborhood school building becomes a center of community life and contributes to the strength of the neighborhood (Handbook, 2014).” Here is how the Handbook describes the key roles.

The principal is responsible for leadership of the Neighborhood School Center and works with the Building Leadership Team to coordinate all facets

of the Neighborhood School Centers partnership in the school. The principal, in collaboration with the partners, develops a plan for the Neighborhood School Center that aims to ensure academic success for students, supportive and enrichment programs for children and families, and engagement of families and the neighborhood in the success of the children in the school. The principal, in collaboration with NSC site coordinator and the kindergarten teachers, is responsible for organizing a Neighborhood Readiness Coalition to enhance kindergarten readiness within the neighborhood.

The **building leadership team** is led by the principal and is responsible for developing, coordinating, and sustaining all facets of the Neighborhood School Centers partnership. The building leadership team identifies barriers that inhibit learning and develops an annual building improvement plan to enhance learning for the children, the support of families, and the engagement of the neighborhood.

The **faculty and staff** working at a Neighborhood School Center are critical to the success of the Neighborhood School Centers partnership. The key outcome of students succeeding academically depends on a faculty that works collaboratively to set high standards of academic success and is skillful in working with families and children from high poverty neighborhoods. Faculty and staff must be willing to engage families by visiting the homes of their students and to assist parents in supporting the learning of their children. Staff members must begin to work collaboratively with faculty and community partners to make the school a welcoming neighborhood center.

The **Community Engagement Council** is coordinated by the principal and includes key constituencies in the Neighborhood School Center, especially parents and neighborhood partners. The goal of the Community Engagement Council (CEC) is to serve as a coordinating and reporting mechanism to promote family and community engagement in the Neighborhood School Center. A member of the NSC CEC represents the school at the meetings of the system-wide Dayton Education Council. The CEC develops an annual plan for family and community engagement and assists in its implementation so that the NSC site is a center for community life and contributes to the success of children and families within the neighborhood.

The **lead community partner** is a critical component in the success of the Neighborhood School Centers. The lead community partner is a not-

for-profit social service agency that has as part of its mission the building of assets and relationships within a neighborhood that support children and families. The lead community partner dedicates some its resources to the success of the Neighborhood School Center.

The **executive liaison** from the lead community partner is an agency executive that provides integration of the agency and the Neighborhood School Centers operation e.g., the school and other community resources. The executive liaison, in collaboration with the principal and the University of Dayton Fitz Center facilitator, hires the site coordinator and coordinates an annual evaluation of the site coordinator.

The **NSC site coordinator** is an employee of the lead community partner and is also part of the building leadership team of the Neighborhood School Center. The site coordinator is a relationship builder and broker who forges partnerships that align community resources, such as other not-for-profit social service agencies, public social service agencies, colleges and universities, faith communities, and business to benefit children, families, and the neighborhood.

The NSC site coordinator working with the principal and the building leadership team organizes **action teams** that focus on specific objectives that are important to the success of the Neighborhood School Center. Examples of action teams are: (1) A Family Café Team that works with one or more faith communities to organize family cafés at the school, (2) an After-School Team that organizes after-school programs to support reading and mathematics, and (3) and a Health Team that makes sure children are coming to school healthy and ready to learn.

A Neighborhood School Center, whenever possible, provides a space and an opportunity for relevant **public agencies** to deliver services to children and families in the neighborhood. For example, in our community, these agencies can include public health, children services, mental health, and employment services at the county level and public safety, parks and recreation, housing inspection, and trash removal at the city level.

The site coordinator is also responsible for mobilizing additional community resources that assist children's success in learning and assist their parents in supporting the growth of their children. These resources include other social service agencies that have specialized competencies and resources as well as volunteers from colleges, universities, faith communities, and service clubs. These community resources can be part of an action team organized by

the NSC site coordinator. The site coordinator is to be more of a recruiter and organizer of services than a provider of services.

The **Neighborhood Readiness Coalition** endeavors to align the early learning in the neighborhood (day care, pre-k, and kindergarten) around the Common Core Standards. The coalitions have not been formed yet. When they are, each coalition will consist of the pre-kindergarten teachers, kindergarten teachers, NSC site coordinator and representatives of the early learning providers in the neighborhood. The primary objective of the coalition is to ensure that every child in the neighborhood is kindergarten ready, regardless of what school the students attend.

### University-assisted community schools

The University of Dayton is a charter member of the University-Assisted Community Schools coalition. The Fitz Center for Leadership in Community in the College of Arts and Sciences has served the Dayton Public Schools' Neighborhood School Centers by coordinating and integrating a number of important functions. The Fitz Center has assembled a team to mentor the site coordinators who work for the nonprofit organizations that are the partners at each of the Neighborhood School Centers. Through monthly meetings of the site coordinators and periodic one-on-one meetings, the Fitz Center team works to support the coordinators in their roles as they engage members of the community and to assist with the communication concerning what is working effectively and not working as effectively at each of the schools.

When the Neighborhood School Centers began, the Dayton Foundation was the convener of individuals and organizations committed to this initiative. The Fitz Center worked on behalf of the Dayton Foundation to prepare agendas and provide information concerning the progress of the program. As the program has evolved, the superintendent of Dayton Public Schools and her staff have taken on the role of the lead partner in the Neighborhood School Centers. The Fitz Center now works with the Dayton Public Schools administration to schedule meetings including the five meetings during the school year of the superintendent with the Neighborhood School Centers' principals and site coordinators, the three meetings during the school year of the superintendent with the Neighborhood School Centers' nonprofit partners and funders, and other meetings as necessary. The Fitz Center staff assists the superintendent in formulating the agendas for these different coordinating meetings. These

meetings are held to assure that issues are brought to the table for discussion and resolution and that those who are vested in the program fully understand the progress being made and the barriers yet to be overcome. The Fitz Center also has assisted Dayton Public Schools in reporting on the progress of Neighborhood School Centers at school board meetings and at meetings with the other public and nonprofit agencies that have been supporters of the program.

The Fitz Center coordinates the recruitment of University of Dayton urban teacher education students as interns at the five schools, ongoing weekly volunteers who work with Dayton Public School students in academic activities, and one time volunteers for major events. During the 2013-2014 school year, 751 University of Dayton students shared their time and talent as community engaged learners and volunteers. About one third of these served on a consistent basis for a semester or school year.

We hope to continue to improve the ability of the Fitz Center staff to facilitate community dialogue or structured community conversations. Helping groups learn to come together and suspend judgment long enough to fully digest each other's viewpoints has proven critical to the community building process. Conversation circles have not won general acceptance yet, but the Center continues to begin most of its projects with such open, nonjudgmental dialogue. It is usually where we begin to identify the potential for a shared vision. Without a shared vision, in our experience, community schools and most other community initiatives are usually short-lived and ineffective.

### Tracking progress

Beginning in 2014-2015, the Dayton Public Schools Office of Accountability, Assessment, and Research will semi-annually organize the academic indicators into a Neighborhood School Centers Report Card. This report card will include proficiency ratings, information on attendance and discipline, and students moving in and out of the schools. Using these data, the site coordinator and the curriculum instruction assessment person at each school will be responsible for evaluating the effectiveness of Neighborhood School Centers programs.

We have developed a preliminary list of outcomes and indicators that can be used to measure progress being made by the Neighborhood School Centers. Data for some of the indicators are easily obtained from Dayton Public Schools, county health department data, and census data. Data on some of the indicators

will require parent or neighborhood surveys (See Appendix D). We believe that the indicators present a more complete assessment of the conditions necessary for learning than previously endorsed by community leaders and concerned citizens. Whether indicators show progress or not, they remind the community that many things matter in the life of a child and that there are many preconditions of student success.

#### Sustainable funding

Without sustainable sources of funding, community programs do not build community. Youth programs, in particular, risk leading impressionable young citizens on a roller coaster ride of programming. This can happen due either to the “three year and out” approach of many private sponsors, failure of local levies or United Way campaigns, or the inconsistency of fiscal federal block grant funding. In any event, children, youth, and adults alike see many summer programs, after-school opportunities, and youth employment programs as occasional and unpredictable rather than as part of the neighborhood community fabric. By always blending private and public funds available primarily from or through local sources, Dayton’s Neighborhood School Centers hope to avoid the roller coaster ride and establish predictable neighborhood assets.

The annual operating budget for the Neighborhood School Centers partnership is \$290,000 for fiscal year 2014-2015 (See Appendix E). This is 17 percent less than the budgets of the five previous years. As start-up financial support from multiple private sources ramped down in years four and five, Dayton’s key public human service partners assumed a larger funding role. Each has been involved from the start. The public partners participate in a variety of ways, not all of which are financial. Dayton Public Schools contributes just under half of the annual funding. The superintendent, deputy superintendents, members of the Board of Education, and principals are directly involved in the planning and implementation of Neighborhood School Centers. The superintendent hosts a monthly meeting of the partners, including city, county, lead nonprofit executives and Fitz Center team members with the expressed mission of removing barriers to achieving the shared vision. Besides the public funders, the Neighborhood School Centers receive annual private-dollar support from the United Way and the University of Dayton.

#### **Site coordinators as the essential investment**

Each of Dayton’s Neighborhood School Centers

has a full-time site coordinator. As shown in Appendix E, the salaries of the site coordinators represent 83 percent of the annual operating budget. Each site coordinator is employed by a nonprofit agency partner, although the funds are provided by the Neighborhood School Centers’ funding partners, not the agencies themselves. Supervision is provided by the agencies and the school principals. Coaching is provided by two consultants from the Fitz Center, one for support on building community in the neighborhood and one for assistance with building community within the school. Site coordinators are selected by a team of partners representing the school system, the school building, the nonprofit agency partner, and the Fitz Center. The current site coordinators were selected primarily from outside the school community and represent a variety of experiential backgrounds. All are skilled community builders who use consensus organizing techniques to add value to the schools as centers of their neighborhoods.

The site coordinator supports the school principal by managing the contributions of various community partners who bring programs voluntarily to the school site. The site coordinators’ employers are leading Dayton nonprofit organizations committed to the vision of making schools the centers of their neighborhoods. The site coordinators and their employers are the brokers of partnerships for the Neighborhood School Centers. Three paid interns from the University of Dayton assist each site coordinator and help bring other University students and faculty to the school site as community engaged learners.

#### **Neighborhoods as partners**

While it is, in our opinion, more difficult to create and sustain partnerships between schools and loosely organized neighborhoods than between schools and highly accountable agencies, neighborhood partners are vital to our community school concept. Leaders of neighborhood associations, community development corporations, churches, parent organizations, and neighborhood hospitals have all participated in the planning and implementation of Dayton’s Neighborhood School Centers. With the assistance of the City of Dayton Planning Department, the neighborhoods joined forces to secure Ohio Department of Transportation Safe Routes to School funding for the NSC neighborhoods. For three of the school sites, neighborhood planning teams, organized by the Fitz Center, participated directly in planning new school buildings and locating them to maximize their

impact on the future of the neighborhoods. The social capital – bonding and bridging – developed during the building planning period exceeded anything that could be expected from any other organizing strategy.

The neighborhoods included in Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers have both great assets and serious needs. For Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers to be successful, these neighborhoods must move forward. Each neighborhood has identified one or more key developmental assets on which to build. These include a national park site in the neighborhood that was home to the Wright brothers, home building projects in two neighborhoods, a new family center funded by the Kroc family in another, a comprehensive neighborhood redevelopment project around one school, multiple city parks, reasonably stable neighborhoods, major anchor hospitals, and strong neighborhood associations. Barriers to a hopeful future still have to be removed or reduced. These include extensive poverty and little economic diversity, above average foreclosure rates, low student academic achievement, tragic youth crime, and continued parent preference for busing over walking to school. Assets must be leveraged to overcome barriers and assure that each neighborhood and its citizens continue to work for the school as the center of the community.

### **Persistent uncertainties**

There are many remaining uncertainties for Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers. These can be grouped into a few big questions.

- Can our community school model contribute to improved student academic performance? Most schools are in “academic emergency” status, according to Ohio performance standards, and the entire district is at risk of being classified as in “academic distress.”
- Can the community take the Neighborhood School Centers to scale? Dayton has 21 public preK-8 schools, and only five are Neighborhood School Centers. How would a larger scale program be administered and by whom? Dayton Public Schools does not have sufficient staffing to do this, and there is a limited number of nonprofit agencies with the capacity to be strong partners in neighborhood schools.
- Will Dayton parents eventually choose to have their children walk to a neighborhood school after a generation of busing them to the school of their choice? Since the start of the Neighborhood School Centers, the percentage of students living within a

mile or two miles of the schools they attend has increased for three of the five schools. However, even in the Dayton neighborhoods served by the Neighborhood School Centers, few children walk or bike to elementary school.

Acknowledging these uncertainties, the key partners have not walked away from their leadership of this project. The partners, though few in number, remain committed. The University of Dayton continues to play a supportive role with staff leadership from the Fitz Center and financial support from the University president. The Fitz Center for Leadership in Community believes that Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers are an excellent demonstration of the power of community building in urban Dayton. When properly oriented and structured, they are also a significant democratic means of engaging University students and faculty in what John Saltmarsh and Matthew Hartley (2011) have described as “reciprocal” relationships with community partners. Patient persistence may be the most important leadership trait needed to realize a hopeful future for our youngest citizens.

### **The possibility that smaller is better**

Since the demise of its manufacturing prowess during the first two thirds of the twentieth century, Dayton has been as hard hit as any urban center in the United States.

Significantly, the city that educated talented leaders as diverse as the Wright brothers and Paul Laurence Dunbar has reinvented itself in many ways, including leadership in advanced technology. But the urban core that was home to Dunbar and the Wrights, the public school system that nurtured them, and the community that is home to the Neighborhood School Centers is smaller, poorer, and less hopeful than ever. If Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers succeed in realizing their mission and shared vision, the importance of planning and programming within neighborhood scale and leveraging strong interpersonal relationships will have been demonstrated in a new way. If so, the lesson of Dayton may be that smaller is better.

One of the biggest challenges faced by youth programs and other so-called “nonessential” social services in all urban communities is inconsistency. In Dayton, our youth have experienced a roller coaster of programming throughout their young lives. Depending on the availability of federal and foundation grants and the resulting large fluctuations in local youth program opportunities, these kids and their families have experienced school years and summers with interesting and even exciting programs

followed by years of nothing. As just one example, no significant neighborhood youth sports teams or leagues have survived the inconsistent support and funding. Summer literacy programs, camps and employment programs for urban youth have done only slightly better.

Our community developed its Neighborhood School Centers to provide predictable and sustainable programs for youth, families, and neighborhoods. We formed partnerships of public elementary schools with effective nonprofits to build program capacity that can be counted on year to year at the neighborhood level, with or without grant support from sources beyond the region. To accomplish this, we started small, moved ahead methodically, and emphasized the strength of personal and institutional relationships.

## Conclusion

The authors are hopeful that communities attempting to grow their community schools from a few to a system-wide program and those exploring the potential role of local colleges and universities will benefit from the information, insights, and ideas shared. While the programs offered, the leadership of key partners, and the talents of site coordinators are essential to community schools, the organization of the effort, the resilience of the community, and the persistence of the relationships matter too. Whether the community schools model is just being tested or the concept is fully imbedded in the culture of a community, the lessons learned in Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers can be useful. Community schools are more than an educational reform tactic; they are the essential building blocks of our democratic society in the United States.

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## The Authors

### Dick Ferguson

*Former Executive Director*

*Fitz Center for Leadership in Community*

Dick held several administrative positions in 41 and 1/2 years at the University of Dayton. He retired in December 2014. In 2001, he began full-time service as executive director of the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community. He team-taught the Leadership in Building Communities seminar for the past 20 years. He helped initiate and direct Dayton's Neighborhood School Centers, an initiative of the Dayton Foundation, Dayton Public Schools, the City of Dayton, Montgomery County, United Way, and the Fitz Center. He is a 1973 graduate of the University of Dayton (B.A. in English) and a 1993 graduate of The Ohio State University School of Public Policy and Management (M.A. in Public Policy). His wife, Susan, is director of the Center for Catholic Education in the UD School of Education and Health Sciences. They have three grown sons, two daughters-in-law, and a beautiful granddaughter and grandson.

### Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M., Ph.D.

*Father Ferree Professor of Social Justice*

Brother Raymond L. Fitz, S.M. was the longest-serving president in the University of Dayton's history. He stepped down from his position after 23 years in June 2002 and now works in the Fitz Center for Leadership in Community as the Father Ferree Professor of Social Justice. This position works to connect Catholic social teaching and the social sciences through the community-building mission of the Center. In 2015, Brother Ray received the prestigious Theodore M. Hesburgh Award for Leadership Excellence in Higher Education from the Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities.

In the region, Brother Ray facilitates conversations that address the "wicked problems" of the cycle of poverty. His major focus is on how our community can move parents and children out of poverty. He was the initial chairperson of the Montgomery County Family and Children First Council and has served on the Executive Committee of the Council. Brother Ray works with Fitz Center colleagues on the Neighborhood School Centers project and is chair of the Dayton Public Schools Family and Community Engagement Council.

Prior to becoming the University of Dayton's 17th president in 1979, Brother Ray spent a decade in a variety of University-related positions, ranging



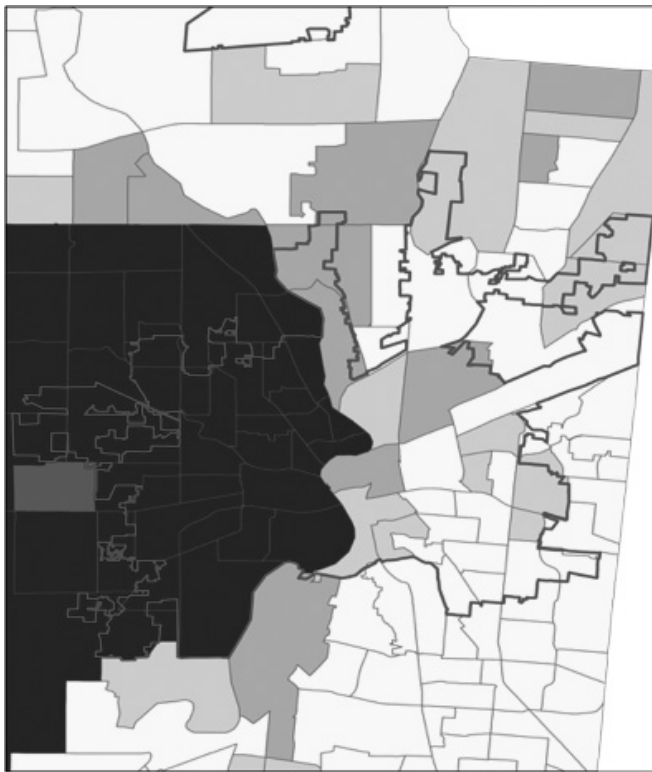
from a faculty member in the School of Engineering to executive director of the Center for Christian Renewal. He entered the Society of Mary, a Roman Catholic religious order, and began his studies at the University of Dayton in 1960. In 1964, he graduated with honors with a B.S. in electrical engineering. He holds an M.S. and Ph.D. in electrical engineering from Polytechnic University.

Footnotes

**Appendices**

**Appendix A**

**Racial Segregation in Dayton – Percentage of Census Tract Population Identifying as Black**



<= 10%    30 -- 40%  
 10 -- 20%    > 40%  
 20 -- 30%

Source: American Community Survey 2013 Five-Year Estimates

**Appendix B**

**Dayton Census Tracts by Percentage of Poverty**

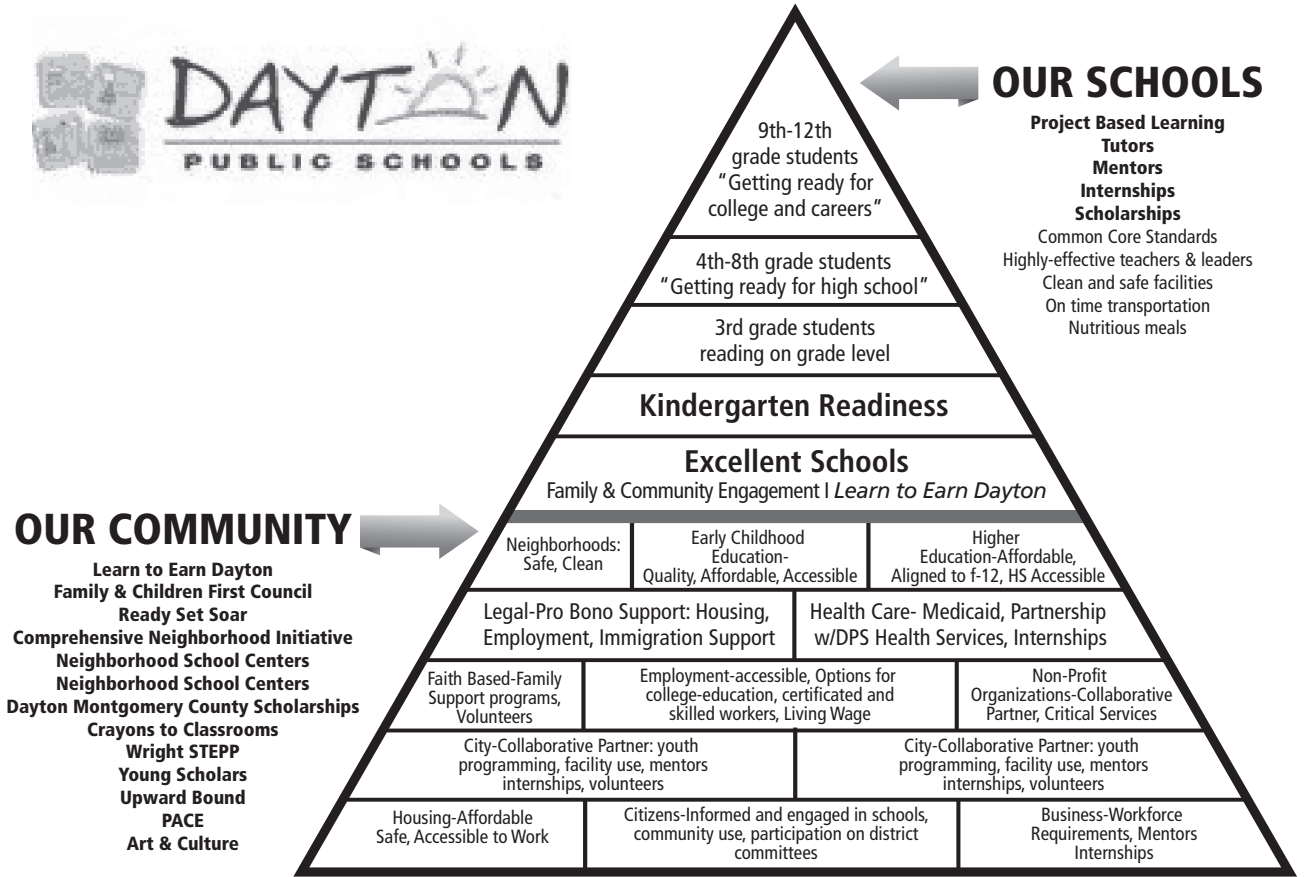
Sixty-three percent of Dayton's children live in high poverty neighborhoods; 83% of Dayton's poor children live in high poverty neighborhoods.



<= 10%    30% -- 40%  
 10% -- 20%    > 40%  
 20% -- 30%

Source: American Community Survey 2013 Five-Year Estimates

Appendix C  
Dayton Public Schools' REACH Model



**OUR COMMUNITY**

- Learn to Earn Dayton
- Family & Children First Council
- Ready Set Soar
- Comprehensive Neighborhood Initiative
- Neighborhood School Centers
- Neighborhood School Centers
- Dayton Montgomery County Scholarships
- Crayons to Classrooms
- Wright STEPP
- Young Scholars
- Upward Bound
- PACE
- Art & Culture

**OUR SCHOOLS**

- Project Based Learning
- Tutors
- Mentors
- Internships
- Scholarships
- Common Core Standards
- Highly-effective teachers & leaders
- Clean and safe facilities
- On time transportation
- Nutritious meals

December 2012

**REACH**  
Raising Education Achievement in Each Child Higher

## Appendix D

### Neighborhood School Centers Outcomes and Indicators

#### Children are healthy and ready to enter kindergarten.

- % of children who are kindergarten ready
- % of children who attend full-day kindergarten
- % of children with selected chronic health problems when entering kindergarten
- % of children with avoidable developmental delays

#### Students attend school consistently.

- % students missing three or more days of school in the last month

#### Students succeed academically.

- % of children who are proficient in 3rd grade reading and mathematics
- % of children who are proficient in 4th grade mathematics
- % of children who are proficient in 5th grade science
- % of children who are proficient in 6th grade reading
- % of children who are proficient in 7th grade mathematics
- % of children who are proficient in 8th grade science
- % of children who transition successfully into high school

The gaps in achievement among racial groups and income groups

#### Students are actively involved in learning and in their communities.

- % of children volunteering in the community
- % of children participating in out of school activities

#### Families are increasingly involved with and supportive of their children's education.

- % of young children read to frequently by family members
- % of parents attending teacher meetings
- % of families above the poverty threshold
- % of families receiving SNAP benefits
- # of substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect
- % of families that eat meals together
- % of families that have rules regarding TV watching and computer usage
- % of families where there is good parent-child communication

#### Schools are engaged with families and communities.

- # of community and neighborhood events held in the school
- % of families attending the Family Cafés

#### Children are healthy – physically, socially, and emotionally.

##### **Children are born healthy**

- % with low birth weight

##### **Children have healthy eating habits**

- % of children that are obese
- % of children that ate fruits and vegetables less than five times a day for the past seven days
- % of children that drank soda at least one a day in the past seven days.

##### **Children have access to primary care doctor**

##### **Children have appropriate mental health services**

#### Students live and learn in a safe, supportive and stable environment

- # of violent crimes per 1000 population
- # of bullying incidents
- # of child violent deaths per 1000 child
- % of children participating in organized sport programs

#### The neighborhood is a desirable place to live

- % of vacant housing units
- % of foreclosed housing units
- % of home ownership

Appendix E

Neighborhood School Centers Budget

Budget for the Neighborhood School Centers

Partnership

2014-2015 School Year

Revenues

Dayton Public Schools	\$140,000
Montgomery County	75,000
University of Dayton	50,000
United Way	25,000
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$290,000</b>

Expenses

Site Coordinators	\$240,000
UD Student Interns	30,000
Consultants	10,000
Program Evaluation/Reporting	1,500
Training/Supplies/Printing/Meetings	2,000
Coordinators' Project Budget	3,000
University Student Transportation	2,000
UD Civic Engagement Support	1,500
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$290,000</b>

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**Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way:  
The Move Towards University-Assisted Community Schools**

Dareen Basma  
Robert Kronick  
University of Tennessee, Knoxville

## **Lead, Follow or Get Out of the Way:**

The ultimate goal of full service community schools is to develop good American citizens who will make positive contributions to society (Richardson, 2009). Benson, Harkavy and Puckett aver the same in their emphasis on producing students who can operate in a democracy as adumbrated by John Dewey. In 2012, Kronick & Dahlin-Brown published *Collaboration + Prevention: Looking Back on Eleven Years of a University Assisted Community School*. That article focused on the obvious from the title: collaboration, prevention and system theory. These are the bases of Kronick's (2000, 2002, 2005) model of full service community schools.

Richardson (2009) and Kronick (2005) maintain the importance of supportive ecology. This generates from the work of Urie Brofenbrenner who advocates for understanding the ecology of human development from a nested systems approach. The community school, as developed by Kronick (2005), focuses on systems as one of the main pillars that must be understood in working with vulnerable and at-risk children. As such, it must be understood that at-risk vulnerable students operate within various systems such as home, school and church; these systems must be studied as a unit where children interact in a variety of ways.

Leadership and partnership are key facets of the successful creation and implementation of community schools. This has been found to be an eternal truth in the evolution and development of the Knoxville University-Assisted Community School (UACS) programs. Leadership that follows the four frames of structural, human relations, political and symbolic has a good chance of being successful within the community school movement. Community schools, by their very definition, are not top-down in their leadership styles, but are rather bottom-up, top-down and lateral. These four frames are especially compatible with community schools as a place and a system of relationships.

This article is designed to give a developmental look at community schools as experienced in Knoxville, Tennessee. In 1998, Joy Dryfoos came to Knoxville and inspired a group of people to learn her theories about community schools. Dryfoos believed especially in school clinics and the school being a hub of services. She clearly saw that services, especially for poor children and families, were fractured in America. By having a one-stop shop, these services can be effectively, efficiently and humanely delivered. The UACS model was established in 2009 with the university being the intermediary with the addition of secure and somewhat generous external

funding. Funding added a new dimension of stability and creativity that continues till this day and serves as a model nationally and internationally. Visitors from as far away as Scotland illustrate the relative importance of the UACS model in our city.

This article also examines the role of the university in the growth of the UACS as well as its impact on the emergence of community schools under the direction of the county school system. The launch of the Great School Partnerships in 2012 resulted in the development of nine community schools, all modeled after the original UACS in Knoxville, with intermediaries ranging from the Boys and Girls Club, YMCA and Project Grad. On a national level, the UACS in Knoxville, TN is both a leader as well as a learner. This article examines issues that influence the successes and failures of the relationship between the university, the community and the schools, not only in Knoxville, but throughout the nation. Further, this article takes into account changing currents impacted by international issues, specifically those regarding refugee populations struggling to assimilate in the United States. This article briefly reviews some of those refugee-specific struggles and proposes the UACS model as a vehicle to deliver services that address their overwhelming needs.

An anchor institution is one in that takes a special interest in its local community and helps provide needed resources and services. It is one that is permanent within its community and hence not likely to move. Examples are universities and medical schools. This concept, thoroughly described by Taylor and Luter (2013) is one that should be considered by university administrators in their long range planning for their universities. Anchor institutions are foundational to the development of a University-Assisted Community School model.

The University of Tennessee (UT), Knoxville, is the potting soil for allowing and facilitating the development of the UACS model. The question often arises in this kind of applied research, community service, of whether or not the university as an institution is an engaged university, or if this is nothing more than a confederation of faculty and students? In 1998 full-service community school model in Knoxville began with the visit of Joy Dryfoos. Since that time, many scholar activists have come to Knoxville to share their insights. What we see from working with them collaboratively is that the citadel for this work is clearly the Barbara and Edward Netter Center at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn). Other universities,

which have made major contributions to the university-assisted community school concept are Boston College, the University of Dayton, the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa and Indiana University/Purdue University-Indianapolis (IUPUI) to note a few.

The following continuum, going from the University of Pennsylvania to University of Tennessee, is designed to give the reader a peak at the possibilities and potentials of the universities involved in community service and civic engagement. The Netter Center is clearly the gold standard for this endeavor. Ira Harkavy, who is the Vice President and Director of the Netter Center, holds many local, national and international positions. His staff enables the Netter Center to do local work particularly in West Philadelphia, which is a commitment upheld not only by the Netter Center, but also the University of Pennsylvania. Penn, under the leadership of such notable presidents as Sheldon Hackney, Judith Rodin and current President, Amy Gutmann, has continued the long history of civic engagement and the role of the university as an anchor institution. This puts Penn clearly at the far end of the positive continuum of those universities that work in the area of University-Assisted Community Schools. Boston College, with a strong College of Education and a Catholic philosophy that not only encourages but also requires community service, has moved from Connect Five and the Thomas Gardner School to Boston Connects, a citywide program. This has all happened under the direction of Professor Mary Walsh, in the College of Education of Boston College. . University of Dayton, Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI), Florida International University are among the others doing significant work. What separates the University of Tennessee from the others, is that it does not have a center; it does not have the type or magnitude of support that is necessary to sustain the Netter Center. This is not to say that UT does not support community schools; what it does say is that the magnitude of support could always be stronger to reach the level of Penn. An extremely crucial component of university support includes funding and program/faculty involvement.

The university's role in helping secure funding for this project includes, but is not limited to, support staff, administrative support in shepherding the grant through the university's office of research, and by providing undergraduate, graduate and professional students to work at the project. The funding that has been raised up to this point at the UACS in Knoxville has come from the work of the Director of the UACS and the

Director of the College's Development Office. Funding has come from the following sources: local and regional businessmen and philanthropists, local grants, the U.S. Department of Education and alumnae. This money allows us to serve 180 children within two schools, employ approximately 20 people and feed children, family and community members five times a week.

Program and faculty involvement can occur either due to the faculty's own interest in service or the encouragement of a university that rewards service commitment. Faculty and program involvement provide the community schools with a wide array of expertise, as each faculty member contributes to the diversity of the programs offered in the UACS. Potential benefits to faculty are myriad. First, it aids in their teaching and helps prevent burnout. Burnout is averted when faculty divert from their regular routine and give back to the community through service. It also provides an avenue for research, albeit applied research. This provides avenues of study that might include how university schools and community work together. In other words, opportunities that faculty have not considered in the past might take formation.

## Resistance and Emulation

As with any new enterprise, community schools in our community were hardly met with overall exuberance. In fact, the initial response to starting the community schools was quite negative. Superintendents didn't understand it, didn't want to support it, or simply felt it was a foolish idea. It was not a concept that was heard of "around here." Without some degree of perseverance, this program would not have come about. Struggles began with the local school system over whether or not it was even their responsibility to provide programs afterschool, and based on Kronick's philosophy, one that was school based versus school linked. Despite resistances within the community, we reached out to the school superintendent and the county mayor. Their initial response was: "What are you going to do for Smithsville?" (pseudonym for a suburban, wealthy area.) They did not understand that the model emphasizes beginning where the needs are the greatest.

Town-Gown balance is always difficult. In other words, it was a delicate balance to get the community and university on board at the same time. Even with the help of a two-year appointment of an Americorps/VISTA member, we were unsuccessful in mounting a strong support for academically based community service courses across the campus. The community

school should benefit the community, broadly defined, and since it is using university students, undergraduate, graduate and professional, the university should gain. This has happened in increments over the years, but has hardly been transformative and systemic.

Overtime through persistence, hard work and a little good luck, community schools began to appear on a local level. The beginning school and its principal were very supportive, energetic and continue to this day to be involved in the community school movement. Commencing in the late 1990s and early 2000s, community school meetings were held on the east side of our community to discuss this approach. In one particular meeting, approximately 300 families attended to learn about what a community school actually was. They were enticed to come to this meeting because of the program that was being offered, and no doubtedly, the food that was provided.

Local leaders came on board and Knox County began to put resources into community schools. In 2012, the Great School Partnership was established and funded by Knox County schools as the fund raising arm for community schools in the Knoxville region.

In 2015, one can say that community schools are well known within the Knoxville region and they are being covered by the newspapers and their supplements. In early November of 2014, Jeanita Richardson, a scholar from the University of Virginia, visited the University of Tennessee and spoke on community schools; she added a new dimension and voice that has not been heard before. A wide diversity of people attended this – some for community schools, some for charter schools, some parents, families and professionals in the field. This is an excellent sign that education in general and community schools in particular are a vibrant topic in our community. This presentation follows a long list of activist scholars who have spoken to the needs of afterschool programs in our community.

The bottom line is that the community schools movement in Knoxville, TN, in 2015, with fits and starts, is relatively healthy and growing. The Great School Partnerships continues to add schools under its aegis and the UACS continues to add programs and personnel to the two schools that fall under its umbrella. It is possible that one more school will become a UACS in the near future.

The UT-supported university-assisted community schools in the Pond Gap and Inskip communities address the basic needs of Knoxville area children and their families that are not met by public schools and human service agencies. The program's

mission is to empower community participants to access support systems independently and learn to help themselves. The project seeks to improve educational outcomes and reduce the number of high school dropouts.

To illustrate the work, Pond Gap has been a university-assisted community school since 2009. Community partners for this project include faculty members at Pond Gap Elementary, Knox County Schools, Boys and Girls Club, Pellissippi State Community College, Knoxville Opera Company, and South College. University of Tennessee, Knoxville partners include the Colleges of Arts and Sciences, Engineering, Nursing, Education, Health and Human Sciences, and Natural and Agricultural Sciences, along with the departments of Sociology, Wildlife and Forestry, Counseling and Sport Psychology, and the Howard H. Baker Center for Public Policy, and UT Educational Psychology and Counseling Department.

Institution impact includes service-learning opportunities for students in a variety of academic disciplines, and career development opportunities for UT students. Students serve in these schools as mentors, teachers and friends with faculty supervision, and participate in a learning environment promoting engaged educational reform. Six faculty members from College of Education, Health and Human Services work with 14 faculty members from Pond Gap Elementary School. During the regular academic year, close to 125 UT and Pellissippi students are regularly at the community school and close to 55 students volunteer for summer activities.

Community impact includes the provision of health services to students and their families, mental health screenings, academic support for students and their families, as well as financial support for the families. At-risk urban students are enabled to create long-term, mentoring relationships with UT students and faculty based on the three tenants of prevention, collaboration, and systems-level thinking.

Community schools, like Pond Gap Elementary, offer programs that align with, but are not duplicative of, school-day programs. This philosophy helps children reach the established higher standards and does not subject them to “more of the same drill and kill.” This approach provides alternative ways of teaching to supplement the common core curriculum. This is completed by offering music, circus, tutoring, reading etc. all done with a creative bent that only afterschool community programs offer. The community surrounding Pond Gap is actually becoming a



destination community for young parents and we have actually seen families move from more affluent areas so they can attend our school.

Other populations are also finding their way to Knoxville, and to our schools: recent refugees. The 21st century has, and continues to be, a time of profound sociopolitical change and upheaval, of ultra-nationalism and widespread ethno-political violence that has resulted in the forced migration of millions of people. The term refugees is used to refer collectively to all people forced by political violence to flee their homes and communities, regardless of whether they enter another country or remain within the borders of their homeland (UNHCR, 2014). The majority of these are civilians whose only crime was that of living in regions of violent conflict, or belonging to a particular ethno-cultural group subjected to oppression and persecution, extending in some cases to the extremity of genocide.

According to the Refugee Processing Center, around 70,000 refugees will have been admitted to the United States within the past year (RPC, 2014). Numbers of refugees displaced in the United States continue to rapidly increase. Many refugees come into their new host country with a wide array of mental health stressors and academic challenges as they undergo the process of displacement and attempt assimilation (Porter & Haslam, 2005). Behind these numbers are not artificial entities, but human lives, many of which are faced with the diagnostic label of Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Many of these individuals have pre-immigration stressors, and are now faced with post-immigration stressors triggered by their arrival to the United States.

Clinic-based services have been developed to specifically target this population, but their limitations hinder significant progress. While there has been no significant research conducted on the impact a full-service community school has on the lives and assimilation of refugees, it is evident from the overall research on this population and their needs that the community school is potentially among the most effective way to deliver the tools they need to succeed in reconstructing their lives.

## **Mental Health & Displacement Stressors**

Much of the research reviewed on the refugee populations generally focuses on mental health stressors as they directly relate to war-related violence. Countless studies on refugee populations from numerous countries of origins, cultures and ethnicities have concluded with similar results. Exposure to political violence has always

been associated with an increased risk of both acute and chronic post-traumatic stress reactions (Tang & Fox, 2000). Most commonly, symptoms of traumatic stress among refugees have been assessed using the diagnostic criteria of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), which was originally developed based on research with American veterans of the Vietnam War (Miller & Rasmussen, 2010).

Schweitzer, Brough, Vromans and Kobe (2011) examined pre-migration stressors identified in Burmese refugee groups that recently arrived to their new host culture; results indicated that significant proportions of individuals in the study presented with PTSD, depression and anxiety. Jamil et al., (2000) conducted interviews with Iraqi refugees and reported that 80% of the participants at the time of the interview were experiencing intense symptoms of anxiety and depression. In a study with Vietnamese refugees, Mollica et al (1998) reported that 90% of members in the study diagnostic criteria for PTSD. His analysis further indicated that the severity of the traumatic experience could be correlated to the severity of the symptoms presented. It is evident that differences in cultures and ethnicities do not mute the development of at times debilitating symptomatology.

While a significant portion of research on refugees focused heavily on the impact war-related trauma had on their mental health and well being, many researchers shift their focus to psychosocial and displacement stressors, indicating that they can have an equally significant impact on wellness. Many even argued that distress is heavily rooted in the daily stressors faced, especially when exacerbated by war-related events (Miller & Ramussen, 2010). It is evident that an exploration of the impact displacement has on the individual, family and community is necessary as they are all mutually influential relationships.

Research suggests that refugee populations struggle with the process of acculturation to their new host culture (Jamil, Nassar-McMillan & Lambert, 2007). Often times, barriers are a result of post-migration stressors exacerbated by numerous losses as a result of the migration and challenges of adapting to new and unfamiliar settings (Miller & Ramussen, 2010). Specific variables that exacerbate stressors include loss of social support and lack of a new social network, feelings of isolation and alienation from the new host culture, feelings of marginalization by the host culture, perceived discrimination from host culture, financial disparities and struggles to attain financial sufficiency, dramatic shift in both familial and social roles and

lack of access to healthcare and educational resources (Miller & Rasco, 2004). The community school, which functions as a hub of services, provides a safe environment to address many of those displacement stressors.

### **Clinic-Based Services vs. Community School Setting**

Kronick (2002) defines full service community schools as an institution designed to meet the needs of contemporary children and families. It can be tailored to meet the needs of every community. Not only is quality education provided for the students, but it is integrated with provision of health, mental health and social services that support and enrich the lives of the children, parents and communities. Furthermore, cultural diversity and community ownership become values foundational to the structure of the community school. It not only addresses concern with the students and their well being, but reaches out to families by including adult education, parenting classes, and parent resource centers. Because the refugee populations in the United States inevitably have access to the school, they will also have access to the services that the community school provides. Community schools, like Pond Gap, can address the limitations of clinic-based settings, including lack of cultural fit, resistance to mental health counseling and a limited capacity of addressing displacement stressors.

One of the major limitations of clinic-based services is the lack of cultural fit. The majority of displaced individuals come from non-Western societies; psychotherapy and psychopharmacology are primarily European and American phenomena, reflecting Western sets of beliefs. The frequently given diagnosis of PTSD is one that was developed to meet the criteria presented in American soldiers as they were impacted by war. For instance, Molsa, Hjelde & Tiilikainen (2010) identified that many older Somali refugees refrain from seeking treatment because the conceptualization of mental distress utilized in the Western world increases their feelings of alienation. Further qualitative analysis with this population revealed that the Western healthcare system failed to integrate this population's understanding of healing and belief in culturally bound symptoms (Molsa, Hjelde & Tiilikainen, 2010).

Although it is difficult to generalize across diverse cultures, some major areas of difference between Western and non-Western approaches to mental health can include an emphasis on religious and supernatural explanations for psychological distress in many non-

Western cultures, versus a focus in the West on intra-individual, natural/scientific explanations (Miller & Rasco, 2004). For example, Western conceptualization of depressive symptoms can include feelings of guilt, low self-esteem and self-accusations. In a non-Western culture, depressive symptoms may be a result of malicious spirits or the consequence of improper conduct. As such, many non-Western cultures view the notion of self and well being as one that is deeply woven into social roles, social conduct, spirituality and higher powers. In contrast, Western conceptualizations of self and wellbeing emphasize individualism, autonomy and assuming responsibility (Molsa, Punamaki, Saarni, Tiilikainen, Kuittinen & Honkasalo, 2014). Another major area of difference between Western and non-Western approaches is the manifestation and expression of the distress. While in Western cultures distress is a psychological symptom, in non-Western cultures, it is a somatic one that is often times healed with spiritual rituals that work towards harmony in social relations, be it with other individuals of the group, deceased ancestors or specific deities (Molsa et al., 2014).

While a community school in the South Eastern part of the United States is not likely to focus on deceased ancestors or specific deities, it is culturally alert and aware of the various cultural backgrounds of students who are attending this school. The school depicted in this study is truly one that is culturally diverse. A third of their students are classified as refugees. Interestingly enough, at this school, a large contingent of PreK-5 Iraqi students has arrived over the last academic year. Already there was a large group of Hispanic and African students. In order to maintain the well being of the students and families, the community school had to incorporate elements of cultural diversity into its work, attending to and focusing on the wide array of needs of both its children and families.

Children are forced to negotiate a wide array of challenges in a host country that include grasping the culture of the new school and environment, while also learning a new language (Tyrrer & Fazel, 2014). Because many of the children have settled into a post-migration environment that is capable of sustaining interventions, it is crucial that the children's needs be identified within the school building in order for those interventions to be implemented. Mental health workers, teachers and staff within the school need to be aware and mindful of the context in which those students were placed in the schools in order to facilitate early identification of interventions needed. It is not necessary to engage in the traditional form of talk therapy with the child, as

that may not be the best vehicle to assess their needs. Expressive approaches to counseling as manifested in play, drama, art or writing can provide that space the children may require to process the pre and/or post migration stressors; it may also provide an environment that would ease the process of their acculturation. This can be incorporated during the daytime classroom or can be encouraged in the afterschool program. Further, schoolteachers and staff can also utilize the support system that the children had already formed in the classroom settings and building on group work in order to solidify the child's feelings of belonging and acceptance.

### **Resistance to Mental Health Services**

Numerous research studies have identified that there is a significant underutilization of mental health services among refugee populations. Earlier, we discussed that the lack of cultural fit and sensitivity in the conceptualizations provided by Western approaches prevents many non-Western groups from seeking those services. Another crucial reason for underutilization of services despite the great need of distress experienced is the perception of these services as culturally alien and highly stigmatized (Miller & Rasco, 2004). In the West, for example, seeking professional treatment for symptoms of psychological trauma is a widely accepted and commonly recommended course of action.

For instance, among Iraqi refugees, mental health treatment may be met with extreme resistance because psychological distress is rarely revealed to strangers, and usually kept within the confines of the family system (Nassar-McMillan & Hakim-Larson, 2003). Research on Cambodian refugees indicated that while they were not opposed to acknowledging mental illness, they chose, and preferred, to do so with a traditional healer rather than a mental health professional (Molsa et al., 2014). The combination of lack of cultural fit and overall resistance to mental health services as delivered by a 'professional' is a lethal limitation for clinic-based services. It suggests that not only do clinic-based services struggle to meet refugees' cultural worldviews, but they also struggle with reaching large numbers within this population.

There are several reasons for locating mental health services within the community school setting. First, children and adults frequent the community school on an almost daily basis. The adults pick up their children, attend courses and inevitably interact with staff, teachers and mental health professionals that are already present in the building. This interaction is the

first step to building rapport and a relationship between the adults and mental health providers. Further, many children and adults come in and out of the school on a daily basis with the general population not knowing the specific purpose for the adult being there. They could be there for GED courses, cooking courses or a counseling session. Adults can begin to feel comfortable with talking to providers if the pressure of having to travel to a separate office is reduced; the providers are part of the school and the community and become safe members to talk to. While stigmatization can be reduced by offering these services at a school, mental health and stigma will always be intimately intertwined.

### **Addressing Displacement Stressors**

Lack of access to mental health services can be attributed to several reasons. For one, most mental health professionals do not offer their services to refugees who are often impoverished and unable to pay more than a small fee for such services. Additionally, refugees often lack adequate proficiency in the language of the host country, and professional counselors rarely have access to language interpreters.

When access to clinic-based services is established, displacement stressors are rarely addressed mainly because they fall outside the scope of the clinic (Miller & Rasco, 2004). Prior to addressing symptoms of trauma, clinic-based services need to first assess if basic needs are being met. Initial work with refugees needs to target the attainment of basic needs such as financial resources, employment, language services, legal aides and resolution of any immigration concerns, health care and housing amongst other things. Not only does the clinic have to address and alleviate the symptoms of trauma, but it also has to aid in the development of a social network in order to reduce social isolation and increase social support. It needs to help with the identification of social roles that maintain the integrity of their previous social roles while also empowering them to create roles that better fit their new environment. Finally, services need to address social ties within communities that have been devastated by war and conflict, work on re-building those connections and encourage the creation of new ones free of fear, suspicion and violence (Miller & Rasco, 2004).

While the resolution of many of the stressors mentioned may fall outside of the scope of a clinic-based service, it is necessary to recognize that the mental health and wellness of displaced individuals is strongly linked to their capacity to overcome those displacement stressors. As such, while it is important

to address specific symptomatology, it is also equally important to address those psychosocial stressors. This paper calls for a different form of mental health work—one that is rooted in community settings rather than mental health clinics; that is based on collaborative rather than hierarchical relationships with community members; and that is grounded in a thorough and respectful understanding of local values and beliefs regarding psychological wellbeing and distress. The transition from clinic to community creates the need for a new model, an alternative framework that reflects the complex realities of refugee communities and the altered relationships we will need to develop as we shift from relations of hierarchical expertise to authentic collaboration.

It is evident that a full-service community school is capable of not only delivering the mental health services that the refugee population within that neighborhood may require, but also targeting the displacement needs that clinic-based services struggle with encompassing in their work. For example, afterschool ESL courses are provided for the parents, targeting the communication barriers that may arise. Furthermore, GED courses are offered for the parents if they lack a high school degree. In many instances, individuals who have been displaced have held positions that required some form of education in their countries of origin. The struggle arises when they are placed in a host country that does not accept that degree due to credentialing purposes. As such, it would be crucial to provide those members with some form of career advising that will allow for a strengths based assessment, identifying skills that can be accentuated when looking for better suited jobs. The purpose of doing so would be to increase a sense of hopefulness in the ability to regain a semblance of the roles that they filled in their country of origin. Furthermore, the community school can connect the groups to local refugee agencies that may be able to help with getting initial needs met. The collaboration between local agencies and the community school can provide the population with information on employment, housing, healthcare, financial stability and education. The presence of that agency in the community school on a consistent basis will not only provide them with access to the information but also increase the chances of having all of the families' questions answered and a plan to meet their needs developed.

While it is nearly impossible to learn about and meet the cultural needs of every refugee group in the neighborhood, it is possible to deliver foundational

support that will aid them in the reconstructing of their lives. As mentioned previously, one of the main goals of a full service community school is to encourage community involvement and support. Events for parents and families to meet on a regular basis are planned in order to encourage their involvement. Furthermore, the role of a parent committee is crucial in the union between school and community. The parent committee will play an integral role in reaching out to new groups and refugee members of that community. As such, the school reinforces that those living within that neighborhood take ownership and responsibility of that community. While it may not always be feasible to connect refugee populations with a larger group from their country of origin, it is reasonable to assume that a sense of social support will increase if they feel connected to the neighborhood they are in. It is the community school's role to increase awareness of cultural diversity and appreciation for differences. In essence, the community school becomes a safe place of neutrality, where individuals of all ages come together to learn and grow from one another.

This article brings together a new issue and voice to the community school movement, refugee students and their families. What may appear as an odd couple, is in fact a marriage made in heaven. It is clear from the research that went into this article that refugees can be well served by community schools. There is no question that the philosophy adumbrated by John Dewey long ago that school is the community and the community is the school is played out in the relationships built between refugees and community schools, especially University Assisted Community Schools.

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## **Critical Consciousness, Youth Empowerment and Black Neighborhoods**

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The University at Buffalo conducts an Academic Summer Camp on Neighborhood Development which is designed to construct a bridge between civic engagement and academic support for at-risk black and Latino students. The program seeks to develop and strengthen students' academic skills, including motivation to learn and do well in school, by engaging them in neighborhood development activities. 2013 was the UB Center for Urban Studies' (UB Center) second Summer Academic Program on Neighborhood Development held at the UB South Campus.



Figure 1: Students and Teachers in UB Center Summer Academic Camp on Neighborhood Development  
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The UB Center used the project, *Reimagining the Perry Choice Neighborhood Through Digital Photography*, to teach the students how to formulate neighborhood plans that could transform a precarious, underdeveloped, inner-city community into a better place to live. The students' work was part of a larger neighborhood revitalization plan being developed for the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority's Perry Choice Neighborhood (UB Center for Urban Studies, 2013). The ideas embedded in their neighborhood strategy would be formally presented to the planning team and would be seriously considered for incorporation into the actual neighborhood plan.

The students' final product was very polished and professional. Using the magic of Photoshop, the students turned a struggling neighborhood filled with derelict houses and vacant parcels into a "simulated" community that was lively, prosperous and revitalized. Upon careful review of the project, however, we discovered something both surprising and disturbing. These young black and Latino students had peopled the revitalized neighborhood with only white residents (Figure 2).



Figure 2: The Simulated Revitalized Neighborhood  
Source: UB Center for Urban Studies

The purpose of this essay is to explore the reasons why students participating in the UB Summer Academic Camp on Neighborhood Development made the displacement of black residents a central part of the simulated revitalization of a precarious, underdeveloped black community. The essay will be divided into three parts. The first part explores the theoretical and conceptual framework used in the summer academic camp, while the second part discusses the summer camp program itself. We will then discuss efforts to revise the program to address the issues that produced the earlier result and finally the challenge of evaluating these types of programs will be covered.

## The Theoretical and Conceptual Framework

Civic engagement programs that focus on youth empowerment and citizenship development have become very popular since 1989 (Youniss, 2002). These programs are typically interested in helping young people to develop positive identities and to prepare them for active participation in a democratic society. Checkoway, et.al. (2013) defines civic engagement as a process in which people take collective action to address issues of public concern and become active proponents for the development of a just society. Amplifying this theme, Zaff et. al. (2010) says an active and engaged citizen is someone with a sense of civic duty, feelings of social connection to their community, and confidence in their abilities to bring about desirable social change. Checkoway and Aldana (2013) identify numerous types of activities that can be used to give students progressive civic engagement experiences, including grassroots organizing, citizen participation, intergroup dialogue, and the like. The development of efficacy, collective efficacy and critical consciousness among students falls into this civic engagement genre (Bandura, 1982; Bandura, 1995; Bandura, 2000; Bandura, 2006).

Most civic engagement programs, including those that focus on critical consciousness and youth empowerment, are developed from a white middle-class youth perspective (Checkoway, 2013; Diemer, 2006; Diemer, 2009; Godfrey, 2014). The goal is to turn middle-class young people into caring, democratic citizens with a concern for social and racial justice. The programmatic frameworks are thus middle-class centered ones in which the students are taught to look outward, from their own neighborhoods and life experiences, to sites where social and racial injustice are most intensely manifested. The idea is for these young people to become critically conscious citizens, who come to understand these sites of oppression and exploitation and then work to bring about change in them (Watts et. al., 1999).

The transformation of middle-class white youth into caring adults informed by social justice is a desirable goal, which we support. At the same time, however, it is vitally important for scholars and practitioners to understand the distinction between youth engagement programs for middle-class white students and those for low-income black and Latino students. In civic engagement programs targeted for middle-class whites, the students are taught to look outward, from their own neighborhoods and life experiences, to those sites where racial and social injustice are found (Child & Youth Services, 2008; Lyons, 2012). The approach for low-income, African American and Latino students must be different (Watts et. al., 1999; Diemer, 2011).

In the UB Center Summer Camp on Neighborhood Development, the students are mostly from precarious, underdeveloped black neighborhoods. Their self-identities and life courses are entangled with these neighborhoods; and these neighborhoods are also crucial and durable sites where racial and social injustice are transmitted, maintained, reinforced and reproduced. If the students' lives, and those of their families and neighbors, are to be changed, then these communities must be radically transformed. Therefore, we want the black and Latino students to look inward, inside their own neighborhoods and life experiences, so as to gain insight into the socioeconomic forces that create hardship and underdevelopment in their communities, and then to look outward from their neighborhood to where the sources of the hardship and underdevelopment are found (Watts et. al., 1999).

Within this framework, we also want the students to understand why the development of their neighborhoods differs from that of other neighborhoods scattered across the metropolitan city. It is critical for

them to understand the symmetry between resources and the positionality of their communities within the larger spatial ordering of neighborhoods and then also within the metropolitan city (Sampson, 2012; Watts et. al., 1999, p. 263).

In the summer academic camp, one goal is to transform young people into caring adults who are opposed to racial and social injustice. In our approach, democratic citizenship is not viewed as an abstract value, but rather it is conceived as an authentic commitment. A commitment that students will work with others to recreate and radically transform their own neighborhoods. Our desire is to counteract the "escape the ghetto" rhetoric that students often hear. That is, their efforts to attend school and achieve academically are successful only when they can leave their neighborhood, the ghetto. Our goal is to teach young people to love, respect and fight for the development of their communities and to use this struggle as a platform to battle for the transformation of the entire metropolitan city. The purpose of the UB Summer Academic Program on Neighborhood Development, then, is to produce critically conscious, socio-politically efficacious black and Latino students, who are motivated to learn and do well in school. Such students will understand that education is both a career preparatory tool and an instrument for building prosperous neighborhoods and a just society.

### **The Summer Academic Program on Neighborhood Development**

The challenge for the UB Center for Urban Studies was to develop an academically based summer program that included the interplay of these complex ideas. We decided the best way to achieve this goal was to develop a program that emphasized the evolution of socio-political efficacy among the children. We defined this concept as a young person's belief in their capacity to work with others to bring about desirable socioeconomic and political change in their neighborhoods (Watts et. al., 1999; Bandura, 2006). In this scheme of conceptualization, efficacy is viewed as a process in which learning and knowing are used to map out a course of action that leads to desirable socioeconomic outcomes (Watts et. al., 1999). We believe that sociopolitical efficacy, if nurtured, will promote resiliency, generate positive identities among black and Latino youth, trigger the growth of critical consciousness and motivate students do well in school (Watts et. al., 1999, p. 263). Most critically, we believe that efficacy, if developed in a neighborhood



context, can be transferred to a school context, thereby enhancing student academic achievement.

Unlike most civic engagement programs, the summer academic camp also belongs to the genre of academic support programs for at-risk children. Consequently, improved academic performance was a critical part of our summer program. Not only did we want to prevent loss of learning during the summer, but we also wanted to strengthen the students' academic skills. One desired outcome of the summer program, then, was the improved academic performance of students during the next school year. We theorized that building a connection between efficacy and critical consciousness would lead to improved academic performance among the students. The dismal statistics on academic achievement of black and Latino students is well documented so we need not repeat those statistics here.

What is not so well understood, however, is what causes the inadequate academic achievement among black and Latino students. There are no shortages of studies identifying poverty and poor neighborhood conditions as prime causes for the underachievement of blacks and Latinos (Dubow, 1994). While these issues are certainly factors, we think there is another, underappreciated cause of academic underachievement among this group. We posit that one reason black and Latino students do poorly in school is that they see little or no relationship between classroom activities and the realities they face daily. For example, 53% of the African American students in the Buffalo Public Schools live in poverty, while 79% of all students enrolled in the Buffalo Public Schools are eligible for free and reduced school lunches (Federal Education Budget Project, Buffalo School District, 2013, Online).

These statistics do not simply paint an aggregate portrait of students in the Buffalo School System; they construct a simulation of the world in which these young people live. Most Buffalo Public School students live in shrinking, underdeveloped neighborhoods, which are blighted, run-down and filled with vacant lots, and abandoned houses. Many of the residents are jobless, and because they live on the economic margin, experience high levels of stress, worry, physical pain, sadness and anger. These young folks have regularly seen people killed, sent to prison, and/or having negative encounters with the police. They also know residents who went to college, but never finished, or who graduated but are still struggling to make ends meet. Many of the children live in unhealthy houses, which are decrepit and in need of repairs. At home, the children typically do not have access to the internet, no

special place to study, nor do they have anyone at home to help with their studies. For example, a student, who participated in a UB Center focus group on education two years ago, said "my mother loves me, but she cannot help me." He was talking about getting help with his homework or guidance for his career aspirations.

The point is that these students underachieve academically because they see no relationship between classroom activities and how to grapple with neighborhood conditions. Therefore, we posited that if these students were shown how to use reading, math, science, technology, social studies and urban planning to problem-solve and enhance neighborhood conditions, their motivation to learn would be enhanced and lead to improved academic performance (Diemer, 2006). The use of knowledge and skills learned in the classroom to solve neighborhood problems, we believed, would bolster sociopolitical self-efficacy and the students' aspiration levels. We also believed that self-efficacy would enhance the development of critical consciousness, along with a belief in the capacity of neighborhood residents to change conditions in their community (Watts et. al., 1999; Diemer, 2011). In this sense, we conceptualized efficacy as a generative idea, a type of precritical stage, which would ultimately evolve into critical consciousness (Engle, 2009; Watts et. al., 1999; Wittrock, 1974).

*Critical consciousness* refers to the ability of the students to know and understand their positionality in the metropolitan city and to understand the powerful socioeconomic and political forces that produced the conditions found in their neighborhoods (Diemer, 2011; Freire, 1970; Freire, 2000; Godfrey, 2014). Of course, we did not believe that students would acquire both self-efficacy and *critical consciousness* over a six week summer program. Instead, we believed that developing the neighborhood plan would plant a set of generative ideas that would eventually grow into critical consciousness at some point in the future (Engle, 2009; Wittrock, 1974).

The viewpoint was based on the Watts et. al. (1999) five-stage model of sociopolitical development. Watts et. al. argued that the ability to think critically and independently was a prerequisite for African American sociopolitical development, quoting Carter G. Woodson (1933), education that simply imparts information to blacks is insufficient. True education for African Americans "resulted in making a man think and do for himself." (Watts et. al., 1999, p. 255-256). From this vantage point, Watts et. al. said *education ought to empower the disenfranchised to critically explore*

*options for self and community development* (Watts et. al., 1999, p. 256). In this regard, Watts et. al. believed that a linear relationship existed between the development of sociopolitical self-efficacy and neighborhood political collective efficacy. Citing Bowen (1902), he said “all revolutions and improvements start with individuals as it is impossible to elevate a race en mass (Watts et. al., 1999, p. 256).”

Toward this end, Watts, et. al. developed a model that integrated sociopolitical development with *critical consciousness*. In the first stage, the *acritical* stage, individuals believe in a “just world” and are unaware of symmetry in resources and inequity. In the *adaptive stage*, the individual recognizes inequity and asymmetry, but may feel that sociopolitical and economic structures are incapable of being changed. In the third stage, the *precritical stage*, individuals develop an attitude of complacency regarding asymmetry and inequality, and begin to question the usefulness of previous strategies to deal with injustice. In stage four, the *critical stage*, individuals learn more about social justice and issues of equity, often propelling them into becoming change agents. In the final stage, the *liberation stage*, individuals become change agents for social justice (Watts et. al., 1999, p. 263).

What we found most intriguing about the Watts model is the idea of *critical consciousness* as a process that moved from an *acritical* to a *liberation* stage.<sup>2</sup> In this final liberation stage, people developed a sense of purpose, social connectedness, and self-confidence (Checkoway, et. al. 2013). As self-efficacy evolves, and makes the qualitative leap from *acritical* to *critical consciousness*, ordinary residents are transformed into catalytic agents; they can then trigger the emergence of collective neighborhood political consciousness and efficacy (Watts et. al., 1999). So then, we theorized that if we could move students deep into that first stage – *acritical stage* – in the development of critical consciousness, the generative ideas planted during the summer program, would continue to grow, ultimately giving rise to higher, and higher levels of *critical consciousness*.

In closing out this section, we want to return to our basic thesis. We believe that black and Latino students underachieve academically because they see no relationship between the things learned in school and their ability to bring about positive change in their communities. Additionally, we posit that these children do not understand the forces responsible for

the precarity and underdevelopment found in their communities. We theorized that if students learned how to bring about change in their communities this would make them desirous of learning more about the forces inhibiting and thwarting the development of their neighborhoods, thereby fueling their movement along the pathway to *critical consciousness* and subsequent improved academic performance.

## The Program

The UB Summer Academic Program on Neighborhood Development is a six-week project-based learning program based on neighborhood development. The program exposes children to neighborhood problems that classroom learning can be used to solve. The goal of the program is to enhance the sociopolitical development of youth by transforming them into critically conscious students who love to learn and can apply the knowledge, skills and insights gained in the classroom to the resolution of neighborhood problems. Each summer, the project focus of the program shifts. In 2012, for example, the students used public art to transform an abandoned apartment building into a public art work, thereby transforming the physical appearance of the neighborhood.



Figure 3: From Abandoned Building to a Work of Public Art

In the 2013 summer program, we used digital photography and PhotoShop to show the students how to analyze, evaluate and use a neighborhood planning framework to revitalize an underdeveloped neighborhood. The project focused on a sub-area within the larger Perry Choice Neighborhood, where the UB Center was leading a major neighborhood planning initiative under the auspices of the Buffalo Municipal Housing Authority. The students were given opportunities to interact with other members of the planning team, and their task was to outline a framework for revitalizing one of the neighborhood sub-areas. The planning team intended to seriously consider their recommendations and incorporate their best ideas into the final plan.

<sup>2</sup> Watts' liberation stage corresponds to the highest level of critical consciousness, which culminates with critical action.

The students did research on the internet and took field trips to give them ideas about ways to the revitalize the neighborhood sub-area. Using Google Earth and Google Maps, the students conducted virtual tours of the targeted neighborhood sub-areas, as well as select neighborhoods in middle-class communities, both in Buffalo and elsewhere. These virtual field trips were complimented with real-time field trips both in the targeted sub-area neighborhoods, but also in upscale central city neighborhoods. The goal of these activities was for the students to identify neighborhood assets and liabilities and to reimagine the sub-area as a great place to live, work, play and raise a family. We wanted them to design a neighborhood that they would want to live in.

The sub-area analysis moved through five stages: (1) **describe the physical environment**—houses, streets, vacant lots, public spaces, commercial areas (2) **evaluate the neighborhood urban design and visual image** (3) **assess the neighborhood atmosphere** (4) **analyze the neighborhood as a place**—visual appeal, use of space, play areas, amenities—and (5) at the final stage, the students were to **re-imagine and recreate the neighborhood**.

In their analysis of the neighborhood, the students identified a series of neighborhood problems and then outlined specific solutions to each problem. Finally, the students were taught how to use PhotoShop to reimagine and redesign their neighborhood. In this dimension of their work, the students were shown how to find images online, including people, trees, shrubbery and items, and then incorporate them into existing photographs. In the introduction to their final report, *Changing the Perry Community: A “Lot” at a Time—Reimagining the Perry Choice Neighborhood Through Digital Photography*, the students explained this process in their own words:

“We explored the neighborhood using Google Earth and also on foot. We took pictures of the Perry Choice Neighborhood on weekly field work expeditions. We learned urban planning concepts and vocabulary. We wrote reflections every day after doing our work. We used digital photography as a way to reimagine the neighborhood. Another thing we did was to look at good examples of housing and vacant lots in other Buffalo neighborhoods and online. We used those ideas in PhotoShop to improve the pictures we took in the Ellicott neighborhood. We did all of these things to reimagine the neighborhood with the goal of making the Ellicott community a better place to live (U.S Summer Academic Program, 2013, p. 2).”

## The Program Evaluation

After completing their project, the students presented their work to parents, teachers and a panel of local experts in neighborhood development, including members of the Perry Choice Planning team. At the end of each summer program, we go through a thorough evaluation of the program, where we both engage the students in post-tests and exit interviews, but where we also evaluate their final project and assess the learning that took place. During this evaluation process, the team became fully aware of the extent of black displacement from the revitalized neighborhood. We used attribution theory to understand the reasoning behind the student’s decision to remove most African Americans from the revitalized neighborhood (Weiner, 2010). This theory deals with how people use information to arrive at causal explanations for events. It examines what information is gathered and how it is combined to form a causal judgment.

The students spelled out their reasons in their analysis of four key neighborhood problems. “Problem 1: It appears that the people in the neighborhood don’t take care of their neighborhood; Problem 2: People don’t seem to take care of their homes even if it’s the inside of their house and the outside of their house is dilapidated as well; Problem 3: The City of Buffalo takes down homes and then doesn’t do anything with the lots; Problem 4: People leave disgusting things in the neighborhood and at the park and kids go to the park” (UB Summer Program, 2013, p. 14).

Of these four problems, only one is attributed to the City of Buffalo and none to the owners of the rental properties found in the community. In our exit interviews with the children, these viewpoints were reiterated. The students rationalized that if neighborhood residents blighted the neighborhood and caused the conditions found in the community, the solution was to remove them. Concurrently, if whites maintained and kept up their neighborhood, then it made sense to replace the blacks with them as part of the redevelopment process.

The students’ problem analysis pointed out three programmatic shortcomings. The first is the students had little understanding of the symmetry between resources and neighborhood development. Hence, they had no framework to make an analytical comparison between poorly developed neighborhoods on the East Side, where they lived, and the more upscale neighborhoods on the West Side, where whites lived. The second is that our instructors did not pick up on these knowledge-based issues. Hence, they did not use critical events in the program as *teaching moments*.

For example, one *teaching moment* occurred when the students “blamed” the residents for the blighted conditions in their own neighborhood. This was an ideal time to discuss the symmetry between resources and neighborhood development, thereby enhancing their *critical consciousness*.

Another *teaching moment* was on field trips to the upscale West Side neighborhoods. The housing and neighborhood design of the West Side communities are similar to those found on the East Side. We wanted to students to view the streetscape along commercial corridors, and to take note of the landscaping and house painting on the residential streets. Our intent was to show them how creative design and imagination could be used to change the visual imagery of a neighborhood. We wanted them to focus on the physical infrastructure of the neighborhood. However, much to our surprise, they took away additional, unintended information from the fieldtrip. They paid close attention to the people living in the community. From this observation, they formed a simple syllogism: The neighborhoods on the West Side are attractive because whites live in them. The neighborhoods on the East Side are unattractive because blacks live in them. Therefore, if we want East Side neighborhoods to be attractive, we should get whites to live in them.

This evaluation brought us face to face with the challenge of evaluating the success of our program. Of course, this soon after the summer program, we had no idea if generative critical consciousness ideas had been successfully planted and would begin to sprout in future. We concluded from our evaluation that we had overemphasized efficacy and minimized *critical consciousness*. We backed away from our previous view that efficacy would give rise to critical consciousness. In fact, we hypothesized that simple efficacy will not morph into sociopolitical efficacy without being driven by the evolution of critical consciousness. We thus theorized that critical consciousness was much more likely to spawn efficacy, especially sociopolitical efficacy than the reverse. In fact, we theorized that students could become extremely efficacious without ever developing *critical consciousness*.

### Reframing the Summer Academic Cam

In 2014, we made the decision operationalize the lessons learned the previous year. In this summer camp, we would emphasize the development of *critical consciousness*. Our instructors were taught *critical consciousness* and it became the engine that drove project development. The students’ final product, a

Graphic Neighborhood Plan, showed both creativity and demonstrated a powerful interplay between critical consciousness and sociopolitical efficacy. However, during the evaluation of the program, we discovered yet another problem.

We had succeeded in developing a summer program that emphasized the development of critically conscious sociopolitical efficacy, but we had no good measures to determine how successful the venture had been. For example, Watts identified five stages in the development of critically conscious sociopolitical efficacy. However, we had no direct measures of critical consciousness, and only gross measures of efficacy. The results showed that the efficacy needle had not changed.

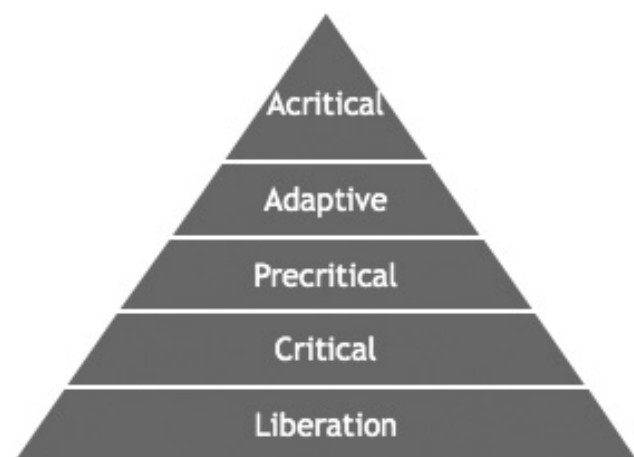


Figure 5: Watt Five Stages of Sociopolitical Development  
Source: Watts et. al., 1999, p. 263

However, if efficacy, like critical consciousness, is a staged process, then how far had our students moved during the summer program? We did not know. Moreover, we had no idea of where they were on Watts’ stage of sociopolitical development. Had we moved them to the upper levels of the acritical stage or had they made the leap to the adaptive or precritical stage. Our evaluation tools were silent. In terms of academic skills improvements our data was positive. However, the core of our theory is that sustainable academic improvement will be fueled by the ongoing development of critical consciousness.

### Reflections

In 1933, Dr. Carter G. Woodson, the renowned black scholar, outlined the importance of critical consciousness and sociopolitical development among African Americans when he said, “When you control a man’s thinking you do not have to worry about his actions. You do not have to tell him to stand here or go yonder. He will find his ‘proper place’ and will stay in it” (Woodson, 1933, p. xiii). Woodson

was talking about the importance of designing educational curricula so that students understood the conditions of the race and the racist socioeconomic barriers that held back the community's development.

A fundamental goal of the UB Summer Camp on Neighborhood Development was to create a program that fulfilled the Woodson credo; a program that used civic engagement, the development of critical consciousness and sociopolitical development to improve student academic performance and to produce a critical mass of young people dedicated to bringing about radical, fundamental change in their neighborhoods and in the larger society (Checkoway, 1998). The summer program differs from similar civic engagement initiatives in two distinct ways. The first is the emphasis placed on the development of critically conscious sociopolitical efficacy, and the second is the focus on neighborhood planning and community development as strategies for increasing student motivation and academic performance.

Our experiences with the 2013 and 2014 summer programs demonstrated the need for us to develop more effective strategies for teaching critical consciousness and sociopolitical efficacy. Also, we learned about the difficulty of developing effective ways of measuring the development of critical consciousness and sociopolitical development among the children. The evaluative challenge is twofold. The first is the development of good measures of critical consciousness and sociopolitical development, while the second are measures that demonstrate the impact that critical consciousness and sociopolitical development have on academic development.

Finally, our experiences have taught us that teaching critical consciousness and sociopolitical efficacy is critical to developing a curriculum that connects civic engagement to neighborhood development and community building. Such an approach to education, we believe, will not only teach students how to think independently and critically, but also it will imbue them with a sense of social justice and a commitment to building a better world.

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**University Community Schools – Embedded and Institutionalized:  
Defining Conditions for Sustainability**

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**Abstract:** This article uses lessons learned from the development of *The Education Effect*, a university community school partnership with Florida International University and Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), to support the case for two critical conditions for sustainability of university community schools. The Education Effect was established in 2010 to support student achievement at Miami Northwestern Senior High and the feeder schools in the historic community of Liberty City, Miami. The overarching goal of the partnership is to support 100% student graduation from high school and see every student college and career ready. Five years since the planning stage, building on the guiding principles of reciprocity, two essential themes have emerged as bedrocks for the partnership's sustainability: the extent to which the partnership is embedded within the high school, feeder schools and community and the extent to which the partnership is institutionalized across the university campus. While the partnership continues to grow and develop, the authors purport that long-term sustainability will largely depend on the success of these factors.

### **Mind the Gap: University community schools as models to close the opportunity gap**

*"For me the biggest impact from The Education Effect was the financial literacy program...As a child I always liked the stock market but I really didn't know what to do and I wasn't given the opportunity or had the necessary resources to learn...There could be a Steve Jobs in Miami Northwestern and no one would know because they never got the opportunity to show it. But if you bridge the opportunity gap just like The Education Effect is... you can see and you can notice, okay this kid is brilliant! I just want to be able to have the opportunity to learn the information and bring it back to my city"~ Rene M. MNW graduate, 2012 (personal interview/video, 2012).*

The "opportunity gap" for low-income and students of color has become an increasingly central theme in education for the last several years.<sup>1</sup> Students' cumulative experiences of denied opportunities to learn and thrive have created chasms<sup>2</sup> in retention

rates, graduation rates, and college admittance and graduation, employability and income levels. Low-income students are more likely than middle and high-income students to fall behind in academics, score low on standardized tests and drop out of school.

"Current teaching strategies in most urban schools serving primarily low-income, minority children are not geared to developing the high levels of conceptual understanding, scientific and mathematical reasoning, problem solving, and communication skills needed in an increasingly global and technologically based economy" (Ferreira, 2007). According to Bob Moses, Civil Rights leader and founder of the Algebra Project, quantitative literacy is essential for students in the 21st century, "We are transitioning from industrial technology to information age technology, and the one thing that information age technology does is it brings quantitative literacy on the table in the same way as reading and writing were on the table in the last age (Moses, 2014). Access to resources, high quality instruction, a safe and inspiring learning environment is not equally accessible for all our children – and this is just as evident in Miami-Dade County (Wynne & Giles, 2010).

As we work to close the gap nationally, seismic demographic shifts project a majority-minority society in the next few decades. Demographic diversity and economic disparity position Miami as a lens to the future.<sup>3</sup> Miami-Dade County Public Schools, the fourth largest district in the United States, is comprised of 91% historically underrepresented minorities. Fifty-six percent of public school children in Florida qualify for free and reduced lunch, 74% in Miami Dade County, 90% in the urban core neighborhood of Liberty City (SEF 2013, www.dadeschools.net).

The pressing challenge to identify and scale effective models to address this divide is imperative. Florida International University (FIU), as a Carnegie-designated engaged institution, the 5th largest university in the nation, the largest minority-serving public university, and a local anchor institution serving primarily students from Miami-Dade County Public Schools (M-DCPS), acknowledges the capacity and responsibility to address the opportunity gap in our urban schools. How do we work collaboratively to support academic success for all students in Miami so

1. Research demonstrates that the wealthiest 25 percent of Americans are filling nearly 75 percent of the seats at the 193 most selective U.S. universities – which operate as informal gateways to America's leadership class – while the poorest 25 percent of Americans fill only 5 percent of these seats. [Attacking the Opportunity Gap, David Bergeron and Scott Greytak, Inside Higher Ed August 29, 2014]

2. The average White 13-year-old reads at a higher level and performs better in math than the average Black or Latino 17-year-old (Bergeron and Greytak, 2014)

3. Miami-Dade County Public Schools are over 91% historically underrepresented minorities and the public research institution, Florida International University is over 80%.

that they not only graduate from high school, but also are prepared for post-secondary education, innovation, inquiry and careers? What is the role of a public university in addressing the inequity and inequality in education and close the opportunity gap?

Such questions inspired collaborative action. In 2010 the university and the school district came together to realize a mutual commitment to student achievement by leveraging their assets with the Liberty City community to establish the region's first university community school partnership at Miami Northwestern Senior High School. The growth of The Education Effect was evidence of the commitment FIU and M-DCPS had made to work strategically together to address the pressing challenges of our local public education continuum through a district-university partnership called ACCESS (Achieving Community Collaboration in Education and Student Success).

Informed by an initial planning grant in 2010 the vision for The Education Effect was built upon lessons learned from the University of Pennsylvania's Netter Center for Community Partnerships, the Children's Aid Society's foundational frameworks of community schools, and the strengths and needs uncovered in asset-mapping and qualitative and quantitative assessments with key stakeholders in the community (Chu-Zhu, 2011).

In 2011, supported by a seed investment from the JPMorgan Chase Foundation, The Education Effect, a university community school partnership to improve educational outcomes in Liberty City was launched. Collaborating with the community, schools, students and parents, the partnership aligns university expertise and resources to address the pressing educational and social needs of students at Miami Northwestern Senior High (MNW) and its feeder schools. The Education Effect resonates with the mutual understanding that FIU's future and the future of Miami-Dade County's underserved communities are intertwined (Chu-Zhu, 2011; Rosenberg, 2011; Harkavy, 2013).

In just four years through multiple collaborations and the efforts of a vast contingency of people and programs much has been accomplished. Miami Northwestern has been designated an "A" school by the State up from its D/F grade for over 10 years, and the graduation rate has increased from 64% to 80%. Proficiencies in reading, writing, science and mathematics are rising, including students performing in the lowest quartile.

The university community school partnership emerges as a model to close the opportunity gap for

students. Aligning the resources of the university in a reciprocally beneficial partnership with the community and public school is a powerful vehicle to level the field. Stanford University Professor Prudence Carter co-editor of *Closing the Opportunity Gap*<sup>4</sup> declared ". . . children learn when they are supported with high expectations, quality teaching and deep engagement, and made to feel that they are entitled to good schooling; the richer those opportunities, the greater the learning. When those opportunities are denied or diminished, lower achievement is the dire and foreseeable result." University community schools uniquely deliver upon each of these indicators. But the models' success relies on the partnership's sustainability.

### **Context and Environment: A university's engagement in the urban community**

FIU is Miami's urban public research institution, opened in 1972. The university was established as an institution of access with a deep commitment to community. Today FIU serves approximately 54,000 students, 61% Latino/Hispanic and 13% African American. Over 52% of FIU's undergraduate students will be the first generation in their families to earn a college degree and nearly 50% of FIU students are Pell eligible. Over two-thirds of FIU's 200,000 alumni live and work in Miami-Dade County. Recognizing FIU's role in developing critical thinkers and innovators from diverse experiences and backgrounds; as well as serving as an important economic engine in the region, the development of a university community school partnership operationalizes the university's commitment to our local community and low income, under-represented students.

Liberty City is located 6 miles from downtown Miami, 9 miles from FIU's Biscayne Bay Campus to the North and 18.1 miles from FIU's main campus. Liberty City is one of the most economically disenfranchised yet culturally rich neighborhoods in Miami-Dade County, where today students face some of the worst academic, health, and safety outcomes in the country. Sixty-one percent of children 0-17 live below the poverty level.

4. *Closing the Opportunity Gap* describes children who have advantages are akin to someone taking an elevator, while disadvantaged youth take the stairs: "To visualize how unfair this system has become, imagine two children asked to race to the top of a stairway. One child is well nourished, well trained, and well equipped; the other lacks all these basic resources. But, instead of designing a system around the needs of this second child, her stairway (akin to the minimal opportunities and resources available at her school) is steep and slippery. Meanwhile, the first child's stairway is replaced with an escalator. Holding these two children to the same standards may allow for a comforting 'no excuses' sound byte, but it does nothing to help that second child achieve."



Liberty City is also home to over 13 public schools, 15 early childhood learning centers and over 100 faith-based institutions (Miami Children's Initiative Promise Neighborhood report, 2012). Miami Northwestern Senior High School, established in 1955, stands as a center of pride in the community. Today MNW serves approximately 1,700 students, over 90% of who are eligible for free or reduced lunch. At the start of The Education Effect, MNW was graded a "D" school by the Florida Department of Education and had a graduation rate of 64% ([www.dadeschools.net](http://www.dadeschools.net)).

Preceding the formal planning stages for The Education Effect, conversations in Liberty City revealed feelings of disassociation with the university and skepticism at best, to frustration, neglect, deep-rooted suspicion and anger at worst.<sup>5</sup> During the course of the development of our partnership, we were confronted often with challenges as to the university's intentions and faced to explain or overcome the university's historic lack of involvement in Liberty City.

The need to build trust and operate transparently was strikingly clear. The university could not begin a termed program, project or grant and add to the years of unmet promises and ineffective short-term interventions. The process in which we engaged community and school would be as important as the destination and outcomes, and would determine our collective success.

Raymond Lorion, Dean of the College of Education at Townson University, described a gradually gained trust in building the university's trust with the Baltimore community through the Cherry Hill Learning Zone Initiative as a prerequisite for action. "Implicitly, an understanding emerged that prior failings would be set aside (but not forgotten) and opportunities for new beginnings made available to all who wanted to join in this effort" (p. 152). As we initiated this work, we reorganized the importance of both addressing prior failings head on as well as collaborating with essential partners committed to this new effort. An emerging sense of opportunity

5. During the planning phase of The Education Effect we met with various community leaders and organizations who had worked for many years in Liberty City. One organizational leader from another local post-secondary education institution expressed frustration and suspicion of the university coming into the neighborhood without deep knowledge of the work that had been done by others. The Principal at the time stated frankly that FIU would need to build a presence at Miami Northwestern with regards to recruitment noting that other colleges and universities, especially the flagships and HBCUs, were more actively recruiting and more known in Liberty City. Other non-profit leaders working with students in Liberty City provided candid feedback that students did not feel welcome on FIU campus during visits noting "they spent the day on campus and they didn't see many people that look like them – students or professors."

and possibility and an asset rather than deficit, based approach to partnership would become evident as The Education Effect's presence was felt in the community through interactions not just within the school grounds but in homes, churches, gatherings and events.

## The Education Effect

The Education Effect explicitly emphasizes a guiding principle of reciprocity. The university, the community and the school are equal partners, each one learning from and supporting one another. Faculty, university students, teachers, parents, and K-12 students are all active learners and teachers. Each entity is advanced by the engagement with the others. In this context, it is important to understand that goals, engagements, initiatives and endeavors are conceived and built collaboratively and organically. Ultimately trust was earned through an acceptance of responsibility, consistent and open communication, a long-term approach and the organic growth of a partnership informed and led by students, teachers, principals and community.

While The Education Effect is committed to advocating for the children, the relationship of the university and the district is not adversarial, as we come to our collaboration centered by our shared goal – thriving students (Lorion, 2011). The partnership director and site coordinator are based in the school, collaborating with the administrators, students and teachers on a daily basis.

Rejecting the traditional deficit models of education reform, The Education Effect promotes student-centered methods focused on community assets to strengthen mutually beneficial, reciprocal relationships (Wynne & Giles, 2010). The collaboration serves the students, families and administration at Miami Northwestern and its feeder schools while providing reciprocal benefits to FIU's students and faculty. Uniting a multidisciplinary team, the partnership enables the community to benefit from the University's vast intellectual and research expertise and the University gains opportunities to learn from the rich knowledge and lived-experience of the community.<sup>6</sup> This is also the premise for the partnership's sustainability.

Committed to addressing the opportunity gap that impacts student achievement and more importantly "raising the platform" to ensure all students are guaranteed access to high quality equitable education

6. "The successful creation and operation of the Sayre CHPDP program strongly supports the validity of the basic proposition that higher education can be a permanent anchor for revitalizing schools and communities if the vast resources it possesses, particularly its faculty, students, and staff, are brought to bear in a coordinated fashion" (Harkavy 2005, p.43).

(Moses, PBS, 2007), The Education Effect embraces a collective model (Kania & Kramer, 2011) to support three main goals: 1) Improve teaching and learning; 2) Create an environment conducive to student success that promotes pathways to post-secondary education and 3) Enhance parental and community engagement.

While the needs assessments and asset mapping informed the structure of The Education Effect partnership, implementation – what it looked and felt like on the ground – required an additional perspective. To be successful, we needed to reflect the urgency of educational inequality and inequity in Liberty City. We needed to adapt processes that would strategically address the needs of all children. We learned from Bob Moses that the fight for quality education for all our children is the constitutional and civil rights issue of our time. Thus, as we began to implement Education Effect programs we framed our model to better reflect the grassroots approach offered by Ella Baker, Bob Moses and the organizing tradition of the southern civil rights movement. Moses' (2001) theoretical framework gave us tangible concepts to implement and weave into all aspects of the Education Effect driven in particular by the following three guiding principles:

1. High quality, equitable and equal access to education is the constitutional and civil rights issue of our time. Education is a right, not a privilege and a sense of urgency and attention to this macro-narrative drives the work.
2. Students are at the center of our work, making the demand for their own quality education and being positioned as knowledge workers (Wynne 2012). Our goal is to raise the voices of the heretofore silenced and amplify students' own language (see examples later in the text).
3. The work is a process not an event. We emphasize that this is a collaborative partnership that fluctuates to meet the ever-changing needs of our students and the community. It is simultaneously addressing both personal experiences and systemic change. The processes are illustrated not in rhetoric but in action.

As the university thoughtfully set forth its engagement as a nascent partner in Liberty City, The Education Effect was developed not as a program but as a school-wide support infrastructure to function from the inside out. The Education Effect is strategically place-based *and* school-based. It is imperative that the work is embraced and operates from within the school itself. The school is an anchor of the community and in order to impact or change the system, we have to understand

and operate from within the system. We organize our efforts with intentionality regarding uplifting the community and investing in the community. "Schools, in addition to being key educational institutions, are an appropriate locus of community engagement because they belong to the community. They therefore have the capacity to be hubs of service delivery and community organization" (Harkavy, 2005).

Four years later, two key sustainability factors have emerged: the extent to which the partnership is embedded in the school operations and community, and the extent to which the partnership is institutionalized across the university campus.

### **Conditions for sustainability**

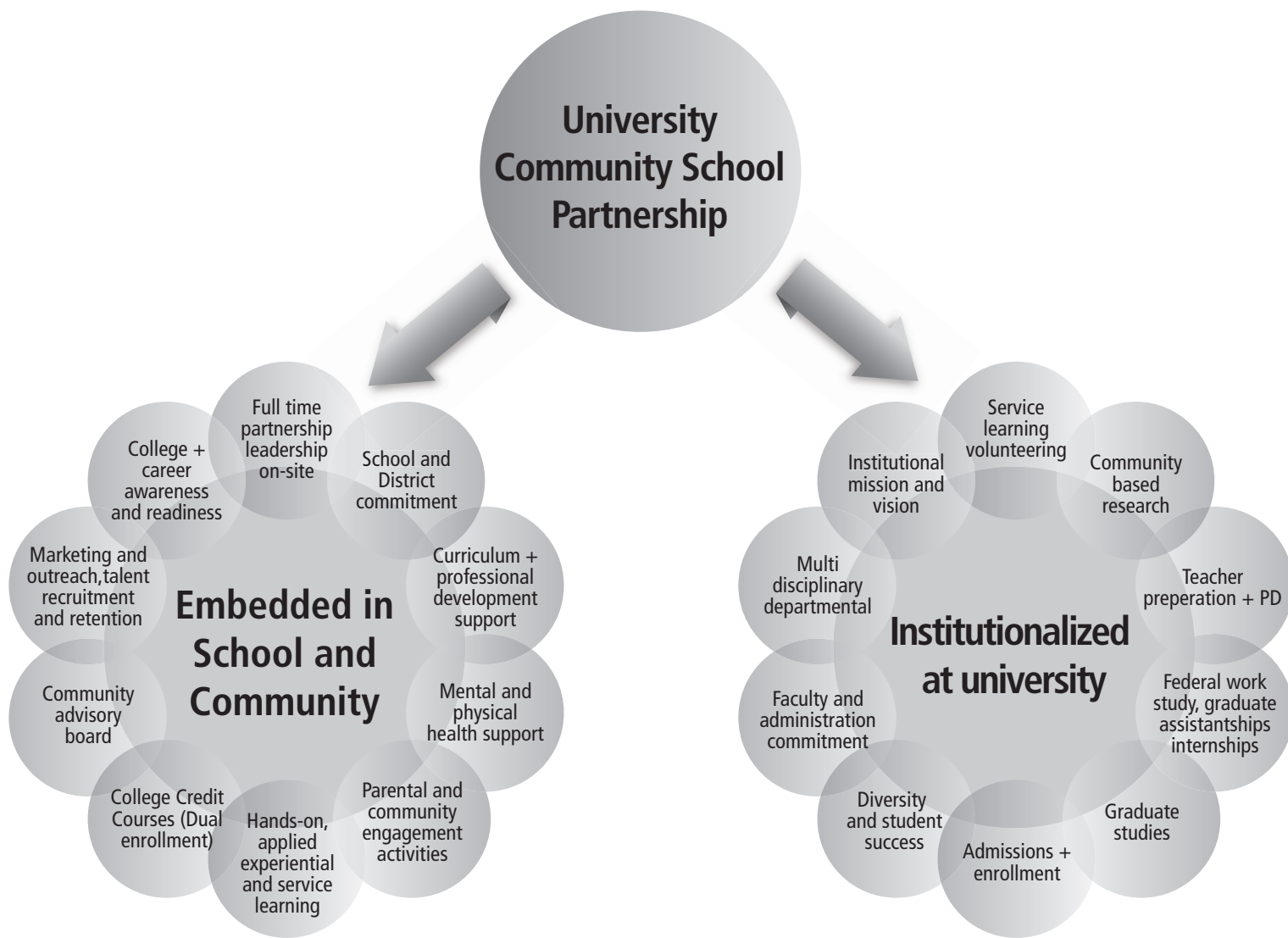
Embedded-ness and institutionalization are livewires of two-way energy between the university (institution, faculty and students), the school (institution, teachers, students) and the community (parents and community at large). The success of the partnership will be fostered or hindered by the extent of these two critical conditions. (Table 1)

### ***Embedded...at Miami Northwestern High School and in Liberty City***

The Education Effect is designed as a school-wide partnership with strategic signature endeavors to engage students, teachers, administrators and families. The success of the partnership is defined by the ways in which not only the signature initiatives are successful but also how the organically growing potential of the partnership is accepted, adopted, realized and eventually shares ownership by the university, the school and the community.

A partnership, once fully embedded into the school and community, should appear seamlessly woven into the fabric of the school's identity. The partnership serves as a force within the school and a vocal advocate for the school, building upon the community's assets to advance student, family and teacher well being and achievement. Effective university community school partnerships become an integrated part of the school's vast spectrum of activity. The partnership leadership serves as a trusted collaborator with the Principal's team, and the university is a resource and support for the students, teachers, instructional coaches, administration and parents in building curriculum, providing targeted and ongoing professional development, facilitating community engagement, and providing hands-on learning opportunities.

Before the partnership can become embedded

**Table 1. Conditions for Sustainability of University Community School Partnerships**

however, the university initially must serve as a listener and a conduit for dialogue among diverse stakeholders. Humbly, the university must identify and reject preconceived notions of how the partnership should be designed. Partnership staff are positioned as conveners, and dot-connectors. The more fidelity the university has to addressing the needs and strengths identified by and with the school and community, the more collective ownership is built.

The Education Effect's embedded-ness at Miami Northwestern is demonstrated in the candid exchange between the director and principal; the leadership of students to maintain, staff and grow the school's aquaponics lab funded by the partnership; ownership of teachers for example, the welding instructor who amplifies student experiences with engagement in the community and the university; employment of

students as "knowledge workers" (Wynne, 2012); and collaboration of instructional coaches and teachers at the school and university students and faculty to engage in service learning initiatives with direct instructional/academic impact.

### ***Institutionalized...at Florida International University***

Research evidences the powerful potential of universities as transformative collaborative agents in schools and school systems (Harkavy, 2013). Likewise, partnerships with urban schools as complex ecosystems of social challenges and opportunities, and reciprocal relationships with community enhance university knowledge and scholarship. Institutionalizing a university community school partnership at the higher education institution is the complement to embedding at the school.

A university community school partnership, which is institutionalized at the university, is evidenced by the participation and leadership from a diverse array of disciplines, commitment and leadership from executive leadership, inclusion in university strategy and identity, and robust attention to professional development, service learning and community-based research led by students and faculty. There may be no better example of institutionalized success than at the University of Pennsylvania where thousands of students each year are engaged in advancing the West Philadelphia Partnership (WPP)—through hundreds of academically based community service courses (Harkavy, 2005).

*Because they are performing community service while engaged in academic research, teaching, and learning, they are simultaneously practicing their specialized skills and developing, to some extent at least, their moral and civic consciousness and democratic character. And because they are engaged in a highly integrated common project, they are also learning how to communicate, interact, and collaborate with each other in wholly unprecedented ways that have measurably broadened their academic horizons and demonstrated to them the real value of working to overcome disciplinary myopia. (Harkavy, 2005 p.38)*

### **What it looks like in action**

Several signature endeavors of The Education Effect reflect the philosophical principles presented and demonstrate how The Education Effect position students as “knowledge workers” at the center of the work, is becoming embedded into the DNA of the school, adopted by the community and became institutionalized across FIU. We highlight examples below.

#### **Interdisciplinary learning platforms: *Aquaponics Lab and Organic Garden***

Embedding and institutionalizing a university community school partnership uniquely allows all stakeholders to approach and address complex challenges from a holistic, interdisciplinary perspective. The development of effective university community school partnerships requires an interdisciplinary team-based approach to complex problem-posing and problem-solving. University curriculum is too often discipline-centered (Harkavy, 2013; Center for Educational Research and Innovation, 1982) and students may lack applied or experiential learning opportunities in addressing real-time challenges. Harkavy asserts, “[Universities’] unintegrated, fragmented, internally

conflictual structure and organization work against collaborative understanding and helping to solve highly complex human and societal problems” (2013, p.529).

The exponential growth, breadth, reach and scope of the Education Effect’s Aquaponics Lab and Organic Garden (what is affectionately known as our Living Classroom) is the most tangible showcase of the partnership’s asset-based, participatory, and integrated approach. An inclusive platform for advancing STEM education and healthy living in Liberty City, the pedagogy of the Living Classroom and opportunities afforded students addresses the under-representation of African Americans, Latinos and women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) related college majors and careers (Beede, et al 2011; Becerra-Fernandez, 2008; Kuenzi, 2008;). Supporting students’ interest and mastery in the sciences and bringing the classroom “to life,” in collaboration with multiple FIU and community partners, we established the first and most comprehensive Aquaponics Lab in Miami Dade County. The partnership positions students as action researchers addressing urgent issues around health, food justice and sustainability. Currently we are raising 500 tilapia in two 8’x 8’ tanks all managed by students. Over 100 plants and trees in our expanding food forest replicate a natural Florida eco-system.

The lab and garden has become a centerpiece for experiential learning across a variety of disciplines including science, business, culinary arts and civic engagement. The opportunity of the lab and garden as unique teaching, learning and engagement tools is being realized across the school and the community.

Though The Education Effect, we have hired over a dozen students and former students as knowledge workers (Moses, 2001, Wynne 2012) – students who are positioned in leadership and teaching roles, often paid, to maintain the tanks and garden, lead tours, teach lessons for students and community workers and participate in local and national conversations around urban farming, environmental justice and Liberty City as a potential site for green collar careers and research.

Led by FIU faculty, graduate assistants and MNW teachers, these activities are complemented by enhanced science lectures and labs, hands-on food and environmental science projects, field trips, graduate fellowships, training workshops, laboratory research, and professional development opportunities.

The Dual Enrollment course at Miami Northwestern, the only one of its kind in Miami-Dade County Public Schools has served over 100 students in the past four years. These students develop projects

to further develop the Aquaponics Lab and Garden at the school as well as in other areas of the community. Promoting rigorous curriculum attached to real life experiences is benefiting students. In 2012-2013 Miami Northwestern students performing on grade level in biology increased from 52% to 70% according to the Florida Department of Education. Three Miami Northwestern graduates who now attend FIU earned \$26,000 scholarships to pursue their studies in agroecology.

As the partnership becomes further institutionalized at FIU, the work in the “Living Classroom” was complemented by the vision and leadership of a wide spectrum of FIU students and faculty. This included the partnership of the School of Architecture and Landscape Architecture where students adopted Miami Northwestern and the Liberty City community as the site for their senior design thesis projects.

The partnership continues to grow across FIU’s disciplines. We recently amplified our efforts with leadership and expertise of FIU’s Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management with the launch of Plant it Forward, an innovative nutrition, food justice and social entrepreneurship outreach initiative. Informed by best practices from the University of Pennsylvania’s Urban Nutrition Initiative, students leverage the lab and garden to expand their own learning in nutrition, science and culinary arts to develop and deliver healthy cooking demonstrations to neighborhood elementary schools. Embedding and institutionalizing one layer further, the school’s welding department in collaboration with students from the university’s College of Engineering designed and constructed a fresh produce push cart and bicycle powered blenders to be used at local farmers markets and community gardens. Four Miami Northwestern students attended the Rooted in the Community national youth forum at the University of New Mexico to present their work and engage in dialogues with youth from predominantly urban communities regarding environmental issues that impact their neighborhoods.

### **Real-time solutions: *Financial Literacy + Student Managed Investment Fund***

Embedding and institutionalizing also represents unique opportunities to approach real-time challenges with real-time action. Business and finance education for instance is creatively built out with university students and faculty to address broader issues of disenfranchisement in the community. In collaboration

with the College of Business Administration, the development of the Bull Investors Financial Literacy and Investment Fund engages Miami Northwestern students with financial and investment knowledge that can lead to individual and community prosperity (McInerny, 2003).

CBA interns and graduate students teach groups of approximately 40 MNW students in 14 weekly sessions at FIU’s state-of-the-art finance lab. To date over 150 MNW students have participated in the program. The students engage in a variety of capital market activities, including equity and debt issuance and investment analysis, financial planning, derivatives and cash and investment management. The program significantly increases financial literacy and instills confidence in the students’ ability to understand market activities, while simultaneously empowering FIU interns to serve as mentors and educators. Additionally, MNW students are provided the opportunity to manage a fund, held at a brokerage firm, of \$10,000. In the first two years the Bull Fund saw a 20% return on investments. Five students selected as sector managers for the program, traveled to New York with FIU finance students to participate in a student management investment conference and visit the NYSE. These students returned home to Liberty City to share their knowledge with MNW alumni, families and community members, seeking to spark new savings, investment and economic growth in their community.

### **Mutually beneficial engagement: *Service Learning***

As a core strategy for mutually beneficial engagement, The Education Effect has involved students from FIU and Liberty City in service learning, a collaborative teaching and learning pedagogy designed to promote academic enhancement, personal growth and civic engagement. Students engage in meaningful service in the community and experience critical real-life connections with specific academic material. Through guided reflection, students examine their experiences and articulate specific learning outcomes, thus enhancing the quality of both their learning and service. “[S]tudents, faculty, and community members all serve as co-educators, co-learners, co-servers, and co-generators of knowledge (Clayton, 2011, p. 6).”

The university’s Colleges of Education and Law have empowered university students to lead math literacy and civic engagement programming, including a summer academy, through the Young People’s Project.

The department of English engaged high school sophomores from MNW to travel weekly to FIU to participate in a writing mentoring class with FIU students in a Writing for Social Action course. One day a week the FIU students planned the lessons for the MNW students and engaged in their own reflective writing about the process. FIU's Academy of Leaders (AOL) from the Center for Student Leadership and Service developed Project CARREE, a peer leadership, service and mentoring program following the Leadership Challenge model which incorporates five practices of exemplary leadership: model the way, inspire shared vision, challenge the process, enable others to act and encourage the heart (Kouzes & Posner, 2007). FIU student leaders organized MNW students in leadership training and the development of a service project. In the spring semester FIU and MNW students implement the project. To date, over 500 FIU students have participated in the work of The Education Effect crossing a variety of disciplines. New partnerships across campus are emerging.

### **Early College Exposure + Access: *Panther for A Day, Golden Scholars Bridge Program, Dual Enrollment***

An enormously significant example of our success in addressing mutual collaborations from school, district, community and university was the promotion of a college atmosphere within the school and the establishment of FIU's first college transition bridge program. To promote pathways to post-secondary education, a core principle of The Education Effect is that every student should have the opportunity to attend college and be successful. While all students may not wish to attend a college or university, they should all have the option (Moses, PBS). Promoting this college going environment, we filled the school with banners that read "Class of 2012 Imagine 2016" and "Class of 2014 Imagine 2018" etc. We organized visits (and continue to do so) from FIU students and faculty to speak to MNW about their college experience. Simultaneously we invited MNW students to speak to FIU College of Education pre-service teachers and law students.

To support our aggressive intention on enhancing post-secondary pathways, we built a robust college exposure program to reach and engage students early and consistently; this is essential for low-income students and students of color (Wynne & Giles, 2010, Harris 2003). Leveraging the vast facilities, students and expertise of a public research institution, our Panther

for A Day program was boldly designed to reach the student body at MNW as well as students in the feeder pattern to experience first-hand the university setting. Academic and career path options are explored through enriched learning visits that provide meaningful hands-on experiences on the FIU campus. The program has also inspired internships and mentoring programs for MNW and FIU students. To date the partnership has engaged over 2,000 high school, middle schools and elementary students from Liberty City schools in visits to FIU. Engaged activities have included exploring the Campus Nature Reserve with the Agroecology Department, demonstrations from the Chaplin School of Hospitality and Tourism Management, participating in mock trials and community forums with the College of Law, visiting the simulation center with the College of Nursing, and "behind the scenes" tours of the Wall of Wind with the College of Engineering to name a few. Parents and community members have been encouraged to participate on these trips as well.

A significant support to The Education Effect was the establishment of FIU's first alternative admissions summer bridge program, The Golden Scholars. When we began the Partnership in 2011, only 8 MNW students enrolled that year to FIU and 5 of them were athletes. The Education Effect collaborated with the leadership of FIU's Departments of Enrollment and Admissions, Pre-Collegiate Affairs, Academic Advising, and the Office of Engagement to establish the Golden Scholars Bridge program, an alternative summer transition and admissions pathway designed to remove barriers to higher education for low-income and first generation students who achieved the required GPA and demonstrate significant capabilities and interest. An unprecedented forty students predominantly from Miami's persistently low-performing high schools under the Education Transformation Office (ETO) were provisionally admitted to FIU in the summer of 2012 through the Golden Scholars program. Of these 40 students, 39 were officially admitted in Fall 2012, including 16 from MNW. The general admission to FIU by MNW graduates is also increasing. The number of MNW graduates attending FIU has increased dramatically from 17 in 2010 to 58 in 2014.

The Golden Scholars, Advising, Panther for A Day and Early College Exposure address the recommendations made by The Children's Aid Society's focus group report that schools need to be intentional about offering college and career readiness programs early, especially to all 9th graders and ensure

that students and families know early and clearly understand graduation requirements as well as services that the school and community offer to help students are effectively prepared for college and careers (Chu-Zhu, 2011). They also demonstrate how the resources and commitment of various administrative and academic departments may be deployed to create a continuum of college awareness, exposure, and access. A fine example of an institutionalized partnership.

An additional example of systemic change from the Education Effect partnership is increasing the access for high school students to enroll in college courses for college credit while in high school. To further promote pathways to post-secondary education, The Education Effect increased dual enrollment at MNW. While Florida has a longstanding dual enrollment program, research indicates that student participants were predominantly White and concentrated in high-income schools (Karp, 2008). As a part of the FIU's partnership with M-DCPS a robust commitment was made to expand dual enrollment to reach more schools and students. Dual enrollment enables high school students to earn college or vocational credit toward a postsecondary diploma, certificate, or degree at FIU while earning credit toward a high school diploma. Dual enrollment courses are free for students; this includes registration, matriculation, and laboratory fees. According to a Community College Research Study, students in dual enrollment are more likely to graduate high school, enter a 4-year university and maintain a higher college GPA than non- dual enrollment students one year after high school graduation (Karp et al, 2008).

The Education Effect tripled the number of courses offered from 4 to 12 at MNW and quadrupled the number of unique students participating. Fifty students participated in 2010-2011 and over 220 in 2013. Expanded dual enrollment positively impacts Miami Northwestern's Florida State performance grade and prepares students to enroll and succeed in higher education. According to MNW Principal Wallace Aristide, this has had a trickle down effect; and access to dual enrollment courses inspires students to achieve. A 3.0 GPA is required for students to take a dual enrollment course. "Students," proclaims Principal Aristide, "are paying attention to their grade point average in 9th and 10th grade because they want to be eligible for dual enrollment as upperclassmen." The percentage of MNW students earning a 3.0 GPA or higher has increased from 15% to 45%. That said, grant funding to support Dual Enrollment has been

reduced – so we acknowledge this as another challenge for our future.

### **The intangible effects: *Outreach + Promoting the Partnership***

A significant outcome of The Education Effect has been the outreach and promotion of the partnership to the greater community and beyond. Representations or mis-representations of low-income communities and communities of color have a perilous impact on young people (Lovett, 2010). Liberty City suffers from such misrepresentations. The community is far too often known for a reductive stereotypical portrayal as seen on the television show *The First 48* and the video game *Grand Theft Auto* rather than its historical significance in Miami, or for its political leaders, educators, artists, inventors and entrepreneurs—many who graduated from Miami Northwestern. The school and community in the early planning stages requested that strategic plans position Miami Northwestern and the feeder schools as preferred educational institutions of academic and vocational rigor, boasting a uniquely comprehensive partnership with FIU. M-DCPS is a school choice district and MNW had seen a decline in enrollment over the years. Efforts have been made including a promotional video, high visibility in the press about the accomplishments and presentations at local and national conference to accurately promote MNW's partnership with a leading urban public research university. The goal is to challenge misrepresentations pervasive in the media about marginalized communities such as Liberty City, continue to foster school pride, retain Liberty City's talent and recruit new students. Principal Aristide stated "Miami Northwestern Senior High School has served as a center of pride for our Liberty City community. 'The West' was always known as a powerhouse for athletics – and it still is. But it has also been known as a struggling school academically for the last 15 years. Today, Miami Northwestern has renewed its goal to become a powerhouse in academics as well. The Education Effect has emerged as a change agent to support The West as academic champions. While it may be challenging to measure the less tangible impact of outreach and events correlated to the Education Effect, we find this to be one of the most significant indicators of embedded-ness within the school.

**Table 2. University School Partnership In Action**

Actions	Embedded	Institutionalized
Integrated curriculum: Science, engineering, health, nutrition and social studies	The Aquaponics Lab and Organic Gardens are not only the focus of the Dual Enrollment Environmental Science course, but have become the nexus for study and practice in health and nutrition, culinary arts, welding, and social sciences. High School teachers serve as advisors to student-led actions and students are positioned and compensated as knowledge-workers.	Faculty engaged in the Aquaponics Lab and Organic Garden grew from the initial leadership from Environmental Sciences and AgroEcology to the School of Hospitality and Tourism Management and
Leadership + decision making	Partnership director is included in Planning, Coach, Curriculum and Executive meetings	Partnership is understood, acknowledged and promoted by President, Provosts, Deans and Chairs
Mission + Vision	The school understands and acknowledges the role of the Partnership as an integral part of the school’s identity	The university, as well as its individual units and colleges, has an explicit commitment to mutually beneficial community engagement in its mission
Service learning, volunteering, peer mentoring	High school students are engaged in opportunities to mentor elementary and middle school students	University students from a diverse array of degree programs are engaged in the university community school partnership through service learning, service/ volunteering and mentoring.
Community + parental engagement	The school leverages the Partnership to deliver or enhance parental and community activities and outreach like orientations, parents night, senior night etc...	The partnership is enhanced by collaboration with other units like admissions and colleges
Teacher preparation and teacher professional development	The school’s teachers are supported with unique leadership and professional development from the university	The community school partnership serves as hubs for practicums and applied learning for pre-service teachers



## Reflection: Accomplishments and Challenges

Embedding and institutionalizing effective meaningful collaborations across two giant bureaucracies, a university and a public school district, is essential for long-term success, but no small task. We had to learn how to effectively negotiate contracts between partners and both institutions. We had to learn to listen deeply and well to the multiple constituencies that we represent. We had to continuously struggle against the current of “naysayers” who did not believe that poor children of color could academically soar. We had to continuously remind ourselves and others that we are not missionaries sent to save a community, but equal partners in enriching the academic and physical landscape of a historically significant and culturally lush piece of the larger city of Miami. Moreover, we had to learn to be patient with the organic nature of transformation.

Shared responsibility and ownership to sustain the work is essential. For every success we herald, there are disproportionately more failed attempts, flat connections, premature designs, abandoned ideas, unanswered calls, and meetings without follow up. From both sides – the university and the school system. Nonetheless we persevere, we are inspired and proud of what we have achieved in just four years. We celebrate the collectively earned “A” for Miami Northwestern, a historically rated “D/F” school. We are optimistic about student achievement gains like the spike in students earning 3.0 GPAs from 15 to 45% during the course of the partnership or the increase of students.

## Conclusion

Ira Harkavy radically argues for all universities and colleges to embrace their role in school reform as a primary institutional mission, asserting that it is in their self-interest to be civically engaged with their local community (Harkavy, 2013). For public institutions of access, it is an imperative. The issues that face our K-12 teachers, administrators, students and families are indeed the concerns of the local higher education institutions, as academic achievement and college readiness directly impacts the students’ college retention, graduation and employment rates, factors on which state-funded universities are increasingly evaluated.

“University community school partnerships uniquely provide a challenging reciprocally beneficial forum to understanding environments of complex social and systemic issues and needs. They warrant, if not

require, creative, empathetic, holistic approaches – core skills and values to advance the K-12, neighborhood and higher education communities” (Harkavy).

It is in fact the most challenging aspects of the university community school partnership that are the critical indicators for sustainability and success. In essence, the most important thing we can do is ignite a fully leveraged partnership with active and pervasive students electrically igniting fires of inspiration, creativity, collaboration and expertise among both the school and university community to embed and institutionalize the work.

We remain committed, with a firm belief that collaborations between urban universities and the communities in which they live is essential to see all succeed in our future. If butterflies and bees can return to Liberty City, then jobs, college graduates, new careers and students who soar will too. Shaquila Thompson, graduated from MNW in 2012. She grew up in Liberty City and enrolled in FIU as a second semester freshmen with her dual enrollment credits. Her words below indicate the metamorphic nature of The Education Effects:

*I am the first person in my family to attend college. Because of The Education Effect you see kids talking about college, talking about they are ready to go and start a new life; it's really touching because a lot of people are like: 'Oh you're not going to be anything, look at where you are from.' And to change that misconception is really, really good. Now walking the streets of Liberty City, and my neighborhood where I grew up, I realize that I am the future of Liberty City (personal interview, The Education Effect video).*

Shaquila validates our intention to address inequity in education, close the opportunity gap and change the rhetoric from college is for some to college is attainable for all if given equal access and opportunity, including the necessary resources, support, rigorous curriculum and high expectations required from public education.

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## **Lessons Learned from Seattle University's Journey of Community Engagement**

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## Abstract

Seattle University's Jesuit Catholic mission calls for "empowering leaders for a just and humane world." Inspired by this mission, Seattle University has, in recent years, made community engagement a hallmark of its educational purpose. The University has pursued this expansive vision by creating a centralized approach to community engagement and pursuing a place-based initiative that features a university assisted community school.

This article explores the critical questions and specific strategies of the three distinct phases in Seattle University's development of its university-wide community engagement initiative. The article concludes by offering "lessons learned" for other colleges and universities interested in leveraging their resources to pursue transformative community engagement initiatives that benefit campus and the community.

### Phase 1: Centralization 2003-2008

In October 2000 at Santa Clara University, several hundred people including all of the 28 presidents of Jesuit universities from the United States gathered for a conference on the role that Jesuit higher education plays in pursuing a more just world. Father Peter Hans Kolvenbach, Superior General of the Jesuits, gave the events keynote speech and described the critical importance of mobilizing students to serve, learn and lead in their communities. Father Kolvenbach observed that for students "when the heart is touched by direct experiences the mind may be challenged to change" (Kolvenbach, 2000).

The Seattle University delegation that attended the convening left inspired and ready to act on Father Kolvenbach's directive. Over the next several years a number of institutional leaders called for greater connections between the campus and the community and greater use of academic service-learning as a pedagogical strategy among faculty. Campus leadership saw immense potential in the University's ability to play a more meaningful role in its neighborhood while simultaneously strengthening the educational experience for its 7,500 students.

By 2003, Seattle University had reached a crossroads. An increasing number of faculty showed an interest in service-learning and more and more community organizations wanted to partner with the University but the activities that were occurring were haphazard, sporadic and having mixed results.

Seattle University faced several critical questions.

- How could it efficiently and effectively mobilize faculty to deepen and expand their use of service-learning?
- What investments would leverage existing efforts to expand overall campus and community engagement?
- How could the University become a more consistent partner with neighborhood organizations and residents in order to begin to have more of a positive impact?

These questions fueled a year-long planning process that led to the launch of the Center for Service and Community Engagement in fall 2004. The Center's immediate mandate was to serve as the focal point for campus and community partnerships. Center staff provided coordination and support for faculty interested in connecting their courses to the community. In some cases staff arranged community placements for students in service-learning courses while in other cases the staff worked with community agencies and faculty to scope projects and research questions that students could complete. Finally, Center staff worked with the University's legal counsel to establish policies, procedures, and guidelines for minimizing risk in university-sponsored community engagement experiences.

Simultaneous to the development of the Center for Service and Community Engagement was the creation of the Academic Service-Learning Faculty Fellows Program. In 2002, a Seattle University College of Education faculty member formed a year-long program for Seattle University faculty to learn the theory and practice of connecting community service to academic courses to enhance student learning and make a positive impact in the community. Through an intensive summer workshop and quarterly meetings and discussions, faculty revise a course syllabus to include service-learning, teach the revised course, and conduct an action research project related to their use of service-learning.

The pedagogical support from the Faculty Fellows Program and centralized coordination from the Center for Service and Community Engagement led to significant growth in faculty use of service-learning. By 2007, 100 Seattle University faculty were engaging 2,400 students in 208 courses with a service-learning component. These courses spanned almost every academic discipline and linked with more than 70 community-based organizations. University leadership had taken Father Kolvenbach's speech seriously and

attained success. In only a short amount of time the University was much more connected to its urban Seattle neighborhood and many more students were discovering the opportunity and challenge of working for justice. Yet, this success soon led to additional major questions.

## **Phase 2: 2009-2015 – The Seattle University Youth Initiative**

In 2007, after observing the initial success of Seattle University's community engagement efforts, a University trustee asked a simple question: "If Seattle University were to focus its community engagement efforts on a particular topic, neighborhood or issue, could it make more of a measurable impact on the community?"

Intrigued by the question, Seattle University President Stephen Sundborg S.J. challenged a group of campus leaders to explore ideas and develop a plan. Over the next several years hundreds of campus and community members participated in a planning process that focused on two central questions:

- How might Seattle University apply its resources in one neighborhood to help young people break the cycle of poverty in order to succeed in school and in life?
- How could this full-scale community engagement effort further advance the University's mission and academic programs?

In February 2011, the University launched the Seattle University Youth Initiative, the largest and most comprehensive community engagement project in its history. The Youth Initiative unites Seattle University and the wider community to improve the academic achievement of low-income youth living in the attendance zone of Bailey Gatzert Elementary School while strengthening the education of Seattle University students and expanding professional development opportunities for faculty and staff.

The Bailey Gatzert attendance zone encompasses a two square mile neighborhood immediately south of the University. Children and families living in this neighborhood face significant challenges including barriers to success in school, lack of access to high quality affordable housing and lack of attainment of employment that pays a livable wage. For many of these reasons, the number of neighborhood children living in poverty is among the highest in the city (Federal Financial Institutions Examination Council, 2014). Bailey Gatzert Elementary School also faces challenges. Among Seattle Public Schools, Gatzert School has

the highest percentage of children eligible for free and reduced lunch, a common indicator of poverty (Seattle Public Schools, 2013). There are over 20 different primary languages spoken by Gatzert families and almost half of the Gatzert students speak English as a second language making it hard to navigate the public school system. On any given day 50 to 70 of Gatzert's 350 students are experiencing homelessness.

The neighborhood also has tremendous resources. Over 20,000 people live in the Bailey Gatzert attendance zone that is one of the most diverse neighborhoods in the city. The zone encompasses several smaller neighborhoods including Seattle's historic and current cultural home to the African American, Chinese American, Filipino American, Japanese American and Vietnamese American communities. In recent years, immigrants from East Africa and Latin America have also moved into the neighborhood. Leaders from all of these ethnic and cultural communities are actively pursuing efforts to improve their neighborhood and support families who are struggling. In addition, several dozen neighborhood non-profit organizations and public institutions are working to strengthen the community.

Through the Youth Initiative the University is partnering with neighborhood leaders, the City of Seattle, Seattle Public Schools, Seattle Housing Authority, and over 30 non-profit organizations to dramatically improve the academic achievement of 1,000 low-income neighborhood students. The Youth Initiative's central strategy is to create a "cradle-through-college" pipeline of educational resources for neighborhood children and their families.

The Youth Initiative also strives to enhance the University's educational programs by mobilizing university students to serve, learn and lead through academic service-learning, community-based research, internships, practica, work-study, and volunteer activities. University faculty also play a vital role in moving the Initiative forward by utilizing service-learning in their courses and pursuing community-based research projects with neighborhood organizations. Finally, the Youth Initiative strives to advance the field of higher education and community engagement. Seattle University pursues this goal by disseminating promising practices and lessons learned and creating a learning community among universities engaged in place-based initiatives, particularly faith-based institutions.

## Community School Model

The initial four years of the Youth Initiative have involved a combination of developing new structures and systems while simultaneously expanding the University's engagement in the Bailey Gatzert neighborhood. In launching the Initiative, one risk the University faced was to expand too quickly and thereby limit the potential for significant impact. For this reason the University chose to focus on school partnerships, particularly a university-assisted community school at Gatzert Elementary. The Coalition for Community Schools defines a community school "as both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources" (Coalition for Community Schools, 2015). A community school's "integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities" (Coalition for Community Schools, 2015).

In pursuing a university-assisted community school model at Gatzert, the University has utilized four approaches (1) direct programming, (2) connecting organizations and systems, (3) advocating for families and the school, and (4) funding critical needs.

**Programming.** The centerpiece of the University's direct programming effort at Gatzert Elementary School is the extended learning program. Led by a full-time Seattle University staff person who is housed at Gatzert School, the University has partnered with Gatzert teachers and five local non-profits to extend the school-day by two hours for 180 Gatzert students. Over 80 Seattle University students, faculty and staff assist with the extended day program by providing one-to-one academic support and leading enrichment activities such as film making, an engineering club, a running program and a dance class. Last year the after-school program, which did not exist prior to 2010, contributed 25,000 hours of additional learning time (almost 20% more time per student per year). One of the elements of the program focuses on science education for fifth graders. In 2013-2014, 50% of Gatzert fifth graders passed the State MSP Science test; an increase from 10% in 2010-2011 (OSPI, 2015).

In addition to the after-school program, Seattle University has pursued other direct service strategies including placing highly skilled math tutors in Gatzert classrooms through a program called the Seattle University Math Corps (SUM Corps). Seattle University staff and students have also led parent engagement activities including a "Strengthening

Families" parenting program and a talk time program for non-English speaking parents to practice their English skills.

**Connecting Organizations and Systems.** Seattle University staff have played a leadership role in convening and connecting new community and campus partners to Gatzert School. For example, the University partnered with the Seattle Housing Authority to identify multi-year funding to contract with Catholic Community Services to run a summer program for sixty students at Gatzert School. The University has also provided support and expertise to Gatzert School in developing a new data tracking system to monitor student academic progress. The University has organized service days at the school including a one-day painting and renovation project that engaged 100 participants from the National Association of College and University Business Officers that was holding its annual conference in Seattle. Finally, Seattle University has attempted to adjust its pedagogical system by having courses taught on-site at Gatzert School. One of these courses was co-taught by the Gatzert School principal.

**Advocating.** Since many of the families attending Gatzert Elementary School are recent immigrants to the United States they have less familiarity with how to advocate for their children within the complex bureaucracy of Seattle Public Schools. For this reason, on several occasions the University has engaged in advocacy efforts in partnership with Gatzert families. For example, in fall 2014 Gatzert School was chosen to receive a \$750,000 three-year grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to start a much-needed pre-school in the building. Yet, political upheaval within the Seattle School Board threatened to deny the school the funding. The University worked to mobilize parents to attend the school board meeting and speak during the public comments portion of the meeting. The parents' testimony led one board member to change her vote and the board voted to approve the funding for the pre-school. On another occasion, Seattle University helped to educate parents about impending school boundary changes that may negatively impact Gatzert families.

**Funding Critical Needs.** The Gatzert Elementary School administration frequently faces financial challenges to fully serve and educate all of the complex needs of its students including over 15% of the student body who, on any given night, are homeless. Seattle University has partnered with the school to address its fiscal needs. For example, in 2010 Gatzert School did not have a computer lab and had very few computers

in classrooms. Seattle University donated 40 used computers to start a lab. The University then pursued grants from Target Inc. to purchase new machines including several dozen i-Pads for use in classrooms. Gatzert School now has one of the best computer labs in the Seattle Public School District. University staff also partnered with the Gatzert administration on the successful application for \$324,000 from the City of Seattle's Family and Education Levy. These funds provide support for additional social, educational and data tracking services within the Gatzert building.

While it is challenging to show a direct correlation between Seattle University's partnership with Gatzert School and the specific educational results of Gatzert children; positive things are occurring at the school since the University started its intensive partnership in 2010. In 2011-2012, Gatzert Elementary School students had the highest academic growth rate of any school in Seattle. In 2014, Gatzert Elementary School received the English Language Acquisition Award because Gatzert ELL student academic growth was in the top 5% in the State of Washington. While these are notable successes, much work remains as Gatzert students still lag behind the Seattle Public School District average in many academic indicators.

### **Choice Neighborhood Grant**

In 2011 and 2012, Seattle Housing Authority successfully attained two Choice Neighborhood grants totaling \$30 million from the Department of Housing and Urban Development to begin the redevelopment of Yesler Terrace, one of Seattle's oldest public housing communities. The grant funding provided over \$3 million for additional education programs. Since the Seattle University Youth Initiative neighborhood encompasses Yesler Terrace, the Housing Authority asked Seattle University to serve as the lead education partner in implementing the grant and leading a coalition of seven organizations committed to a collective impact strategy of improving educational outcomes for Yesler Terrace children.

As lead education partner Seattle University convenes partner organizations to strategize how to expand and deepen education support activities ranging from parenting programs to summer camps to college prep projects. Through monthly meetings and an annual conference the group uses data and information provided by a Seattle University data analyst to improve program delivery and academic engagement among all 500 children and youth living at Yesler Terrace. An education engagement specialist employed by

the housing authority works with University staff and program partners to help neighborhood families navigate the school system.

Preliminary indicators of the Choice Neighborhood education effort are positive. Twice as many Yesler students are now involved in high quality summer academic enrichment programs and Yesler students are showing improvement from baseline data in 10 of 12 math and reading grade level indicators. While promising, the Choice Neighborhood education collaborative stills has much work to do as indicators such as school attendance among k-2 graders remains a cause for concern.

### **Additional Youth Initiative Partnerships**

In addition to the work at Gatzert School and Yesler Terrace, Seattle University is also involved in many other neighborhood efforts through the Youth Initiative. Seattle University students and faculty are partnering on over 40 additional campus-community partnerships directly supporting neighborhood children, youth and families. For example, students from the Albers School of Business provide free tax assistance and financial literacy workshops for neighborhood residents. An additional group of Business students have assisted with a study on the feasibility of expanding small businesses in the local neighborhood. Students in the University's Criminal Justice program have designed a safety plan for neighborhood residents and Nursing students have assisted with health screenings and referrals. Meanwhile, a small group of faculty have responded to evaluation and research questions posed by neighborhood community partners.

The University also has creatively pursued policies and funding opportunities to expand its impact through the Youth Initiative. For example, the University partnered with Seattle Public Schools to open a small alternative high school within the University's College of Education. In addition, thanks to a generous gift from an individual donor, the University established a one million endowed scholarship fund for neighborhood youth to attend the University. Finally, the University made a strategic decision to have all students utilizing the community service work-study program conduct their work within the SUYI neighborhood.

This myriad of community engagement partnerships is having an impact on Seattle University students who are serving and learning throughout the neighborhood. Through concentrated engagement activities in a smaller geographic location students get to know the neighborhood and begin to see how various

community partners and resident leaders contribute to the overall health of the neighborhood. In this way they are challenged to see beyond a model of one-time charitable works to a model of holistic and continual engagement based upon solidarity and mutual trust.

The number of students involved in the neighborhood has grown from 834 in 2011 to 1,708 in 2014. In addition, the number of students making at least a two quarter commitment to serve, which is a major goal of the Youth Initiative has increased from 130 in 2011 to over 200 in 2014. Equally important to the number of students engaged in the neighborhood is the impact the experiences are having on them. The results of a yearlong study that utilized the Civic Attitudes and Skills Questionnaire show that Seattle University students involved with SUYI programs demonstrated a marked improvement in interpersonal and problem-solving skills, political awareness, social justice attitudes, and diversity attitudes compared to a control group.

### Phase 3: 2015 to 2020

After years of intensive activity and positive results, Seattle University is entering a new phase in its community engagement efforts. The central questions the University now faces are:

- How to maximize the significant work of the Youth Initiative to have an even greater impact on the campus and community?
- What further role the University can play as an anchor institution in central Seattle?

The University will explore these questions by deepening and expanding its Youth Initiative programs and partnerships including building out the entire p-12 pipeline of education support for neighborhood children by expanding its partnerships at the local middle school and high schools. The University will explore its role as an anchor institution by developing and adding new major University-community projects such as a community health clinic, a jobs program, a small business incubator, and a community research center.

These efforts will be supported through the pursuit of a financial plan that sustains current successes and continues growth and experimentation. The University recently entered a new \$300 million comprehensive campaign with a goal of \$30 million for community engagement initiatives.

### Lessons Learned

Seattle University's experiences with community

engagement offer many lessons for other institutions. The following recommendations are not meant to be prescriptive but hopefully offer ideas that might inform the process and practice of community engagement at other colleges and universities.

1. *Draw upon one's institutional tradition.* Seattle University's significant movement toward community engagement stems directly from its Jesuit Catholic tradition. Father Kolvenbach's Santa Clara speech struck a chord because of the university's faith-based heritage. Since almost all religious traditions have a focus on service, faith-based universities are particularly well positioned to embrace community engagement as a way of animating their mission. Yet, community engagement is not and should not be just for faith-based institutions. Public and secular institutions also have great opportunities to engage in their communities drawing upon aspects of their tradition and founding ethos. Many have done so with tremendous success. The key lesson from Seattle University is to embrace the distinct features of one's tradition and history that calls the institution to engage in the wider community.
2. *Create a plan.* While Seattle University's Jesuit Catholic tradition might have been the spark to get started, the long-term success of its community engagement programs have depended on how much forethought and planning occurred prior to the launch of each of the University's three distinct developmental phases. For example, Seattle University took almost three years to move the Youth Initiative from an initial idea to implementation. This included extensive research on other university models of engagement, significant outreach on campus and in the community and a major organizing conference that brought together 300 campus and community leaders. This thorough and inclusive planning process made it much easier to move quickly and attain good results once the University launched the Initiative. Planning is also an iterative process. Each phase of Seattle University's community engagement efforts have called for a separate planning process.
3. *Act with humility and cultural competency.* While Seattle University is an increasingly diverse institution, its student body and faculty do not reflect the full diversity of people living in its surrounding neighborhood. In addition, on occasion members of a university can become overly focused on the



knowledge arising from academic inquiry and forget that knowledge arises from many other forms of inquiry. This reality along with the power imbalances that arise from differences in class, culture, race, religion, gender, and nationality have been a central challenge for Seattle University's desire to build long lasting comprehensive campus-community partnerships. Moving into partnership with community organizations and local residents requires university faculty, staff and students to consistently engage with humility and constantly question their assumptions. Fully embracing this ethos increases the likelihood of developing trusting partnerships between the community and campus that can lead to benefit for all stakeholders.

4. *Get Faculty Off Campus.* In many cases, engaging with humility and self-awareness might not be enough to form reciprocal partnerships. Seattle University faculty live throughout the greater Puget Sound region and only a few live in the neighborhoods adjacent to campus. While experts in their field of study, many faculty may not fully understand the complex systems and issues impacting urban neighborhoods. These factors could lead faculty to struggle to effectively lead their students in community engagement activities. One way to address this issue is to provide faculty with experiences designed to develop partnerships and better understand the local neighborhood context. Seattle University has engaged faculty, staff and its administration in a series of local immersion experiences ranging from four hours to three days.
5. *Use the community school model as an organizing strategy.* In launching the Youth Initiative, Seattle University chose to focus on supporting Gatzert Elementary School's interest in becoming a community school. The intensive initial focus on the community school model offered almost every Seattle University college and school an opportunity to partner with Gatzert. For example, nursing students assisted with health education activities, art students partnered with children to create a mural and engineering students led after-school activities. The community school focus also offered quick visible successes for Gatzert School and the University that contributed significantly to a sense of trust between the two institutions. The comprehensive nature of the community school model also has led to positive results for Gatzert children; both in their academic success and the expansiveness of enrichment opportunities. Finally, the successes from the community school approach has established a strong foundation for the University and the community to pursue even greater impact in future years.
6. *Expand engagement through a place-based focus.* Seattle University's choice to pursue a place-based approach in phase two of its community engagement efforts has significantly increased its ability to be a positive change agent in Seattle. The Youth Initiative's neighborhood focus offers a central story to share in communicating the many ways the University is engaged in the community. Funders, community partners, students and faculty have shown much more interest in the place-based approach than the University's previous dispersed approach to engagement. Having one audacious goal and focus is much better than having 30 modest ones.
7. *Place equal value on student learning and community impact.* For Seattle University, pursuing strong community engagement partnerships has meant balancing its focus on university student learning and on community impact. If the university places too much emphasis on its student's learning within its community engagement programs than its community partners will become disinterested in collaborating with the campus because it will not see significant benefit. On the other hand, if the university overemphasizes its focus on community impact instead of student learning, it is highly likely that university leadership will begin to question the university's use of resources and involvement. Success depends on holding student learning and community impact as equally important.
8. *Engage leaders at all levels.* Seattle University is fortunate to have a university president who cares deeply about community engagement. Yet, while very helpful, to attain full success the University has needed leadership at all levels and from multiple stakeholders. Many individual faculty have taken leadership roles in connecting their courses to the community. Hundreds of students have mobilized their peers to serve and learn. Leaders from community organizations have also embraced partnerships with the university to further their mission and goals. Most importantly, local residents have led efforts, shared their resources and voiced their needs. This mix of leadership, at all levels of the university and community is essential for successful university-wide and neighborhood-wide partnerships.

## Conclusion

Seattle University's story of community engagement is only one example of the hundreds of colleges and universities that have recognized that substantial campus and community partnerships can significantly enhance their institutions and their communities. Seattle University's experiences provide other institutions with ideas and lessons to draw upon. Yet, in developing and expanding its efforts, Seattle University has benefited from the examples and lessons of many other institutions that have pursued creative approaches to connecting themselves with their communities. In this way, Seattle University and these other institutions, while acting individually in their own communities, are contributing to a much larger movement that has the potential to positively influence the future direction of high education in the United States.

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**University-Supported Community Schools:  
One Organization's Journey**

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## Abstract

The Social Work Community Outreach Service (SWCOS) was developed in 1992 within the University of Maryland School of Social Work to expose graduate social work students to urban poor and vulnerable populations. Using a social justice lens, the organization has developed a framework for its community schools work, based on Maslow's (1943) Hierarchy of Needs, which includes six core principles or "non-negotiables", which every community school must possess to be successful: positive school culture and climate; physical and mental wellness for every child; family stability; safe and secure school environment; successful academic performance; personal, family, community empowerment and self-determination. The framework moves beyond doing transactional work (meeting physiologic and safety needs) to doing transformative work (meeting esteem and belonging needs) to eventually fulfillment (meeting actualization needs). This article discusses SWCOS' reflections on its community school journey thus far, its challenges and vision for the future.

## University-Supported Community Schools: One Organization's Journey

### Overview and History of University of Maryland Community Schools

The Social Work Community Outreach Service (SWCOS) was developed in 1992 within the University of Maryland School of Social Work to expose graduate social work students to urban poor and vulnerable populations, in the hope that students would become interested in remaining to work with inner-city communities after graduation. Since then, SWCOS has become known across Baltimore for its grassroots organizing approach and social justice lens. With social work education at the core of SWCOS' work, community practice has included community organizing initiatives, capacity-building with nonprofit organizations, case management and mental health services. Over the past ten years, SWCOS has provided mental health services within K-12 public schools and, as the community school movement grew, it seemed a natural transition for SWCOS to support community schools, much as it had supported many other community organizations.

As SWCOS transitioned from becoming mainly a mental health provider in schools to a community school operating partner, another organization within the School of Social Work, Promise Heights, also began to support community schools in a West Baltimore

Promise Neighborhood. The University president had expressed a strong commitment to community engagement, and there were many programs of the university engaged in service to local schools; both with SWCOS, Promise Heights and independently. Every school on the professional graduate campus: Social Work, Dental, Medical, Pharmacy, Nursing and Law was somehow involved with community schools.

As field education is an important component of graduate social work education, our social work students are engaged in a variety of activities through their plan of study with SWCOS. Activities such as running a school-based food pantry, going on home visits, running parent groups, helping with the attendance team, crisis intervention, engaging community partners, case management and organizing parents around critical issues allow our students to apply the knowledge and skills learned in the university classroom under the supervision of seasoned SWCOS social workers. They multiply the reach of the Community School Coordinator several times over. Medical students often work alongside social work students to tutor children in math and science, or to lead classes in nutrition.

What we share in this article is the process and transformation SWCOS is currently undergoing. We have not arrived. We are asking difficult questions about where we are going and even where we have been. We are developing a framework within which to do our work, which we know will change and evolve as we mature. As an organization that believes in the community organizing principles of transparency and accountability, we are allowing ourselves to be transparent on our journey so that we may be accountable to our partners and stakeholders. This is our journey.

## Our Guiding Philosophy

In the past two years, SWCOS has been working through a strategic planning process, which has required us to ask many difficult questions about our work, including why we work in community schools and what we hope to achieve. This has led us to some soul-searching about *transactional* versus *transformative* work. And this is not just the common adage of the difference between giving people fish and teaching them to fish, but the difference between the former two and encouraging community members to ask questions about why there are entire ponds and lakes without fish, while others are amply stocked, and then determining how to better ensure equity in the stocking of bodies of water, so that all might eat without struggle. In other

words, we want to encourage community members to begin addressing structural issues, which impact their communities and keep them poor and oppressed; issues which do not impact others in the same way. If we only deal with transactional issues we will never support communities in becoming empowered.

Let's look at a couple of examples of this. Most closely related to the fish adage is the issue of good nutrition. We often see children eating chips and donuts or drinking soda for breakfast in our schools. One of the topics we hear well-meaning volunteers discuss is the need for nutrition classes and nutrition classes are, indeed, necessary. But we also have to deal with the fact that some of our schools exist in food deserts, and that there is no grocery store within easy access for our families. We can teach families how to prepare healthy, nutritious meals, but if they can't get to a grocery store or can't afford healthy food when they get there, we have not addressed their issues. We want families to begin asking their local politicians why there are no grocery stores in their communities, and what they plan to do to secure access to healthy, affordable food for their constituents.

Another example: we can work with a young African-American man, see his potential, nurture him through school, and he will be arbitrarily subject to a stop and frisk procedure on the street. If he is found with marijuana, that misdemeanor charge might stop him from getting a job later in life and ruin his potential. We know that marijuana use between young whites and Blacks is roughly the same (ACLU, 2013), but the young White man is far less likely to be stopped than the young Black man, and so his marijuana will never be found. If we don't encourage the young Black man's parents (and other parents in our schools) to speak out against stop and frisk laws, all the time we spent teaching and nurturing him in school will be put at risk out on the street when he gets stopped as a result of racist policies which exist at the structural level.

While this might not seem, on the surface, like community school work, the more time we spend in community schools, the more convinced we are that this is exactly what community schools need to be about. Encouraging community advocacy is a critical part of our work.

It is impossible, or at the very least imprudent, to consider the learning outcomes of children in a school without first considering the environment in which the school, the student, and the student's family reside. Further prudence suggests that learning outcomes be viewed through a lens colored by an understanding

of how that environment, over time (both the actual time in the child's life, and the cumulative time spent by generations of caretakers), alters the trajectory of the child throughout the education process. Families who live in poor neighborhoods are most likely to have lived in a similarly poor neighborhood for multiple generations. The effects of growing up within severely impoverished communities accumulate over generations, and are likely to continue to greatly impact individuals as they move into adulthood (Sharkey, 2013, p.17). For the purposes of this article, neighborhood and community will be used interchangeably to represent at once a geographic place defined by physical boundaries, a series of inter-connected relationships, and a space within which people, live, work and take part in daily activities (Leventhal & Brooks-Gunn, 2008).

According to the National Center for Children in Poverty (NCCP), in the United States, in 2011, 45% of children were low-income or poor. The percentage of low-income and poor children has risen from 40% in 2006 to 45% in 2011 (Addy, Engelhardt & Skinner, 2013). Beginning in the 1970s and 1980s, urban communities saw a dramatic increase in concentrated urban poverty, as racial housing restrictions in the suburbs eased, and upwardly mobile African Americans moved into the suburbs, leaving behind a concentration of very poor families and individuals. Other theories about elements contributing to the increased concentration of poverty in urban communities includes the loss of manufacturing and other local jobs, economic and social disinvestment in cities, blight and decay (Yang & Jargowsky, 2006; Sessoms & Wolch, 2008). Additionally, Black and Hispanic children are much more likely to live in poverty than their White counterparts, and those Black or Hispanic children are overwhelmingly more likely to live in communities made up mostly by people of the same race (Drake & Rank, 2009). This concentration of poverty is seen most clearly in older, industrial cities in the Northeast, such as Newark, New York and Baltimore (Ricketts & Sawhill, 1988).

While concentrations of poverty decreased in the 1990s, these Northeast cities still see a significant concentration of very poor people living in certain neighborhoods. In fact, poverty should consistently be considered within the neighborhood context, even more than in the family context since, even if a particular family is not impoverished, that family will experience a number of significant disadvantages, simply by virtue of living in a neighborhood of concentrated poverty (Drake & Rank, 2009). Living in poverty creates

significant stressors, which impact families’ ability to maintain healthy relationships, parent their children, and adapt to life circumstances (Conger, Conger & Martin, 2010; Conger, Schofield, Conger, & Neppl, 2010; Wadsworth, Rindlaub, Hurwich-Reiss, Rienks, Bianco & Markman, 2013).

*The concentration of poor families and children in high poverty ghettos, barrios, and slums magnifies the problems faced by the poor. Concentrations of poor people lead to a concentration of the social ills that cause or are caused by poverty. Poor children in these neighborhoods not only lack basic necessities in their own homes, but also they must contend with a hostile environment that holds many temptations and few positive role models. Equally important, school districts and attendance zones are generally organized geographically, so that the residential concentration of the poor frequently results in low-performing schools (Jargowsky, 2003).*

Since financing for public schools is drawn from local property taxes, and poor districts have a smaller tax base to draw from, children in poor neighborhoods are more likely to attend neighborhood schools, which are educationally inferior (Drake & Rank, 2009). So what happens when children from psychologically stressed families, who have parents with an impaired ability to problem-solve and cope with their life circumstances, are concentrated in schools with insufficient resources? As social workers, we recognize that assets already exist within schools and communities, which are often overlooked and sometimes even misunderstood. Identifying and strengthening these assets is critical to enhancing sustainable support systems that can maximize the potential of children and families in resource-poor communities.

To use a commonly understood framework, we have begun organizing our thinking about community schools around Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs. We always understood that, as a partner organization, we provided support to schools by bringing in other partner organizations which could stock the food pantry, provide clothing, medical, dental, care, mental health and a host of other support to children and families. We also understood that we could engage parents in school activities and help them organize to have a voice in the school and to support the school leadership and staff. All these activities were designed to allow the educators to focus on what they do best: educate. However, what has become apparent to us is that unless the community-level trauma and disempowerment is addressed, we will still be here next year and several years thereafter, doing exactly the same things for the next generation of the

same families without any forward movement. And that is not why we do this work. So the questions then become: 1) What do we hope to achieve?; 2) How can we move beyond the transactional level?; and 3) What does it look like when higher level needs are fulfilled?

In response to the aforementioned items of inquiry, SWCOS staff identified six “non-negotiables”, or guiding principles, which we believe should exist in any community school we support. We believe they should exist in every school, although each school may develop its own strategies and activities for achieving the outcomes associated with those principles. These principles are closely aligned with the guiding principles we are developing for our organization as a whole. The non-negotiables are:

1. Positive School Culture and Climate
2. Physical and Mental Wellness for Every Child
3. Family Stability
4. Safe and Secure School Environment
5. Successful Academic Performance
6. Personal, Family, Community Empowerment and Self-Determination

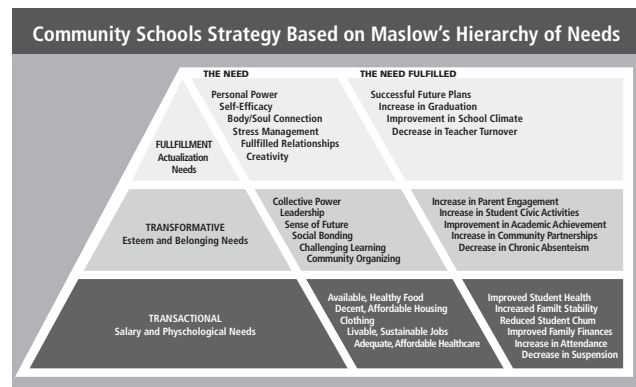


Figure 1: SWCOS’ Community Schools Strategy Based on Adaptation of Maslow’s (1943) Hierarchy of Needs

## Positive School Culture and Climate

*The National School Climate Council defines school climate as:*

*...the quality and character of school life. School climate is based on patterns of students’, parents’ and school personnel’s experience of school life and reflects norms, goals, values, interpersonal relationships, teaching and learning practices, and organizational structures (2015).*

In some ways, it is almost impossible to separate any of our non-negotiables from school climate but, in a city like Baltimore where, according to Advocates for Children and Youth’s Kids Count Data Center (2015) 86% of Baltimore students in 2014 received free

and reduced meals (in some of the schools SWCOS serves, the number of students qualified is much closer to 100%), and trauma, a close bed-fellow of poverty abounds, school climate deserves to be called out for special attention. It may be considered that school climate and culture provide an umbrella within which to house the other five non-negotiables.

The impact of trauma on children, families, and school staff in Baltimore is not to be under-estimated. In an analysis of FBI crime records, Neighborhood Scouts (2015) cites a one in 70 chance in being a victim of a violent crime in Baltimore, compared with a one in 211 chance in the rest of Maryland. This is a high number for a city of this size. Baltimore also carries notoriety in the media as the heroin capital of the US. A short drive in some neighborhoods leaves little question that, whether the label is accurate or not, Baltimore has a very big heroin problem.

Children exposed to community violence are at a higher risk for mental health problems and acting out behavior in school (Hardaway, Larkby & Cornelius, 2014). Young people who have experienced this type of trauma often live in a constant state of arousal, anticipating that harm could come to them at any time (Martin, Revington & Seedat, 2012; Steinber et al, 2014). It is impossible to consider academic achievement for children who have experienced trauma without first reducing risk, enhancing social and emotional supports, and finally enhancing academic supports (Mulloy, 2014).

We have discovered that an important discussion about school leadership belongs in lock step with this discussion of school climate. Many in the education community have caught the vision about the pertinence of trauma and students' (and staff's) socio-emotional needs to student success, but we now understand that, without the driving force of school leadership, school climate cannot be improved. We have seen a marked difference in school climate between our schools where school leadership has been stable, consistent, and deliberate about creating an organizational culture built around a vision, which has been co-created with staff, students, parents and community members. This vision must be consistently messaged and reinforced throughout the school year, and must include opportunities for the entire school community to see how it benefits them.

Unfortunately, in some of our schools, the principals have changed yearly, and the new principals have only been vaguely familiar with the concept of community school, and have been overwhelmed with

the tasks of becoming acclimated to a new school filled with students who are experiencing any number of challenges. In those cases, the concept of the community school is often seen as one more burden to deal with, rather than an asset to help overcome presenting challenges.

Organizational culture is a pattern of basic assumptions or shared meaning on which the perceptions, thoughts and feelings of the people in the organization are based. It exists in groups of people who have shared (and solved) significant problems, observed the effects of their solutions, and have taken in new members. These basic assumptions are often unspoken and are highly resistant to change (Schein, 1987). Schools, like other types of organizations, require stable, consistent membership in order for strong culture to develop. A strong leader sets vision and absorbs the anxiety of group members, as culture is being created, embedded and reinforced (Schein, 2008). A revolving door of principals (and often accompanying faculty and staff) is destabilizing to culture, especially in schools where positive school culture has not already been established.

### **Physical and Mental Well-Being of Every Child**

On our health sciences campus, health resources abound, but this is not the case for many residents of Baltimore City. According to the 2013 Baltimore City Health Disparities Report Card, the city "continues to experience higher mortality rates and burden of disease than both the rest of Maryland, and the overall US population". In fact, the report cites a mortality rate for Baltimore City that is 1.34 times that of Maryland (p.5). The Health Department graded the city (which is almost two thirds African American) on health disparities between race, gender, education, and income, and gave the city a final grade of C minus.

In one of our schools, where the principal has set out and walked the community school vision for a long time, a close collaboration with the university's dental school has made a huge impact on the dental health of the largely immigrant student body. In another of our schools the nursing school would like to work more closely with the students around asthma, which we believe impacts attendance, but bureaucratic processes about who can see children in the health suite have become an obstacle.

We would like to see a school-based health center in every school, which provides for children's physical and mental health needs. In one community

school, which we no longer support because they are strong enough to no longer need us, a strong principal and Community School Coordinator sought funding for a health center, on-site daycare and mental health center a multitude of other services for students and families. This school turned around from a school which was scheduled to be closed. Not surprisingly, this school is thriving. Again, it took strong leadership with a vision. It was not university-driven; we merely provided the resources to actualize that vision of the principal, teachers, parents and students.

### **Family Stability**

Foundational to Maslow's (1943) framework, is the concept that basic safety and physiologic needs must be met. This really is the bedrock of our community school work. The goal for Community School staff is to ensure families have opportunities to learn about resources they need and to identify themselves as in need of additional resources. SWCOS staff helps school staff identify child and family needs, which impact school achievement. Sometimes the issue presents itself through an attendance problem, which is an indication of a family's homelessness or impending homelessness. Often school staff refer families for case management related to employment, housing, food and other needs. We have a separate program in SWCOS which provides case management and financial assistance to families at risk of homelessness, and that program sits in a community school, serving both families in the school and community members.

We have found that we cannot separate family stability from our other non-negotiables. We recognize that helping families find stable housing is insufficient if one of the parents has untreated mental health issues, or a medical issue and a job with no sick leave. Other barriers like family members who get job training, but are barred from employment by an old misdemeanor on their record have pushed us toward the importance of policy work and advocacy.

### **Safe and Secure School Environment**

Much of this non-negotiable has to do with bullying and fighting between students. In some of our schools, fighting between students occurs daily and in some classrooms. It is not uncommon in one of our schools to have multiple fights erupt at the same time. Bullying is also a pervasive problem. Our Community School Coordinators work with school leadership on programs and activities, which end the bully-victim-bystander cycle.

The issue of safe and secure school environment is closely aligned with school culture and climate. The impact on all children of both overt aggression and being witness to aggression is profound. In schools where deliberate attention is paid by school leadership to peer relationships between adults, peer relationships between children and relationships between adults and children, schools are safer in perception and in reality (Cobb, 2014; Goldstein, Young & Boyd, 2007).

One of the difficult questions we have struggled with over the past two years is how to handle the issue of safety in our schools, especially when that safety might impact our own university students. We have had a few times when our own graduate students have felt unsafe; either because of events inside a school or in the immediate community. We wrestle with the question of when our focus should be service to the community versus the safety of our own university students. We are fully cognizant that removing our graduate students from their placements is an exercise of our privilege. The K-12 students who live in that community are not able to leave. Are they not equally at risk? We are also cognizant that coming into a community and then leaving when the going gets tough is exactly what universities have been doing for years; hence many communities' distrust of institutions such as ours. And this type of perceived betrayal makes the work tougher for those who would come behind us, as they have a bigger mountain to climb in gaining the community's trust.

In these instances, we have chosen (and received university clearance) to stay, even as some of our partners have left. We have been successful in staying each time, and hope that we will be able to weather each storm in kind. We believe that anyone who works in a traumatized system needs to recognize the impact of the trauma first. If a partner is coming in to teach reading, they should understand that they are coming to teach reading in a traumatized system. If they don't want to deal with trauma, they should teach reading somewhere else. We will never be able to separate the trauma from the child (or from the school as a system). Until that reading teacher can work with that child, with all her trauma, that will be a very frustrated reading teacher. We have a lot of very frustrated teachers!

### **Successful Academic Performance**

Assuming school climate is positive and supportive; children have good physical and mental health; families have all their basic needs met, and are in a stable and sustainable living situation; and children



feel physically and emotionally safe and secure at school, then children should be able to access the most rigorous academic material. This does NOT mean, that children who are not in perfect settings in all of the other non-negotiables cannot achieve significant academic success, and should not be met with high expectations for such. Molloy (2014) states that that #1 mistakes made by schools that serve at-risk students is neglecting the social-emotional foundations of academic success (the lower rungs of Maslow's hierarchy). The #2 mistake, she says, is assuming that little can be done to help children who face many obstacles achieve academic success. At the same time that we address the transactional needs of students and families, the school's expectations should be clear: children can and will learn, and every adult in the building should carry the attitude and expectation of such.

This is easier said than done; we are aware. In some of the schools in which we work, staff are burned out and, sometimes themselves traumatized from working under trying conditions. It is often challenging for them to put away the tough outer shell they have to assume to keep showing up to do this difficult work. This is another place where leadership is important. Where the principal models for teachers his or her expectations for student learning, and relationships with students around academic achievement, significant strides can be made.

### **Personal, Family, Community Empowerment and Self-Determination**

We trace many so-called "problem behaviors" of students and families in schools and communities back to the issue of disempowerment. In the same way that we would not want to work with a community organization that does not practice the community development principles of transparency, accountability, participation and inclusion, we find that these principles are not common practices for many schools. We understand that in many of the communities in which we work, the families have experienced generations of disempowerment, and suddenly becoming empowered at school will not solve all problems, but we believe this is a place to begin. Developing opportunities for student, parent, community, and staff voice to be heard is critical.

As part of this non-negotiable, Community School Coordinators encourage parents to identify issues about which they would like to develop campaigns; either in the school or in the community. This allows opportunities for civic engagement and

social bonding around an issue. The goal is for parents and students to learn advocacy skills, and to gain the experience of being successful in asking for and gaining something to which they are entitled. The hope is that they will do this more and more: in their school, in their communities, on their jobs. The sense of power gained from coming together with others and raising a collective voice is unparalleled. We want to show community members that, what they cannot achieve alone, they can achieve together. This creates incentives for many types of bonding found in healthy communities (Beck, Ohmer & Warner, 2012).

### **The Center for Positive School Climate and Supportive Discipline**

As we work through our questions around community schools, SWCOS received funding to develop the Center for Positive School Climate and Supportive Discipline, fondly called, The Positive School Center. The Center was created to work with the Maryland State Department of Education to reduce the disproportionate suspensions of children of color and children with disabilities across the state. The goals of the Center are four-fold; to help teachers, staff and school administrators learn to: 1) View their schools through a trauma-informed lens; 2) Create classrooms which build resiliency with a focus on engagement, as opposed to behavior management; 3) Explore individual and structural bias and how these biases create policies which support disparate impact; and 4) Use restorative and healing practices, including the use of mindfulness for stress reduction and teacher self-care, and restorative practices for conflict management.

The use of tools such as mindfulness is steadily gaining momentum in schools, and appears to have significant utility in schools serving students experiencing trauma; helping to increase self-awareness and reduce stress (Mendelson, et al; Mulloy, 2014). Reduced stress allows individuals to enjoy more fulfillment (as SWCOS calls the peak of our adapted triangle): creativity, personal power, flow, positive relationships, and resilience (Conger, Conger & Martin, 2010; Csikszentmihalyi, 2010; Wadsworth, Rindlaub, Hurwich-Reiss, Rienks, Bianco & Markman, 2013).

#### **What We Have Learned**

We have learned difficult lessons about our own internal capacity, which has led to some re-organization. Community School Coordinators working in schools with complex challenges require a lot of support, and this support was not built into our original model. In fact, funders do not provide support for this level

of supervision, so we have had to figure out how to do some creative fundraising to pay for it. We have watched our staff in schools burn out without it. We have created a new position: Director of Community Services, and this position goes between our community schools to lend support to staff and interns in the schools. Our Director of Community Organizing also provides support for activities related to parent and student advocacy.

We have also learned that we made the mistake of supporting schools at the request of community partners or a funding source, or because it seemed to make sense geographically. This has never worked. If the principal does not have a burning desire to be a community school, the program will not work. Our new requirement is that the request must come from the principal for us to consider it. We need to know that there is leadership commitment. We have also had principal turnover, where a committed principal leaves and then received a new principal who had no interest in moving the community school program forward. This has always been devastating to the program. Baltimore City Schools has a new system in place for ensuring principals who will be placed in a community school are committed to the concept, which will make the process easier.

Finally, we have had to ask some tough questions about our own effectiveness and organization as a university supporter of community schools. As we go through this strategic planning process, we are articulating desired outcomes, strategies for achievement and related activities. We are identifying which indicators we can clearly measure, which are within our control, and which are not. It is not enough to simply say we did good work. We need to be able to point to outcomes and say what we have achieved.

## The Future

We want to bring together the full force of our community schools, community organizing, case management and mental health services, non-profit capacity building, partnerships and graduate student enthusiasm and energy to achieve collective impact in the communities we support. Our vision is to work within the community school ensuring that the students, staff and families have access to the six non-negotiables we have discussed. At the same time, we want to work with families outside the school to have a voice in their communities and a seat at the table when local policymakers, developers, businesses and institutions like ours, are making decisions. We want

to encourage families to tell their stories beyond their communities; at the state level and at the federal level, to put a face on poverty and trauma. We want them to know the satisfaction of no longer being faceless and voiceless. We want young people to learn about and exercise advocacy, and learn early not to be invisible. We want to support partner organizations in growing and becoming strong, so that they have better capacity to serve families both inside and outside community schools, so they are trained and equipped to work with families experiencing trauma. We want them to be able to stay in the game for the long haul, and not burn out and give up. This is not a short journey.

We understand that nothing we envision will happen quickly or come easily. We will see staff burn out and school leadership come and go. But like any organization, we know that a vision is a place to start, and this is ours. We look forward to seeing how our vision will mature and grow, and to what we will learn along the way.

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**Teacher Education in Australia, Teachers' Imaginations  
and Community engagement**

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## Introduction

Teacher education courses are designed to ensure that graduates are thoroughly and appropriately prepared to provide quality education well suited to the children and young people entrusted to their care. Essential to that preparation is the development of their personal and professional commitment to the dignity and rights of all people, and awareness of the diverse educational, social, religious, cultural and economic contexts in which they live — a process founded upon graduates' acquiring the kinds of imagination necessary to perceive education and the world in the ways that their own students do. Graduates should also be well informed by the scholarship of the discipline of education and capable of contributing to it with reference to different contexts.

This vision of teacher education, and of the graduates and the children and young people who are to benefit from it, is based in human rights law built upon a commitment by all nations to a shared humanity and shared values that emerged in reaction to the arbitrary violence of totalitarian regimes and extensive destruction and loss of life in the Second World War. Teacher education policy and practice need to be informed by human rights legislation, which includes legislation regarding the right to education itself.

## Human rights and education

In international human rights law, the right to education is stated in terms of the aims, process and substance of education (Butcher, Sidoti, Benjamin, Casey, & Steel, 2011). The aim of education is to develop:

- the child and her/his personality, talents and abilities;
- respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- respect for the child's parents, cultural identity, language and values and for the national values of the country of residence and the country of origin; and for civilizations different from his or her own; and
- respect for the natural environment.

The education of the child is also to be directed to “the preparation of the child for responsible life in a free society, in the spirit of understanding, peace, tolerance, equality of the sexes, and friendship among all peoples, ethnic, national and religious groups and persons of indigenous origin” (pp. 166-167).

The process of education requires that “education should be directed towards developing respect for

human rights and fundamental freedoms...modelling a society with a culture of human rights that operates on the basis of respecting all human rights of everyone” (Butcher et al., 2011, p. 168).

The substance of education refers to the forms of education to be provided for the society by its government in order that these forms are available, accessible, affordable, acceptable and adaptable (Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, n.d., General Comment 13 “The right to education” paragraph 6). Underlying these principles is a commitment to the provision of education that is of high quality, relevant, culturally appropriate and “responsive to culture and needs as they exist and change” (Butcher et al., 2011, p. 171).

Universities need to ensure that their teaching, research and community engagement (service) implement these principles articulated in the right to education, and also to contribute new insights that inform the realization of these human rights in practice. This chapter shows how a community engagement approach to teacher education enhances what John Passmore calls the “disciplined imagination” and the “sympathetic imagination” (Passmore, 1985) of teacher education students and graduates in ways that both embrace and enact the values expressed in the right to education. The “disciplined imagination” combines mastery of subject disciplines with openness to innovation in an increasingly technological world; the “sympathetic imagination” develops the capacity to understand the feelings of others and to co-operate in a society of widely differing cultures and values.

This right to education agenda cannot be assumed as a basis for teacher education, nor was it available as a set of principles for school and teacher education in Australia with the arrival of white settlers from England in 1788. Two scenarios from the history of education and teacher education in Australia are set out below, the first from the early days of settlement and education and the second from 2013. They outline the development in Australia of education and teacher education policies upholding the rights to education, fundamental freedom and respect for cultural identity and values, showing the importance of the disciplined and sympathetic imaginations in that process.

A brief discussion of the disciplined and sympathetic imaginations follows, leading to a consideration by means of a case-study of how community engagement in a teacher education program develops both forms of imagination in teachers and pupils, strengthens a very diverse local community,

supports the rights of children to education and contributes to the common good.

### **Australian education contexts**

Formal education in Australia was a vision more than a reality for new settlements. Schooling and education were not the top priorities of Governor Arthur Phillip when he sailed with the 778 convicts aboard the First Fleet into what would later be known as Sydney Harbour. The main provider of schooling in England and British colonies at the time was the Church of England. Later, when Catholic priests were allowed entry into the colony, a few schools for Catholic children were opened. Recognising the difficult situation of “poor” girls in the colony, however, Phillip established a school for girls – an affirmative action showing the importance he placed upon education for women in the new settlement.

In the first half of the 19th century schooling in New South Wales was chiefly the responsibility of the different Churches, with the Government providing some financial support. In 1848 there was just one state-owned school, with an enrolment of 50 pupils. Considerable growth followed, during which the colony of New South Wales became a State in 1859. By 1870 there were 359 state schools with an attendance of 33,456. At this time the state was concerned only with primary education. The number of Church-run schools had also increased, and they were educating about half of the State’s children.

The commitment of the Catholic community to available, affordable and appropriate education found imaginative and new expression in the first century of the new colony. In 1867 Sir Henry Parkes introduced the NSW Public Schools Act, and in 1870 legislation was passed specifying that State schools would be free and secular and that schooling was to be compulsory. At the same time financial support for Church schools was abolished. Similar legislation was passed in Queensland, Victoria and Western Australia.

Catholic Bishops were gravely concerned that schooling should be the total responsibility of the State. Committed to faith-based education, but without the finances to pay teachers, they had recourse to the Religious Congregations of Ireland (the Sisters of Charity, Presentation Sisters, Sisters of Mercy, Christian Brothers and Patrician Brothers) and Europe (the Marist and De La Salle Brothers) to provide teachers who would not draw a salary. In Australia two Congregations were founded to provide education for Catholic children – the Sisters of the Good Samaritan

and the Sisters of Saint Joseph. The right of Catholic children to faith-based education became a matter of national focus when on July 16, 1962, the Catholic community in Goulburn, a regional city in New South Wales, closed its Catholic schools and more than 1,000 children enrolled at the already overcrowded state schools in the city. By 1967 every parliament in Australia had passed legislation that allocated state funds to non-government schools (Henderson, 2011; Luttrell, 2012; Shirley, 1997).

Quality teacher education was not a priority in the early years of the Australian colonies, and teacher training was almost non-existent in the first half of the 19th Century. Aspiring teachers were allocated as “pupil teachers” to experienced teachers who prepared them for their work in the classroom. Today it may come as a shock to learn that girls aged 13 could become “pupil teachers,” and that some girls aged 15 were put in charge of 100 pupils in city schools. As late as 1882, teacher training was a mere six-month program.

It was only in the 20th Century that teacher training colleges were opened in Queensland, West Australia and Tasmania. At this time only Victoria required all teachers to be registered, and its teacher training courses, whether State or private, had to be approved. Catholic teacher education began in a formal way when Catholic religious congregations established teacher training courses in the late 19th Century, with entry restricted to members of their congregations. Catholic teacher education would only become available to lay teaching students in the latter part of the 20th century.

Big changes took place in teacher education in the 20th Century, and by the early 1970s teacher training courses had become three-year courses, and most teacher training colleges were classified as Colleges of Advanced Education (CAE’s), offering approved courses in different disciplines leading to degrees at Bachelors and Masters levels. By 1980 the distinction between CAE’s and Universities had become so blurred that the Federal Minister of Education directed that CAE’s should meet the requirements to become Universities in their own right, or join with an established University (College of Advanced Education, 2013).

A human-rights-based approach to school and teacher education requires consideration of the experience to the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples of Australia. During their long history in Australia, which spans more than 40,000 years, children learnt their culture, history and spirituality

by participating in Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander family life and ceremonies and from the wisdom of their elders. For indigenous communities, white settlement entailed loss of land and devaluation or even loss of traditional cultures and approaches, which were not valued by white settlers.

The new settlers usually had little desire to provide any schooling for Aboriginal children. The first attempts to provide it were by Christian missionaries, whose primary aim was to convert the Aboriginal people to the Christian faith while also providing very basic education devoid of any relation to the children's and the communities' ways. By contrast, in the second half of the 19th century Bishop Salvado, of New Norcia, Western Australia, showed the mutual benefits to be gained by engaging with the Aboriginal people. He lived close to them, studied their language and customs, listened to their stories and legends, and took part in their ceremonies. He also insisted that his teachers took Aboriginal pace, initiative and aptitudes into account in their educational methods (Salvado, 1871; Russo, 1979).

Since the early days of white settlement there has been a marked shift in policy toward engaging with Aboriginal and Torres Strait islander people to develop appropriate school and teacher education for their communities. Today, many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people have senior advisory and policy roles in the field of education. Their schools and communities are also benefiting from the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people who have graduated from teacher education programs. These benefits have flowed on to Aboriginal and Islander peoples and the wider Australian community.

According to the latest figures on schools issued by the Australian Bureau of Statistics in March 2013, the majority of Australia's 9,427 schools were in the government sector (71%) and the Catholic and independent sectors accounted for 18.2% and 10.8% respectively (Australian Bureau of Statistics [ABS], 2013). Schooling is also provided in hospitals, correctional centres, and through technology to remote places in this vast country. Teacher education occurs largely within universities, of which there are 39 in Australia (Universities Australia, 2013). There is federal and state government funding for government schools with partial funding for Church and other private schools, which raise additional income from school fees paid by parents or carers. Teacher education is funded through federal government grants to universities, and students who have citizenship or residential status are

able to access Commonwealth supported places in these institutions.

These two scenarios, from the first half-century of white settlement and the first quarter of the 21st century, provide very different pictures of school and teacher education in Australia. In the first scenario, school education was neither available nor accessible for most children, and achieving accessibility and availability took precedence over appropriateness. Little public attention was given to the formal education of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander children or to the call of people from Catholic and other faith traditions for education that respected, and at times incorporated, particular faith perspectives into children's formal education. Governments had not provided teacher education institutions or courses for aspiring teachers, and there was no government financial support for faith-based teacher education institutions. Education generally was focused largely upon mastery of disciplines, with their unquestioned bodies of knowledge and procedures (Passmore, 1985).

In the second scenario, school education is largely available and accessible, but questions remain about its appropriateness, given the diversity of Australian people, cultures and contexts. Aboriginal and Indigenous communities continue to seek appropriate education and new opportunities for their children, conscious that their young people comprise 52% of young people in custody (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare [AIHW], 2013). Another concern for school and teacher education is to meet the needs of refugee families and children from Africa, the Middle East and Asia, many of whom have had little if any experience of formal education in institutional settings.

This second scenario occurs within a market context that brings forces to bear around high levels of student attainment and school performance (Zanoni & Mampaey, 2013). The market context constructs education as being transactional in nature, providing access to schooling as a service, learning focused upon disciplines, and examination results as goods for the consumer. By contrast, quality education in human rights terms gives priority to the person and to relationships and the interdependence of people within a shared humanity. Teachers committed to high quality and culturally appropriate education will be committed to the development of children as people and members of communities rather than to their increased functionality and economic value as commodities for the state. Such teachers will call upon both their disciplined and sympathetic imaginations in

implementing curricula and interpreting government education policies.

### **Education policies**

In Australia the federal government's commitment to address issues of education and disadvantage has been expressed in the Gonski review of school education (Australian Government, 2011). This review is based upon the principle that "a fair and inclusive education system is one of the most powerful levers available to make society more equitable" and upon the human rights imperative that "all people be able to develop their capacities and participate fully in society" (Australian Government, 2011, p. 107). There are political complexities, however, in the implementation of the review. Some state governments seem reluctant to support its provisions at all; others are concerned about a possible shift in apportionment federal and state responsibilities for education, and about the extent of federal control over the delivery of education by government, Catholic and independent schools.

The federal government has also seized upon a time of bipartisan support to push for reform and renewal in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education, but the question of appropriateness of its policies and strategies remains in contention (Luke, 2010).

The federal government has put students and social inclusion at the centre of its higher education policy, aiming to increase the number of highly skilled Australian workers capable of taking advantage of the new jobs and opportunities that will emerge in the future. Central to the government's higher education reforms are the radical improvement of levels of participation in higher education of students from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and the enhancement of their learning experiences. One of the government's stated goals is that by 2020, twenty percent of undergraduate higher education enrolments will be people from low socioeconomic backgrounds.

Both federal and state governments have policies for providing quality education for all. Explicit attention is given to quality teaching, performance feedback, and school culture that values quality learning (Australian Institute for Teaching and School Leadership [AITSL], 2011). Policies acknowledge that all schools are different, with their own strengths and weaknesses in creating a culture of teacher performance and development. The purpose of teacher performance and development is the achievement of the vision of the Melbourne Declaration that "all young Australians become successful learners, confident and

creative individuals and active and informed citizens" (Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs [MCEETYA], 2011, p. 5).

The federal government's education policies are part of its focus upon positioning Australia within the Asian region. Skills and education form one of the government's five critical pillars for enhancing Australia's productivity and for ensuring that all Australians can participate and contribute within the Asian context (Australian Government, 2012).

Teacher education is central to governments' achievement of their educational priorities and of their economic and social priorities. It is no wonder, then, that teacher education has been the subject of many government reviews. Ramsey (2000) drew upon twenty federal and state government reviews from 1980 to 1999 in his review of teacher education for the New South Wales Department of Education and Training. The focus of these reviews included questions of continuity and change, disciplines such as Science, Mathematics, literacy and reading, teacher status, teacher profiles, teacher recruitment, vocational education and training, student management, and teacher education for the 21st century. The number of reviews shows that teacher education in Australia is subject to continual government intervention, which in its own way hinders teacher education institutions from achieving the goal of providing quality teachers for diverse communities, cultures and contexts. The scope of reviews indicates the complexity of teacher education and its importance for governments and other stakeholders.

The position of teacher education is structurally complex. Both school and teacher education are constitutionally the responsibility of state governments, but federal government legislation influences or determines educational funding, program priorities, and accountabilities. Complexity and, at times, tensions are evident in the current priorities of the federal government and the New South Wales government relating to quality teaching (AITSL, 2011; Independent Schools Teacher Accreditation Authority [ISTAA], 2013). Both governments have focused upon entry requirements for the teaching profession, but at different points; the federal government specifies requirements when graduates seek entry into the profession, while the state government specifies requirements for applicants into teacher education courses. Both governments specify time requirements for in-school experience, and the state government also specifies structural and course unit requirements for teacher education programs.



The capability of teachers to understand and respond to communities, cultures and contexts is addressed differently by the federal and state governments. The national (federal) professional standard requires teachers to be able to “engage professionally with colleagues, parents/carers and the community” (AITSL, 2011, p. 3). This standard requires teachers to show exemplary ethical behaviour, support legislative compliance, engage parents/carers in children’s learning and school priorities, and contribute to professional and community networks. The federal government requires school partnerships with parents and communities, established to work with students showing disruptive behaviour or under-performing. This requirement includes provision of take-home advice for parents regarding student learning and behaviour (AITSL, 2011). The priority of the New South Wales government is to require the Institute of Teachers and teacher education providers to support initiatives and approaches that address the roles of parents, caregivers and communities in education, and to do so in a way that is consistent with the ethos of the school (NSW Institute of Teachers, n.d.).

### **Teachers’ disciplined and sympathetic imaginations**

The development of teachers’ disciplined and sympathetic imaginations offers an important focus for teachers’ professional development. After setting up a dialectic between the “disciplinary imagination as a thesis and Romantic imagination as antithesis,” Passmore (1985) proposes a “higher synthesis” (p. 13) of the disciplined imagination as combining mastery of disciplines — systems of knowledge built up over time and expressed in rules and information — and imagination that allows questioning of and innovation within such systems, to produce “thinking at its most remarkable.... not only does the imagination ... involve discipline within itself, it also has to be subject to discipline” (p. 18). Looking ahead to the twenty-first century, Passmore presciently notes that development of high technology “demands co-operative disciplined imagination of a complex kind.” (p.18)

“Another form of imagination is also of fundamental importance,” writes Passmore; “it is sometimes called sympathetic imagination” (p. 18). The nature of the sympathetic imagination is “a capacity to understand how other people are feeling. Such imagination is inherent in the capacity to co-operate. Always difficult, it becomes even more difficult when the people in question are culturally and socially

remote” (p. 18). The sympathetic imagination is central to implementing a human rights based approach to education in Australia, especially since, as Passmore pointed out twenty-eight years ago, “Australians are living in a multi-cultural community, they are trying ... to take Aboriginals seriously, and their future is inexorably bound up with the future of Asian countries.” (p.18) (Passmore, 1985).

In Australia both the federal and New South Wales governments require, through their respective statements of professional standards for the teaching profession, that teachers master professional knowledge and skills and also develop attitudes and capacities that include parents and communities in a school’s educational endeavours. In other words, teachers are expected to develop the abilities to engage and teach in ways that are professionally appropriate, effective, responsive and “sympathetic” to the different people, cultures and contexts within the wider school communities. Teachers who do so will be regarded as leaders in the schools, wider school communities, and the profession.

These professional standards, as well as the right to education, require teacher education programs to be structured in ways that assist student teachers to develop and master professional knowledge, skills and abilities, and to be reflective and critical about their professional practice in different situations. The development of student teachers’ “disciplined imagination” is necessary, but not sufficient if teachers are to provide education which is of high quality, relevant, culturally appropriate and “responsive to culture and needs”. Explicit attention also needs to be given to developing teachers’ “sympathetic imagination”. Returning to the first scenario above, Bishop Salvado’s engagement with the Aboriginal people in their worlds and his expectation of such engagement and sensitivity from his professional colleagues nurtured his own “sympathetic imagination” and theirs.

Such a focus on the disciplined and sympathetic imagination of teachers and teachers-to-be would not, however, have been an expectation of school and teacher education in the early days of the white colony in Australia, when capable school students were called upon to be “pupil teachers,” and then teachers of 100 pupils. Their classroom contexts required a mastery of teaching and management without time or space to draw upon scholarship or community engagement to inform their own or their pupils’ “disciplined” and “sympathetic” imaginations.

By contrast, the policy emphasis in today’s

Australia requires a mastery of the profession that will inform teaching practice in quite different contexts. The implementation of these policies for teachers' professional standards would benefit from an emphasis upon developing both the disciplined and the sympathetic imaginations of teacher education students, teachers and teacher educators. Such an emphasis reflects the wisdom shown by Bishop Salvado and others who knew that their own professional learning had to be built upon listening to and engaging with children and their communities. As Passmore noted in 1985, "... students at every level are often better at understanding the problems which confront their fellow pupils than their teachers are" (p. 17). Education, so informed, moves beyond an unthinking compliance with policy to the provision of high quality education appropriate and attentive to the capacities and needs of different children and communities.

The development of teachers' disciplined and sympathetic imagination is enhanced through "engagement with," as distinct from "a study of" or "service to" communities. Proper engagement with communities provides an important avenue for developing one's disciplined imagination as well as one's sympathetic imagination, since the community engagement will include scholarship and research informed by collaboration of the community and the academy.

### **Teachers' imaginations and community engagement**

The role of community engagement in developing student teachers' sympathetic and disciplined imaginations will be examined from a case study of community engagement in teacher education at the Australian Catholic University. The university defines community engagement as follows:

Community engagement is the process through which Australian Catholic University brings the capabilities of its staff and students to work collaboratively with community groups and organisations to achieve mutually agreed goals that build capacity, improve wellbeing, and produce just and sustainable outcomes in the interests of people, communities, and the University.

The University values community engagement as:

- a key means of advancing its Mission in serving the common good and enhancing the dignity and wellbeing of people and communities, specially those most marginalised or disadvantaged;
- integral to its teaching, learning and research; and

- affirming relationships that depend on trust and genuine partnerships with community organisations, institutions and corporations. (Australian Catholic University [ACU], n.d.)

Sheehan elucidated the idea of an "engaged" university further when he described engagement with communities as follows:

Engagement with the human community is not just service to the community through imparting knowledge about social issues and problems. Engagement is a reciprocal process whereby communication is backed up, if possible, by interaction in ways that can effectively alter the way the problem is perceived by oneself and others. Genuine engagement moves beyond the level of mere service and allows the opportunity for societal response to help redefine the nature of the problem itself and perhaps forge new solutions. (Sheehan, 2002, p. 136)

This community engagement is based upon mutual respect, trust and reciprocity, a commitment to seeking the truth with communities, and a commitment to the common good through an openness to, and a searching for, new and helpful perceptions of the realities of and possibilities for communities and human cultures. A person's employment of their sympathetic and disciplined imaginations is central to such community engagement: being sympathetic to the other, seeing and hearing the world from the perspective of the other, and researching in a disciplined way the nature of the situation, the problem, and ways of making a difference.

Examples of the University's community engagement are presented here to show the nature, purpose and benefits of the programs, and the synergies between the engagement and the development of sympathetic and disciplined imagination in pre-service teacher education students. The University has 26000 students across six campuses, which are based in Brisbane, Sydney, Canberra, Ballarat and Melbourne. The University's faculties include Education, Theology and Philosophy, Health Sciences, Arts and Sciences, Business, and Law. Pre-service teacher education courses are offered by the Faculty of Education and as joint degrees by the Faculty of Education and the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. The University's Institute for Advancing Community Engagement (IACE) is responsible for facilitating community engagement across the whole of the University. IACE engages with communities in particular precincts or sites locally, nationally and internationally. Three areas of

its community engagement, particularly for the teacher education students, are engagement with children and youth, with marginalized communities, and in developing nations.

### Engagement with children and youth

The University has been committed to engaging with schools and communities for enhancing people's learning. The Faculty of Education is engaged in homework or learning support programs (HSP) in four of the five cities where the University is located. The largest homework support program, involving over 120 children and a similar number of University students, is in Atherton Gardens, a high-rise residential area adjacent to the Melbourne campus of the University. The homework support program is structured into the University's primary teacher education course, with the lecturer-in-charge of the unit working collaboratively with IACE in organizing the student teachers' briefing for and involvement in the program. IACE allocates students and oversees their participation and debriefing.

Research has been integral to the HSP program, with survey data being collected from the school children, teachers, and university students. People's perceptions of the program by children, parents, community members and university students have also been the subject of research by Master's students at the University. Evidence has shown how children's learning has been enhanced. In the second half of 2012, 86% of the children indicated that HSP helped them with their learning and 80% indicated that HSP helped them understand that learning is important. These benefits are reflected in the following comment from a parent:

Before, when Rachel came home from school, she came with homework she didn't understand. When the ...tutor explains it, she gets it right away. Her teacher told me she has started to be more open and participates more in class discussion now.

The research has also documented how the homework support program is more than an educational program, and that it contributes very much to a sense of community among children, parents, teachers and tutors. Children's comments include:

I feel safe.

It helps you make friends.

It is the best time of my life!

I like to be here because it is fun and helpful.

Parents regard HSP as a place where they can be heard and understood. They practise their English

when seeking information from tutors and they learn new ways of helping their children. Student teachers have commented that their community engagement has given them the opportunity to learn from children about the children's worlds and their learning. They have been able to see the world and the process of learning from the perspectives of the children. Mutuality and reciprocity are evident in these reports.

The importance of the mutual benefits and reciprocity in the community engagement is evident in the following reflections from a student teacher and child who worked together in HSP.

### Jennifer, Year 3 student teacher

"Luana and I first met at the Atherton Gardens Homework Support Program (AGHSP) in Fitzroy – established by the community in response to the specific language and literacy needs of local children from refugee backgrounds.

I started attending weekly sessions as a volunteer tutor – initially to satisfy the 80-hour community engagement component of my primary teaching course at ACU– but it soon became so much more than just marking time and ticking boxes.

Getting to know Luana – such an inspiring young person – has been truly awesome, and an experience that will definitely enrich my teaching experience. I look at how far Luana has come in her young life and her ambitions – wanting to become a doctor – and I am truly amazed.

Born in Kenya – with English as her second language – Luana was coming along to the program for extra support with her school-work. I paired up with her at the first session and we have been working together ever since – reading, writing, solving maths problems and laughing a lot. We just get along so well.

Being in Year 6 at Fitzroy primary School, Luana was making some preparations for high school and needed a little help. The day she asked me to assist with her application to get into a prestigious secondary girls' college (SGC) was the beginning of something really special between us.

We sat down and wrote it together, and Luana came out with all these wonderful aspirations she had for her high school years. She spoke of her interest in medicine – about how she wanted to help people to stay healthy and have a better life.

She talked about her passion for science and nature – and her plans to set up a school newspaper, write articles and draw cartoons.

She told me about her passion for art and music – how she loved to paint and play the guitar. I discovered that she spoke three languages – Somali, Arabic and English – and was looking forward to adding French and Italian to her repertoire.

Writing an application that Luana was happy with was important – it became a really big deal for both of us. Luana did most of the hard work herself and I just helped her to frame her language and articulate her ideas.

I will never forget the day Luana told me she had been accepted into SGC– the high school of her dreams. It was just so exciting and I really felt like we were a winning team. Luana had her heart set on that school and it was a privilege to play just a small part in helping her get there.

Our experience together has been mutually beneficial in so many ways. For example, my maths skills can be pretty sketchy and watching Luana work things out has helped me develop new problem solving strategies that I can take into the classroom.

She has helped me learn the importance of having a personal connection with my students – getting to know how they learn, what they like and what drives them. She has reinforced my belief that learning should be a lot of fun – and that having a good laugh works wonders in the classroom.

I have wanted to be a teacher since I was a little kid – it’s definitely my calling. Working closely with Luana in this amazing program has really confirmed that I have chosen the right career.

### **11-year-old Luana Ahmed, Year 6 student – Local Primary School**

When I met Jennifer, I knew straight away she was a nice person. She’s kind and funny and likes singing and playing drums – I think that’s cool. I get excited about seeing her every week at the program.

Even though I have lived in Australia most of my life – I arrived with my family as a refugee when I was one – I still think English is the hardest language to learn. We always speak Somali at home so some parts of English still don’t make sense to me.

I have learned lots of things from Jennifer. She has helped me improve my education and especially with my high school application. I am so happy to be going to SGC – it’s a very good school that can help me achieve my dreams if I work hard.

I am a really excited about going to the orientation day and meeting my new teachers. I have some friends that are going there as well – also from Fitzroy Primary School. I really want to see the whole building – it is such a big place with lots of new things to do. I like learning new stuff and meeting new people.

Jennifer knows me so well – she doesn’t let me cheat or get away with anything – this is really good because she makes sure I try hard and learn.

I will miss Jennifer a lot after our time at the program finishes – she is leaving ACU soon to find work in a primary school. I know she will make a really good teacher because she has already been teaching me. If I was the boss of a school, I would definitely give her a job.

The changes or transformations that have occurred in Luana, the school student, and Jennifer, the student teacher, show the impact upon both of them of this community engagement within the teacher education program. Luana’s movement from her coming to HSP for learning support, to new aspirational goals for her secondary education and her attainment of these goals, shows the power of the quality education and the relationships that made this community engagement so effective for her. Jennifer’s community engagement was a source of her movement from a focus upon meeting the course requirements to a depth of professionalism and mutuality in her learning-focused relationships with Luana. Jennifer has since taken this community engagement approach beyond her teacher education to her pupils in a school where most of the children are from refugee backgrounds. She embodies the values of the right to education, ensuring that she structures learning to suit each of the 23 children in her class. Her community engagement as a student teacher and now as a beginning teacher informs both her “disciplined imagination” and her “sympathetic imagination”. Her teaching is structured to provide quality and appropriate learning for each of the 23 children.

Jennifer commented that she, as teacher, sees the power of community engagement as being captured or “nailed” in this quotation from Remembrance of

Things Past by the French novelist, Marcel Proust: "The real voyage of discovery consists not in seeking new landscapes, but in having new eyes". Jennifer sees the landscape of the classroom and the children's lives and learning with new eyes, drawing upon her disciplined and sympathetic imaginations developed through her community engagement based teacher education.

The impact of community engagement on Jennifer is also seen in her participation in "Hearts in Harmony", a whole of community approach to inclusion through the arts. Through this community engagement, the student teachers have experienced the power of sharing in music to break through barriers and isolation and grow new connections and relationships. Jennifer's reflection on this community engagement shows the sympathetic imagination that supports understanding of people in marginalized communities:

Most of us are not aware of how it feels to be excluded, to be left out socially, emotionally or otherwise. Hearts in Harmony expresses the very essence of social justice, inclusion, engagement, and the breaking of all social and emotional barriers. Everyone is welcome. Everyone is included.

### Implications for teacher education

Jennifer and Luana have shown in their life narratives the mutual benefits of community engagement within teacher education for student teachers, children and the wider community. Jennifer has developed both her disciplined and sympathetic imaginations through her community engagement. As a teacher she gives priority to education that is appropriate and engaging for each of the children in her class. The children's human rights to education are fostered by Jennifer through education that is of high quality, relevant to each child and culturally appropriate. Luana acknowledges the benefits of her learning with Jennifer and how she became confident in pursuing her educational goals as she moved into secondary education.

The history of education in Australia shows how communities, church groups and other institutions sought and provided new structures and opportunities to enable children to access their right to quality and appropriate education, and how appropriate teacher education supported this development. The "disciplined" and "sympathetic" imaginations underlie the transformation of education in Australia since the days of rudimentary instruction in enormous classes by teachers who had been apprenticed as "pupil teachers," and narrowly proselytizing mission schools

for Indigenous people. Both "imaginings" underpin policies requiring mastery of subject disciplines that is coupled with openness to questioning and innovation, and personal commitment to children's right to education, and understanding of the variety of experience they bring to classrooms in a nation more than ever marked by diversity of backgrounds, cultures and capacities.

Now is the time for schools and communities at the local level to assume responsibility for their children's education to be of high quality, culturally appropriate and responsive to the differences. The development of teachers' disciplined and sympathetic imaginations through community engagement based teacher education gives priority to children's right to education. It transforms the life narratives of teacher education students and of many of the children with whom they engage.

Community engagement based teacher education assists graduates to develop their capacities for both a high level and multidimensional awareness of children, families and their contexts, and a high, multidimensional, and transformative approach to engaged education with the children and their families (Butcher, Johnston & Leathley, 2011; Butcher, Leathley, & Johnston, 2013; Butcher, Howard, Labone, Bailey, Smith, McFadden, McMeniman, Malone, & Martinez, 2003). It supports the sympathetic imagination that contests educational policies based upon a technical, disciplinary view of teaching, learning equated with results of testing, and teacher education seen as training employees for the education market.

Community engagement provides an important compass point and path for teacher education. It becomes the philosophical base for, and an integral component of the structure of teacher education programs and a holistic dimension of the students' development as teachers (Butcher, McFadden, & McFadden, 2005). Such teacher education programs are transformative for the institutions, graduates, communities and children, ensuring that children's rights to education become central, and that new possibilities for achieving this centrality in diverse contexts emerge. Further, in Catholic universities, such as the one in this case study, community engagement based teacher education programs express the universities' moral responsibility to make a difference in the world for the good of all (Gascoigne, 2009) through fostering the development of graduates' sympathetic and disciplined imaginations.

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**Preparing Teachers to Teach in Urban Schools:  
A Pedagogy for Community Schools**

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**Abstract**

As the community school movement continues to grow, so does the research on the formation of community schools and the impact on academic achievement. While the vision and practice of community schools focuses on academic success for all students, teachers play a critical role in articulating the student needs and referring student needs appropriate programs, the scholarship on teacher preparation for urban community schools is limited. Drawing from the literature on urban teacher education and community schools, this article discusses the importance of preparing teachers to teach in community schools and presents a theoretical framework, multicultural competence, equity pedagogy and social justice, that teacher education programs.

Urban schools alone cannot abolish the educational disparities caused by poverty without a critical understanding of the affects it has on learning. When schools apply broad deficit concepts that deem poor communities as violent, and struggling families as unsupportive, deficit views of poverty perpetuate an unconscious war against students that live in poverty. Frequently overlooked in narrow views of urban communities are the vibrant cultural assets and social capitals that repeatedly serve as lifelines to families who live with the hope that education will become the link to a better future.

Taking charge of the uncertainty and needs of urban schools are community leaders, parents, and service-provider partners who work with schools in a school reform movement that acknowledges poverty from a community perspective and honors the strengths within a community as a necessary strategy in addressing poverty. Known as the full-service community schools movement, this humanistic approach operates through a committed partnership of community agencies, businesses, educational institutions, and community leaders dedicated to identifying and coordinating resources for students, their families, and neighborhoods. The ultimate goal of community schools is academic achievement. To reach that goal, community schools focus on family engagement and provide school access to families by providing information and volunteer opportunities to be involved in the school. Community school staff works with teachers and administrators to reinforce the school curriculum by providing afterschool and summer enrichment programs that enhance student learning.

The vision and practice of community schools

focuses on academic success for all students so teachers play an important role in articulating the needs, become the link to providing a holistic response to student needs. Unfortunately, few teacher education programs focus on building competencies that prepare teachers to participate in a community school process. Preparing teachers to teach in community schools is critical, particularly at a time when teachers choose not to teach in struggling urban schools (Cunningham & Sanzo, 2002). The cultural naiveté of many pre-service teachers entering the field presents a challenge for teacher education programs that attempt to counter the deficit notions of urban schools. Deficit thinking creates a greater problem for urban schools that desperately need culturally competent teachers who can teach culturally diverse students.

Drawing upon the research on community schools, teacher preparation in urban schools, and years of experience in teaching pre-service teachers in a full-service community school, this paper highlights a theoretical framework for preparing teachers to teach in urban community schools. This paper focuses on a teacher education course, titled Diversity and Learning, and highlights the practical and pedagogical approaches for teaching in an urban community school. The philosophical underpinnings of the course support the natural connection between living and learning and a sense of community that permeates school and community. Because the political will is deliberate at eradicating poverty in this country, teacher educators must prepare teachers to teach in schools that operate in financially struggling communities.

**Preparing Teachers to Teach in Urban Schools**

Traditional teacher education programs do not focus on the necessary professional skill sets for teachers who plan to teach in urban schools (Helfeldt, Capraro, Foster, & Carter, 2009). A growing body of scholarship had indicated the importance of preparing teachers to be successful in urban school environments through action research and early school field experiences (Szabo, Scott, & Yellin, 2000). Supporting this research, are studies that develop the necessary skills, knowledge, claim growth in understanding of theory and practice (Auger & Wideman, 2000; Rock & Levin, 2002) and the insights to teaching in urban schools. Because teacher preparation programs typically do not prepare candidates to teach in urban schools (Haberman, 1996; Helfeldt, Capraro, Foster, & Carter, 2009), to be effective aspiring teachers must understand the



complexity of poverty, racial, and ethnic heterogeneity as factors that influence learning (Chou & Tozer, 2008; Hollins, 2012; Weiner, 2002, 2006). Weiner (2000) states, “Most research on preparing teachers for urban schools has been an absence of analysis of how political and economic conditions influence on teaching, teachers, and teacher education “ (p.372).

The dearth of adequately prepared teachers to teach in urban schools creates a severe shortage of high quality teachers in urban school districts that have a culturally diverse student population (Gay, 2000). To meet the personnel needs, school districts hire unlicensed or full-time substitute teachers to teach (Darling-Hammond, 2000; Darling – Hammond & Post, 2000) without considering the negative consequences it has on students. Other crucial factors that influence urban schools are higher student-to-teacher ratios (Darling-Hammond & Post, 2000; Karoly, 2001), lower teacher salaries (Betts, Rueben & Danenburg, 2000; Karoly, 2001), and less resources and funding (Carey, 2005; Kozol, 1992). The consequence that each factor has on students is unmeasurable; yet, the inferior image of urban schools continues to ignore the complexity of social, political, and intuitional factors that hinder the success of students who are often considered “at-risk” instead of “at-promise” (Swadener & Lubeck, 1995).

In the past 20 years, research has examined various aspects of teacher preparation for urban school classrooms (Banks et al., 2005; Haberman & Post, 1998; Hollins, 2012; King, Hollins, & Hayman, 1997; Ladson-Billings, 2001; Nieto, 2000; Villegas & Lucas, 2002; Sleeter, 2001). Similar studies have focused on specific the competencies for teaching in urban schools (Haberman, 1996; Oakes & Lipton, 1999; Oakes, Franke, Quartz, & Rogers, 2002), and teaching in multicultural settings (Ladson-Billings, 1995; Nieto, 2000; Sleeter, 2001). Because community schools are more than just another program added to a school, teachers must develop specific skill sets to think, work, and act collaboratively with interdisciplinary partners, organizations, and families. As the community school movement continues to grow, so does the research on the formation of community schools and the impact on academic achievement. Limited within the scholarship are the basic models for teacher preparation or professional development for teachers who teach in urban schools.

## Overview of Teaching to Learn, Learning to Teach

The Indiana University School of Education at Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis

(IUPUI) secondary education Learning to Teach/ Teaching to Learn (LT/TL) program is a four-semester, block-sequenced program facilitated by faculty who jointly plan and teach cohorts of twenty-five to thirty students. Each semester the new “cohort” of students is assigned to a professional development school (PDS) site where they complete an early and subsequent field experience (The Holmes Group, 1990). Pre-service teachers undertake intensive clinical practice supervision by expert clinical instructors that link their field experience with subject matter and empirical evidence about effective teacher practices in urban schools.

Philosophically, the LT/TL program values the John Dewey interpretation of authentic learning, derived from recursive “doing.” Preservice teachers experience intense learning situations in schools and communities that cannot be gleaned from a set of readings and assignments on course syllabi. The field experience allows pre-service teachers to establish knowledge in the act of teaching (Cochran-Smith & Lytle, 1999), expertise through experience (Darling Hammond, 2006) and growth through action research (Auger & Wideman, 2000; Szabo, Scott, & Yellin, 2002). The foci is social justice education, a critical examination of dominant cultural perspectives that affect learning and the complexities and intersectionality of socioeconomics, gender, language, race, ability, and ethnicity as factors that influence student identity, motivation, and academic achievement.

The PDS site for the secondary education program is located at George Washington Community High School (GWCHS), one of three high schools located in Indiana’s largest school system, Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS). The demographics at the school in 2013 included 77% of the students who participated in the free or reduced lunch program, 82% were students of color, and 64.5% of the students graduated from high school (Indiana Department of Education, 2015). Unique to this full service community school is the community advisory council, comprised of seventy-five community partners that connect community services to the school to address the needs of students in 13 different areas. The community advisory council meets monthly and supports the school administration with program and curriculum needs.

Since 2000, faculty from the IU School of Education at IUPUI have conducted research and held teacher preparation courses for pre-service teachers at the school. The emphasis on the full-service school as a social justice reform movement presents a

transformative approach to classroom teaching and learning. Transformational teachers create constructivist learning experiences (Dennen, 2004), utilize culturally responsive pedagogy (Gay, 2002), adopt learning strategies that engage students in problem solving, and more choice to craft more ways to motivate student learning (Schultz, 2008). In this program, future teachers examine the philosophy and practices of full-service community schools as a social justice education reform movement. This means pre-service teachers must understand the impact of reform movements that move beyond a simplistic understanding of theory and classroom practice to a sophisticated articulation of the relationship between social justice education and pedagogical practice.

### **Early Inquiry in the Pedagogy of Community Schools**

The School of Education began preparing teachers to teach in community schools in an undergraduate/graduate course titled “Better Together” – Interdisciplinary Practice in Urban Schools in the 1990s. The course, taught by faculty from the Schools of Education, Nursing, and Social Work, focused on topics that centered on the educational needs of urban schools, children, their families, and community. This interdisciplinary team of faculty, along with “community faculty” (teachers, community leaders, or individuals who had a history of working in the community), brought to life topics about urban schools to scaffold the idea of full-service community schools. Working together to deconstruct individualistic and autonomous notions of practice with graduate and undergraduate students from the three disciplines, the curriculum focused on six key areas: 1) collaboration and communication, 2) cultural competency, 3) public policy and policy awareness, 4) development and coordination of family, school, and community resources, 5) reflective practice, and 6) leadership (Murtadha-Watts, Belcher, Iverson, & Medina, 1999).

In weekly seminars conducted in neighborhood public elementary schools or community centers, students unraveled complex challenges related but not limited to education, health, social services, economic security, nutrition, and childcare in high need communities. Sometimes unprepared for civic activity as a strategy to learning about others, university students in small groups learned about the conditions and lives of neighborhood students at community centers, moving beyond a narrow view of their practices by conducting interdisciplinary

research. Here interdisciplinary research is defined as an “interdisciplinary understanding” or the capacity to integrate knowledge and modes of thinking drawn from two or more disciplines to produce a cognitive advancement in ways that would have been unlikely through single disciplinary means (Boix Mansilla, 2005, p. 16).

By integrating the insights of three disciplines in identifying the questions, answering questions, and discussing solutions, university students were able to produce a more comprehensive, holistic understanding of complex urban school issues. The general goal of the course was to break down the barriers that teachers and practitioners encounter in practice where they may view their roles in professional domains and fostered an attitude of collaboration that benefits youth and schools (Murtadha-Watts, Belcher, Iverson, & Medina, 1999). Recognizing that practitioners often bear the primary responsibility for developing core competencies that address a student’s basic needs, an emphasis in this course was placed on developing the necessary competencies for developing a holistic understanding of education. The theoretical framework for the course includes four key components: 1) an understanding of culture, power, and oppression, 2) acknowledging cultural deficit theories, 3) reflecting on white privilege, and 4) the adoption of culturally responsive teaching. The theoretical concepts and ideas incorporated in the “Better Together” course were appropriate for a teacher preparation course titled, *Diversity and Learning*, later taught at George Washington Community High School.

### **Conceptual Framework of the Diversity and Learning Course**

The IU School of Education at IUPUI has long recognized the need to prepare qualified teachers for urban schools. The Learning to Teach/Teaching to Learn program is committed to prepare graduates to be instructional leaders and change agents for educational equity in their classrooms, schools, and community. A foundational course taught within the secondary education program, *Diversity and Learning EDUC M322*, focuses on a critical social justice perspective that empowers pre-service teachers to decontextualize information to make informed decisions about students, school, and community. As previously stated, pre-service teachers discuss theory and classroom practice and critically analyze the relationship between social justice education and traditional pedagogical practice. Fundamental to the

discussions is critical theory and the examination of the educational perspective and politics that benefit dominant groups and marginalize students of color (Giroux & McLaren, 1986; Shor, 1980).

Different from traditional teacher education courses that only emphasize social justice, this course places anti-racist education at the center of the conversation, giving full attention to the institutionalization of whiteness, the systemic factors that underscore its continued dominance, and positionality in the reproduction of racialized culture (Giroux & McLaren, 1994; Leonardo, 2002) in urban schools. The major strength of this program is the innovative approach to examining pedagogical approaches along with learning about the benefits of working in a school that is committed, dedicated, and determined to enhance the quality of education for urban school students. A conceptual understanding of critical social justice education can help future teachers better rise to the equity challenges of teaching in urban schools and the fundamental principles of community schools. To be ready, they must reach beyond their own realities and must understand the frames of reference and points of views that their students bring to the classroom (Nieto, 2000).

The early field experience at George Washington Community High School advances a philosophical approach to teaching and promotes interdisciplinary practice through an asset-based inquiry project in the school neighborhood. Problem solving from an interdisciplinary perspective encourages students to focus on diversity, equity, and fairness and the social, political, and cultural context of schooling. Learning takes place in context as pre-service teachers engage in authentic relationships with middle and high school students, mentor teachers, and community members. To support these experiences, the course design continually blends theory and practice so that pre-service teachers can reflect and question their own ideas and question theory and practice. Through course assignments, students practice critical and meta-cognitive thinking, critical inquiry, and data-driven decision-making. Throughout the semester, they reflect on their experiences in critical reflective journal entries; an opportunity to establish one-on-one dialogue with the course instructor to help shift their ideologies about the complexities in urban schools. Participation in class discussions, role-play case studies, and videotapes to some degree further their conceptualization of difficult socio-political notions that education including white privilege, oppression, discrimination, and colorblindness that are often difficult to comprehend. Each course

activity is intentionally designed to create a “community of learners” and a classroom environment that is conducive to honest, critical, and reflective dialog that fosters transformational knowledge. According to James Banks (1993), transformational knowledge “is based on different epistemological assumptions about the nature of knowledge, about the influence of human interests and values on knowledge construction, and about the influence of human interests and values on knowledge construction, and about the purpose of knowledge“(p.9).

To shape their instructional attitudes and skills, the theoretical framework for the course centers on three components that promote equitable schools: 1) Multicultural Competency, 2) Equity Pedagogy, and 3) Societal Equity. Incorporated within each of the components are assignments that provide pre-service teachers with inquiry-based and a practical application to key theoretical concepts.

### **Component 1 – Multicultural Competence**

Multicultural competence is the knowledge, awareness, and skills that enable teachers to know how culture (including their own individual or dominant group’s common beliefs, shared tradition, language, styles, and values), creates a lens through which they give meaning to their teaching (Bennett, 2001). Multicultural competent teachers demonstrate a critical understanding of the power structures in society, while acknowledging commonalities across cultures. Becoming multiculturally competent is a lengthy self-reflective critical process that requires pre-service teachers to understand student cultures particularly ones different from their own. Multicultural competence manifests as a cyclical developmental journey expanded by perceiving, evaluating, believing, and doing (Gibson, 1976). According to Bennett (2001):

Implicit in the idea of multicultural competence are dispositions of open-mindedness and the absence of racial or cultural prejudice and knowledge about worldviews and funds of knowledge associated with various cultural groups, as well as the diversity within and across ethnic groups (p.191).

The multicultural component of the course Diversity and Learning requires pre-service teachers to reflect on culture and socialization to gain a deeper understanding of the concept of culture by facilitating dialogue that facilitates a critical understanding of their own culture. A critical understanding of culture pursues a pedagogical, ethical, and political end that affirms a counter pedagogy often presented by popular culture. The counter pedagogy teaches pre-service teachers

how to read cultural texts, how to critically decode and produce oppositional readings, and to understand the effectivity of cultural texts in socialization, the construction of identity, and the reproduction of social relations to develop a more democratic culture and citizenry (Giroux, 1994).

**Cultural Inquiry Paper.** Preparing pre-service teachers to re-evaluate traditional notions of student and teacher relations to one that is culturally respectful, collaborative, mutually reflective promotes concepts of social justice and equity (Ball, 2000; Haberman, 1996). To understand the significance of culture beyond the obvious traits, pre-service teachers must be able to assess the affects for teaching and learning. The Cultural Inquiry Paper involves pre-service teachers to reflect, critique, and analyze the multiple ways their culture has influenced their learning. Students describe racial and cultural attributes including race, gender, social class, ethnicity/nationality, religion/spirituality, geographic location, and age. The second part of this assignment entails university students to interview a GWCHS student they tutor to learn what if the youth's culture is based on the same attributes the university students responded to in their autobiographical paper. Again, university students focus on the ways culture has influenced learning and include a comparative analysis or interpretation of their culture when compared to the youth's culture. Citing the concepts discussed in the course, the papers must focus on repeating themes or parallels in each of the stories with a broad conclusion of the ways cultures may influence teaching and learning.

Developing multicultural competency is important in a community school, particularly in schools where teachers' cultures do not reflect the cultures of the community. Therefore, teacher preparation programs must provide pre-service teachers with opportunities to develop the essential skill sets that allow teachers to conceptualize how culture influences the way they interact with students and families that may be culturally different from themselves.

Multicultural competency, often cited with concepts of equity pedagogy, focuses on cognitive and social psychological variables that indirectly influence or interact with school and classroom climates, teaching strategies, and student learning. While they may inform each other, equity pedagogy centers on social structures, teacher skills, and pedagogical practices or broad-based cultural norms and world views associated with groups (often based on ethnicity, gender, or social class) that have a direct impact on learning (Bennett, 2001, p.192).

## Component 2 – Equity Pedagogy

Equity pedagogy incorporates a specific body of knowledge, skills, and attitudes that supports the discourse of fairness, equity, and excellence. It encourages teachers to make ongoing personal and scholarly connections with students to discover how they make meaning and interpret their reality to learning. Teachers reflect and develop in-depth knowledge of academic discipline, pedagogical knowledge, and the willingness to learn students' cultures to embrace the whole student in the learning process.

An equity pedagogy instructional strategy is culturally responsive teaching (Gay, 2002). Culturally responsive teaching requires a fundamental conceptualization of fairness in education, a deep appreciation for culture as a tool for teaching, and the willingness to cultivate a classroom community of learners (Gay, 2002). Thus, equity pedagogy requires knowledge about the cultural assets and resources that authentically bolster academic achievement.

Conversely, deficit perspectives of students, their families, and communities often supported by educational research and teacher preparation programs (Trueba 1988; Valencia, 1997; González, 2005) are deeply embedded in the fabric of urban schools. An example of deficit literature is Ruby Payne's 2001 Framework for Understanding Poverty, a widely disseminated text popular within school districts, promotes classist, deficit-centered theories to explain the underachievement of youth who live in poverty schools (Gorski, 2006). The spirit of deficit thinking suggests there is little schools can do to change the lives of urban school students, so the rational reverts to providing them with interventions to help them fit within the context of the dominant school culture. Richard Valencia (2010) argues that deficit thinking "blames the victim" for school failure instead of examining how schools are structured to prevent poor students and students of color from learning. Deficit ideology validates the outcome of low standardized test scores or low academic achievement by pointing to hypothetical deficiencies related to marginalized students (Valencia, 2010; Yosso, 2005). Deficit ideology negates discriminatory systemic conditions such as racism, classism, and sexism to justify the existing social conditions (Brandon, 2003) and channel efforts to "fix" disenfranchised people rather than addressing the conditions that disenfranchise them in the first place (Weiner, 2002; Yosso, 2005).

Scholarly research also points to the consequences of the deficit thinking as toxic policies and practice that place students of color as overrepresented in special education and in the less academically rigorous, non-college-prep tracks of their schools (Russo & Talbert-Johnson, 1997; Coutinho & Oswald, 2000; Noguera, 2001; Oakes, 2005; Conchas, 2006). Disproportionately high dropout or “push out” rates among students of color and poor students illustrates the negative impact of deficit policies or “no-excuses” authoritarian uncompromising schools that assume discrimination does not exist in schools.

Deficit thinking works against the full-service community school model because the spirit of holistic education that requires an authentic understanding of the school community culture and the values it brings to the school and classroom. An asset-based approach entails developing social relationships with students through genuine communication and mutual trust (Gonzalez, Moll, & Amanti, 2005). According to Gonzalez, et al (2005), a funds of knowledge approach changes the perceptions of working class or poor communities by identifying their strengths and resources, thus, discrediting deficit theories by identifying the assets that exist within a family structure.

**Asset-based Community Assessment.** Pre-service teachers in the Diversity and Learning course conduct an asset-based community assessment to identify (Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993) the community culture and history, health and social services, politics and communication, economics and environment, and fire and police services. In five small inquiry groups, university students obtain information about the youth, their families, and community by interviewing community leaders and reviewing relevant online databases. Each group prepares a detailed report and brief multimedia presentation to share their findings with peers and invited guests. By examining the impact of community-based services, organizations, and the multi-agency partnerships that support the community school, pre-service teachers gain a new perspective about parents, community members, and the need for interdisciplinary practice in urban schools (Murtadha-Watts, Belcher, Iverson, & Medina, 1999). The class presentations stimulate lively debates about the assumptions pre-service teachers had prior to the study. They discredit deficit thinking as they assess the assets with the complexity of the school problems.

Teacher education programs provide little evidence of critical skill development related to discourse, debate, or analysis of acute urban school issues

(Fairclough, 1992; Goodlad, 1991; McLaren, 1995). Peter McLaren (1995) proposes that teacher education programs teach students to examine policy, pedagogy, and performance to question critically the stereotypes that support domination and oppression in schools and communities. In the community school model, schools serve as public spaces where community members gather to make decisions (community advisory council, parent nights), participate in recreation (school sport events, fitness center activities, swimming), celebrate their culture in school events, (plays, concerts, fundraising activities, graduation), and learn (GED, ESL classes, community library events). Thus, the community school model is a democratic process when genuine participation by the community beyond translates to commitment and deed and classrooms value fairness, equity, and excellence.

### Component 3 – Societal Justice

In contrast to the first two course components, societal justice focuses on community and society specific aspects of equitable access, participation, and achievement in social institutions. Here, the scholarship illustrates the socio-political perspective of racism and classism in misdirecting policy and practice in urban schools and the invisible power of hegemony in generating an ugly effect on academic achievement. Guilty of perpetuating universality and normality is a blissful ignorance that shifts the conceptualization of urban school problems that implicitly confirm stereotypes and faulty generalizations about students when teachers and administrators seek evidence to support existing disguised and subtle bias instead of seeking non-bias data and facts that disconfirm predispositions (Gorman, 2005).

In this course, pre-service teachers deconstruct their internal and external perceptions about white privilege and the normalization of society by dominant socio-political groups in painstaking discourse. Dialogues on intersectionality, internalized oppression, and internalized power become entry points for courageous discussions that champion a critical understanding of all forms of oppression. Once again, the moral principles of full-service community schools are compared to anti-racist education and critical social justice education (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2012).

Many pre-service teachers attempt to intellectualize concepts they have not experienced such as racism, sexism, classism, or systemic oppression (Bonilla-Silva, 2006). Peggy McIntosh (1990) explains that whites are carefully taught not to recognize white

privilege or recognize unfair discrepancies, often leaving them feeling guilty or defensive when asked to consider how they benefit from these atrocities. Sensoy and DiAngelo (2012) suggest that helping white students realize the collective history of white privilege is key to understanding socialization and social positionality and the problematic issues that promote social inequalities.

Fundamental to the discussions within this component is the concept of social justice as it calls for a critical analysis of commonly held assumptions about who can learn, how students do learn, and who benefits from unjust schools. Nieto (2000) suggests, "Analyzing school policies and practices... that devalue the identities of some students while overvaluing others" (p.183) prepares teachers to be committed activists in transforming the "fundamental inequalities" in their schools. They must intentionally revisit the inequalities inherent in their own educational experiences to understand ways they must modify their teaching of students who are from different cultural, social, and economic backgrounds, as well as those who learn and perform differently.

Throughout the course, inequitable social structures due to inequitable representations in political structures are identified and students discover the roots of pervasive stereotypes that fuel inequities normally not considered when discussing academic success. The discourse moves from discussions about achievement gaps to opportunity gaps, as the findings from the asset-based community assessment become the foundation for transforming their conscious and practice as they consider plans of action that reshape school and classroom practices to counter inequities and injustices. Here is where class discussions center on the impact of community schools and the principles of social justice as an education reform movement.

At the macro or institutional level, pre-service teachers come to realize that societal justice means supporting and believing in a school reform movement that concedes to the principles of community schools and promotes fidelity at every level of the school and community so that there is a more equitable distribution of resources and opportunities for students and their families. They come to understand that societal change is a necessary condition to bring about access, achievement, and accountability to equitable education; thus, societal equity (change) is possible if we believe in the basic Democratic values that support public education.

## Implications for Practice

As pre-service teachers begin to experience the complexities of teaching, teachers must have a keen understanding of the competencies that influence a culturally diverse classroom. Therefore, teacher education programs must provide future and practicing teachers with authentic school-based experiences that motivate them to scrutinize their entrenched cultural values and belief systems (Cochran-Smith, 2004), and broaden their realities of classrooms by recognizing the learning disparities between and among historically marginalized students.

As the field of teacher education undergoes a philosophical and political shift, Sonia Nieto (2000) asserts that teacher education programs must "place equity front and center of the teacher preparation process if we are to transform teacher education" (Nieto, 2000, p.180). This means intentionally advancing the notion of social justice in every aspect of the teacher education program to gain a critical understanding of the injustices and inequalities that shape the lives of urban school students.

As political debates about education continue to center on the achievement gap, the inequities in the opportunity gap for urban school students are downplayed by the myths of high-stakes testing instead of focusing on the necessary conditions for learning for all children to succeed academically. Historically, community schools were celebrated as investments in neighborhood and were used for multiple purposes to advance social change in society. Influenced by Jane Addams' work in Chicago neighborhoods, John Dewey saw the academic value in connecting schools with communities. In *My Pedagogic Creed*, Dewey (1897) states,

I believe that the school is primarily a social institution. Education being a social process, the school is simply that form of community life in which all those agencies are concentrated that will be most effective in bringing the child to share in the inherited resources of the race, and to use his own powers for social ends (p. 78).

At a time when the achievement gaps are widening, full-service community schools attempt to close the opportunity gap through the formation of cooperative partnerships with social service organizations, businesses, educational institutions, and community groups who all work collectively to establish a streamline of supportive services and resources that enrich the intellectual and social environment for students. By widening the circle of responsibility,

students and their families benefit immensely from the marshalling of resources and an improved quality of education. In community schools, teachers play a critical role in connecting students to resources and identifying student needs sometimes not evident outside the classroom (Dryfoos, 2005). Ultimately, community schools free teachers to teach “because teachers are able to concentrate on what they know best: intellectually stimulating children who are ready to learn” (Quinn & Dryfoos, 2009, p.16).

The success in any teacher education is the role of the teacher education program in the school, the University commitment to the School partnership, and the relationship between preservice teachers and cooperating teacher. Teacher educators must continually discuss with preservice teachers their thoughts, beliefs and images of the school and the importance of becoming an inquiry – orientated teacher in an urban school.

## Conclusion

The old adage, education as the great equalizer, is a myth for people who have unequal access to quality education in this country. While most people want to believe this is true, this memorable phrase is misleading when limited resources in schools create barriers that fuel inequalities for students (Hanushek, 2010). Jonathan Kozol (1992) calls it the savage inequalities of schooling as inequitable distributions of resources force teachers and students from urban schools to be held to the same standards as privileged schools. The lack of access to programs essential to closing the ever-growing achievement gaps, including early childhood education, afterschool programs, extended learning time programs, health services, and good nutrition, are vital to the success of students who attend high-poverty schools. At a time when high-stakes testing is used to assess student learning and school performance, the realities of students who live in poor homes and neighborhoods become less important, punitive, or deficient. Over-simplistic solutions to complex problems based on stereotypes, instead of cultural realism, becomes norms for overwhelmed school systems that often diminish the intellectual capabilities of students and discount cultural values and behaviors of poor families. Parents and community leaders, who often have keen perspectives of problems affecting schools, can facilitate complex conversations about access to resources that facilitate educational opportunities.

While there are many examples of successful community schools, there are many limitations to

their development and success. Few programs address all student needs and are counterproductive when the implementation and delivery system is flawed by the lack of fidelity of the model. Although many students benefit from services, the assumption is that the provision of the services and resources will translate to high academic achievement. In other words, as the services to students increase, so do the expectations for higher achievement (Houser, 2010).

There are two major assumptions with such thinking. First, is the assumption that institutional structures of schooling will reform and address the academic inequities that exist in urban schools. Second, the curriculum that often predisposes students to increase alienation and lack of engagement must address the long lasting devastating effects it has on the academic outcomes of students who live in poverty. The evidence missing from the assumptions about community schools is that leadership and teaching matters and high quality teaching can offset the effects of poverty (Hanushek, 2005). The evolution of leading a child to adulthood is complex and beyond the resource of any one institution. Blaming teachers, parents, or administrators for the current socioeconomic conditions that effect student learning fail to consider the multiple factors that make students vulnerable. Only when teachers are valued as the consistent and valued partners can we build communities within schools and schools that exist within communities. Teachers must practice, by participation, active democracy, and citizenship and embrace wholeheartedly the connection to the community outside of school.

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**The Community School-Assisted University and the Redesign of Ed Schools**

***Toward Equity-oriented, Cradle-to-Career Systems that Provide  
Pathways to Meaningful Employment and Facilitate Democratic Citizenship\****

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Worldwide new designs for schools are being developed rapidly, and many are guided by international benchmarking. Among the several forces driving the search for better designs, the potent combination of family diversity, dramatic immigration, and place-based, concentrated poverty, social exclusion and social isolation is especially important. It helps to explain the accelerating development of community schools, also known as community learning centers, multi-service schools, and extended service schools (Lawson & van Veen, 2016).

These community schools are not another iteration of conventional school reform because reform focuses on the stand-alone school with its narrow view of children as “students.” In contrast, community schools connect academic success with complementary programs and services structured to achieve positive youth development; offer extended, accelerated, and personalized learning during out-of-school time; support parents and strengthen families; provide health and social services; and augment community development initiatives. What is more, the most sophisticated community school designs prioritize youth leadership, the social inclusion of diverse children and families, and early childhood education programs. Especially in the United States, community school development is associated with another noteworthy innovation. Place-based clusters of community schools are being configured as Cradle-to-Career Education systems (Lawson, 2013). These clusters provide vulnerable students with educational opportunity pathways to postsecondary education, and higher education leaders play central roles in these new educational pipelines. Faculty members’ expertise for data-guided decision-making is a special contribution (Edmundson & Zimpher, 2014; McLaughlin & London, 2013), but there are others.

The multiple contributions developed by the University of Pennsylvania’s extraordinary Netter Center team top the list. Examples include service learning and academically based community service. The full measure of these contributions is visible in stand-alone community schools. They are comparatively under-resourced, and the work is more difficult because university faculty, staff, and students are not mainstays.

The ensuing analysis begins with recognition of the international leadership provided by the Netter Center’s faculty, staff, and students. Keeping in mind this university-assisted exemplar’s contributions and benefits (e.g., Harkavy, Hartley, Hodges, & Weeks,

2016), like all exemplars it is selective. Appreciative critiques serve to highlight its selectivity, help to identify missing priorities, facilitate continuous improvement, and stimulate the next iterations of innovation development (Lawson, 2010).

In the ensuing analysis, I emphasize a two-way partnership relationship when I introduce the idea of the community-school assisted university. The generative power of this new idea and its game-changing propensities become clearer when it drives the progressive redesign of higher education’s schools, colleges, and departments of Education—Ed schools (Clifford & Guthrie, 1990). This generative power expands when this new idea is extended to professional schools and colleges such as social work, public health, counseling, and nursing, whose faculty, staff, and students are essential to community school start-ups and scale-up initiatives.

The idea of the community school-assisted university, when fully developed, facilitates another noteworthy change. It moves the university outreach and engagement agenda from a voluntary service initiative with civic engagement discourse to a core university mission that showcases the central roles of Ed schools and sister professional schools in the development of cradle-to-career education systems (Lawson, 2013). These new partnership arrangements, clumsily called for the time being “the university-assisted community school and the community school-assisted university,” promises several important outcomes. These outcomes include equitable access to postsecondary education for diverse, first generation college students; the development of human capital in service of social and economic development; and the preparation of succeeding generations of young people for democratic citizenship.

## The Import of Systems Thinking

Systems thinking and planning frameworks are centerpieces in some appreciative critiques (Senge, Cambron-McCabe, Lucas, Smith, Dutton, & Kleiner, 2012), and they also facilitate cradle-to-career system development with community schools. The essence of systems thinking is as follows. Ultimately, changes in one part of a system will influence, and be influenced by, one or more of the others. This idea is an eye-opener when it is applied to the design of new cradle to career pipelines. Policy constraints and barriers that challenge place-based clusters of community schools provide a case example.

## **Beyond the Cradle-to-Career Rhetoric: Systems Realities**

A familiar mantra often accompanies the development of cradle-to-career systems: “All one system.” This is normative language because America’s education system from birth to career is fragmented, not unified. To wit: Higher education, K-12 schools, adult career and technical education institutes, early childhood education initiatives, and birth-to-age 3 programs continue to operate in separate state policy environments, each with its own requirements.

The full measure of this fragmentation comes into view when relevant components of advanced community schools are inspected for their coherence and cross-sector policy alignment. Sadly, mental health programs, health initiatives, child welfare services, juvenile justice services, and other key community school partners also operate in sector-specific silos. Although state level Children’s Cabinets (with various names) are under development in several states, these cabinets’ promise is far from being realized.

Little wonder then that leaders of fledgling community schools, whether from the school district, the county, or a local community agency, find themselves mired in bureaucratic red tape and caught between competing accountability requirements as they struggle to obtain the resources and the policy waivers they need to advance new community school designs. Frustration grows as state education department accountability requirements, developed for stand-alone schools inherited from the 20th Century, are applied to community schools.

A systems contradiction is apparent. Industrial age, silo-like policy structures with their respective accountability systems trump interrelated child, family, and community needs. Leaders wonder: What can be done to ensure that child, family, and community needs replace rigid, sector-specific policy requirements as the main drivers for community school outcomes?

Policy-practice councils with alternative names provide one solution (Lawson, 2013). These policy leadership and governance structures consist of key leadership constituencies such as leaders from the several state departments charged with serving children and families, community school leaders, mayors and city managers, state higher education officials, and private sector leaders. Married to community schools and the cradle-to-career systems they comprise in particular locales, these councils enable policy learning in tandem with optimal practice discoveries. They also facilitate the identification of missing systems change targets.

The main assumption is noteworthy. Unleashing community schools’ enormous potential, and the sustainable development of cradle-to-career systems for vulnerable people who reside in challenging places depends fundamentally on cross-sector, complex systems change. Higher education is a beneficiary because cradle-to-career systems yield diverse, better prepared students and offer abundant research opportunities. However it also is a system change priority.

## **Higher Education is a System Centerpiece**

Once higher education overall and especially the university-based professional schools are added to the system, the challenges accompanying community schools’ start-ups and scale-ups are predictable. So are the constraints and barriers that accompany cradle-to-career system building with community schools as centerpieces.

It turns out that Ed schools, social work schools, public health schools, nursing schools, and other preparation/credentialing disciplines are core systems components. So long as these programs continue to prepare students for status quo policy and practice arrangements, especially for the operation of stand-alone schools, mental health agencies, social service agencies, and juvenile justice agencies, predictable workforce-related constraints and barriers will limit the development of community schools and cradle-to-career systems.

## **Ed Schools as Constraints and Barriers**

Every innovative community school design and every cradle-to-career system configuration depends fundamentally on concomitant, synchronized changes in Ed schools. Granting these Ed schools’ potential to be at the leading edge of all such innovations, a steady barrage of criticism suggests otherwise. Instead of being leaders and facilitators, critics claim that Ed schools constrain and impede these innovations. Instead of being an essential part of the innovation solution, Ed schools are part of the problem.

All such criticism of Ed schools includes the penetrating critiques and reform proposals offered by Ed school insiders (e.g., Goodlad, 1994; Labaree, 2004; Levine, 2005; 2006). Diverse in some respects, these critiques converge around two related problems.

One is the organization, content, and operation of preservice education programs. Here critics emphasize the gaps between what these programs provide and all that best practice guides and current

policy mandates require. The gap between today's Ed school program emphases and optimal community school configurations is especially important (Lawson & van Veen, 2016).

The second problem concerns the role orientations and activities of Ed school faculty members, especially their research agendas. In all manner of research-oriented Ed schools, many faculty allegedly resist or deny the need to change as they pursue specialized research agendas, and they justify their self-serving orientations by referencing academic freedom. Lacking preparation in their respective doctoral programs for the unique and essential demands associated with community schools, and in the absence of faculty professional development focused on community schools, these faculty members will continue to prioritize what they know. And what many know tends to be framed by the stand-alone school in relation to their respective academic specializations, manifested as preferences for particular improvement strategies.

### **Inherited Ed Schools Are a Perfect Match for Inherited Stand-alone Schools**

Even the most penetrating critiques of, and reform proposals for, Ed schools seemingly take for granted an inherited Ed school structure. This structure is deliberately patterned in relation to the industrial age public school, and it is rooted in 20th Century ideals for Ed schools and higher educational overall. Here, the academic department provides the unit for planning and operations. Departments such as educational leadership, educational psychology, and teacher education provide organizational homes for their respective fortress-like disciplines.

These specialized departments, with their respective disciplinary structures and organizational cultures, are signature features of Ed schools. They reflect and reinforce their respective faculty members' vested interests and career aspirations. Oftentimes, these departmental structures mirror a firm role system in the stand-alone school model focused exclusively on academic learning and achievement. In this model, educators are the experts, narrow role conceptions of "student" threaten holistic conceptions of whole child and positive youth development, and insufficient attention is given to the manifest diversity of families and communities, especially those challenged by poverty, social exclusion, and social isolation.

Above all, the antecedent and co-requisite conditions needing to be in place for the stand-alone school's effectiveness get short shrift in many Ed

schools. These conditions start with a competent, supported, and stable education workforce as well as sufficient resources. They extend to strong, stable families residing in adequately resourced, safe and stable neighborhood communities in which levels of employment and home ownership are high and neighborhood collective efficacy for children is evident (Sampson, 2012; Tate, 2012).

This oversight is important. Strip away these antecedent and co-requisite conditions, and the stand-alone school cannot and will not succeed at scale. This same conclusion applies to cradle-to-career systems these schools comprise.

### **Toward New Ed School Designs for Community Schools**

To the extent that these several lines of criticism are warranted, and if it's true that Ed schools are operating on a kind of automatic pilot, it is timely to advance proposals for the redesign and possible reconfiguration of 21st Century Ed schools. Here, too, systems thinking and planning are design facilitators.

### **The Contributions of Improvement Science**

A key tenet from the new science of improvement draws on systems frameworks (Bryk, Gomez, Grunow, & LeMahieu, 2015). Know the system that produces the outcomes! This tenet has a dual character. Know the system that produces sub-optimal outcomes, but also be able to design and continuously improve a new system that regularly produces more desirable outcomes.

In places where the terrible trilogy of poverty, social exclusion, and social isolation prevails and when diverse, vulnerable families in these locales are left to their own devices, the potent combination of stand-alone schools in partnership with inherited Ed schools produces a 20th Century system that routinely yields sub-optimal outcomes. In brief, the stand-alone school is no match for concentrated, place-based hardship with growing ethnic and cultural diversity.

When these circumstances prevail, undesirable outcomes are predictable. These outcomes start with early school leaving (aka dropping out), comparatively lower academic achievement, young people's involvement in the shadow economy of the streets, and gang membership. Lower teacher quality (Goldhaber, Lavery, & Theobald, 2015) in combination with high workforce turnover in these schools (Holme & Rangel, 2012) is normative. And when high workforce turnover is combined with student and family transience, a sub-

optimal relationship follows. Strangers interact with strangers. Instead of a cradle-to-career education framework, a school-to-prison pipeline may develop (Mallett, 2015).

There is an alternative. Advanced community school exemplars are fit for purpose in high poverty places that serve as homes to many vulnerable families. In other words, these community schools are centerpieces in the design of a new system that promises to yield better outcomes. In the same vein, clusters of community schools hold considerable promise for the development of cradle-to-career education systems structured to honor America's constitutional promise to children that their birth circumstances will not predict their life chances and destinies.

Unfortunately, this new system, founded on place-based clusters of community schools, remains in the formative stages. The unfinished work that lies ahead requires systems changes in universities. Ed schools and their sister professional schools are special priorities. They need to be configured in concert with community school development.

### **Simultaneous Renewal and Improvement**

The late John Goodlad (1994) provided a compelling framework for the simultaneous improvement and renewal of Ed schools and public schools. He emphasized that Ed schools and local public schools need to form partnerships that enable them to learn and improve together.

This rationale is salient to new Ed school and community school partnerships, especially those that extend to cradle-to-career systems development. Change schools without companion changes in preservice education, and one costly result will be that every new teacher, principal, district officer, and student support professional needs additional training. Conversely, change preservice education apart from school policy and practice, and real world experience probably will wash out the innovative parts of educators' preparation.

This rationale can be extended to faculty research agendas. They also need to be synchronized with school policy and practice. Responsive research and evaluation agendas need to be complemented with research and scholarly agendas for new school-related designs.

To the extent that Ed school programs and faculty research agendas are not organized in this simultaneous renewal framework, there is a predictable, albeit unintended consequence. Stand-alone Ed

schools inadvertently are formidable barriers to the new school designs such as community schools. These Ed schools also constrain and perhaps impede the progressive design and development of 21st Century cradle-to-career education systems.

### **Getting Started: Making Ed Schools Mirror Images of Community Schools**

Thus, community schools' effectiveness, scale-up, institutionalization, and sustainability fundamentally depend on specially reconfigured Ed schools with newly-minted missions, goals, programs and capacities. These Ed school components start with an explicit anti-poverty agenda, and they extend to new institutional designs for schools and cradle-to-career education systems. New preparation programs are immediate priorities because community school start-ups and scale-ups as well as cradle-to-career systems development presently are constrained by workforce gaps and leadership short-falls.

Ed school leaders seeking a map and a compass for Ed school redesign can follow the typical pattern of community school development. At baseline, community school designers begin by recognizing the limitations of stand-alone, conventional schools and their dominant improvement model. They shift their focus from improvement efforts inside the school's walls and with a focus on the school day, i.e., an approach that can be dubbed "walled-in, building-centered, and educator-controlled." Granting the merits, it has profound limitations.

Community school designs spring from these limitations. Leaders recognize that isolation is the enemy of improvement, and so they cease trying to improve alone. They develop organizational partnerships with community agencies and perhaps private sector businesses, and they develop collaborative working relationships with other helping professionals. Working together, educators, other helping professionals and, in a growing number of school communities, representative young people, parents and community leaders, progressively craft new community school designs that improve desirable outcomes.

This same opportunity-rich, developmental framework is available to Ed schools. Like stand-alone school improvement models, many Ed schools worldwide have trended toward a stand-alone arrangement in which professors work alone and preservice education students learn alone. Overall this Ed school configuration has been a perfect match for industrial age schools.

The way ahead is clear. Just as leaders of community schools have reached out to other organizations and developed collaborative working relationships with other professionals, youth leaders, parents, and community representatives, Ed school leaders committed to simultaneous renewal and improvement need to form partnerships with other disciplines, seeking collaborative working relationships with these other disciplines' faculty members, staff, and students.

### **A Consequential Design Decision**

Two important differences in conceptions of, and operational designs for, community schools need to be prioritized in planning and decision-making. These two prototypes serve as reminders that consensus has not been achieved on all that a community school is and does.

This lack of consensus is predictable for two reasons. First, a community school is a complex innovation, one that takes years to optimize. More importantly, state education department policies and accountability mechanisms effectively minimize community school designs, emphasizing only a few components as yet another improvement strategy.

### **Comprehensive School Improvement**

In this comprehensive school improvement strategy, the implicit model of the conventional school remains. The focus is on external barriers to learning, academic achievement, and healthy development as efforts are made to improve the school's core technology—what and how teachers teach and what and how students learn.

In this framework, health and social services, parent involvement initiatives, and out of school time programs are essentially tack-on services. Deficit-oriented assumptions oftentimes drive “fix, then teach” classroom strategies as service providers provide sequential interventions as pre- and co-requisites for teachers' pedagogy. Guided by the familiar banner, “all students entering school ready and able to learn,” the underlying assumption is that sub-optimal outcomes are attributable to extra-school forces, factors, and actors. Once these barriers are addressed, it is assumed, the school will be effective because teachers' work, essentially unchanged, is facilitated. Students' academic learning and achievement provides a singular outcome measure.

When this conception of a community school reigns, needs are reduced for Ed school redesign

in concert with curricular and research innovations in other university disciplines. In contrast, when robust models for a community school and cradle-to-career systems provide the standard, pervasive higher education changes are required.

### **Community Schools as New Institutional Designs**

In contrast to the school improvement model, the best examples of community schools improve and expand a conventional school's core technology, i.e., what and how teachers teach and what and how students learn. These community schools showcase the plural idea of core technologies. Toward this end, advanced community schools have companion technologies for whole child, healthy development; family support; out of school time learning; neighborhood revitalization and renewal; and yet other priorities. Reflecting this complexity, the language system shifts from “students” to children, youth, elders, families and communities.

Called a school, the community school clearly is a new institutional design. It engulfs, but also transcends schooling because it gives expression to the more comprehensive idea of education and human development. Viewed in this way, a community school is a game-changing innovation, and its effectiveness, institutionalization, and scale-up depend fundamentally on Ed schools working in close partnerships with other professional schools and colleges.

### **Drill Deeper: Ed Schools at the Crossroads for Two Partnership Systems**

Two partnership systems are mainstays in the configuration called the community school-assisted university and the university-assisted community school. One is an intra-university partnership. The other is the familiar university-community school partnership configuration, albeit expanded with cradle-to-career system leadership.

### **Ed Schools as Centerpieces in an Intra-university Partnership**

A stand-alone Ed school founded on hyper-specialization and isolated from other professional schools as well as from participating arts and sciences disciplines is not positioned for simultaneous renewal with community schools and their associated cradle-to-career systems. A new intra-university partnership system is needed. Here, long-standing organizational and professional boundaries are targeted for change, and bridge-building activities commence. Just as

community school partnerships are configured for a more profound, collective impact, so are Ed school-driven, intra-university partnerships.

In fact, popular collective impact strategies and language are useful in intra-university partnership development (Kania & Kramer, 2011). Ed schools are repositioned to serve as university-based “backbone organizations.” In other words, Ed schools, or one of their constituent institutes and centers (Klein, 1990), serve as intermediary organizations. They act as hubs and are charged with developing firm organizational ties with other professional schools and participating arts and sciences disciplines.

Designated university-based, partnership and collaboration specialists are needed to make this happen. Mirroring the roles of community school coordinators, specially prepared faculty members or perhaps staff members increasingly known as “third space professionals” (Whitchurch, 2013) must be prepared for, and charged with, boundary-crossing and bridge-building work. With a dual focus on professional education and interdisciplinary research, they are charged with building solid working relationships with other university faculty, staff, and students committed to community school scale-ups and cradle-to-career system development in places where community schools provide one of the only viable solutions.

**Professional Education.** In this new configuration, professional education programs in all of the professional schools are progressively redesigned to respond to, and provide leadership for, advanced community school designs and the cradle-to-career systems they constitute. This redesign proceeds with evaluations of how and where high impact professional education is best delivered. Mindful of place-based variability, and leaving out the arts and sciences disciplines for the time being, nine main priorities are mainstays in all professional education programs.

Role-specific professional specialization is the first core priority. Teachers, principals, social workers, nurses, counselors, and others have always needed specialized competence, and this need remains in community schools.

The second priority is preparation for reconfigured roles, relationships, and responsibilities in advanced community school designs. For example, principals’ roles, responsibilities and practice strategies expand in community school designs (e.g., Green, 2015; Ishimaru, 2013), and so do teachers’ roles, relationships, and responsibilities (Lawson & van Veen, 2016; Mooney, Kline, Davoren, 1999). With an

unrelenting focus on classrooms and academic learning, teachers need to be prepared to seek and use resources outside the school’s walls and beyond the school day.

In pursuit of family and community resources for learning, healthy development, academic achievement, and children’s aspirations for postsecondary education, teachers must learn how to work with out-of-school time specialists, youth development leaders, diverse parents and families, and health and social service providers. These new relationships hinge on more expansive preparation.

The third priority derives from a central fixture in advanced community school designs. Teachers, social workers, nurses, school counselors, psychologists, principals and others must learn how to work in interprofessional teams. These teams’ formation, development, and continuous improvement is a special leadership development opportunity and priority (Edwards, Daniels, Gallagher, Leadbetter, & Warmington, 2009; Interprofessional Education Collaborative Expert Panel, 2011). Interprofessional education and training programs are a practical necessity (Lawson & van Veen, 2016); and for good reason. If specialized professionals are expected to work together and especially to collaborate effectively, they must be prepared together. Presently too many educators, social workers, psychologists, counselors, nurses and others do not receive this special preparation. This professional education void extends to the preparation of leaders for interprofessional teams (Lawson, 2014).

The fourth priority derives from this last claim. Interprofessional education and training programs need to be moved from university settings and offered routinely in community school settings. In the same vein, specialized professional education courses in which real world practice optimizes preservice learning also belong in community school settings. The Netter Center’s academically based community service model provides a field-tested framework that moves entire courses and seminars to community school settings. It is ready to be scaled up in expansive professional and interprofessional education programs, and Ed school-facilitated, intra-university partnerships are facilitators for start-ups and scale-ups.

The preparation of community school coordinators is the fifth priority. For a host of reasons, social work is the likely hub for preparation programs, but not exclusively. A growing literature provides curricular guidance regarding what coordinators must know and be able to do in order to cross professional, organizational, and neighborhood boundaries, build new interpersonal



and interprofessional bridges, co-design new programs and services, facilitate interprofessional team practice, and assist principals with leadership and cross-boundary coordination (Akkerman & Bakker, 2011; Schorr with Farrow & Lee, 2010; Williams, 2012).

The sixth priority also requires potent combinations of profession-specific and interprofessional education. Here the focus is top-level leaders of school districts and community organizations. Preparation is designed to prepare them to work together in two critically important, cross-boundary configurations. Resource coordination and policy leadership-oriented governance structures are the first (Blank, Berg, & Melville, 2006; Lawson & van Veen, 2016). Cradle-to-career partnership councils are the second (Edmundson & Zimpher, 2014). In advanced exemplars, these two configurations overlap. In nascent initiatives, especially when community schools are developed without cradle-to-career systems, they are separate priorities, and each has a growing literature to support specialized education programs.

Leadership preparation for cradle-to-career partnership councils and networks is seventh priority. Related in important ways to the preparation of community school coordinators, these new programs are more specialized. Founded on a simultaneous improvement and renewal framework, preparation focuses on one or more of the emergent models for cradle-to-career partnership councils. Three visible examples are STRIVE Together, Ready by 21, and Promise Neighborhoods. Granting some overlap, each has special requirements, and none of them evolves naturally and quickly without expert leadership and guidance.

The eighth priority is the preparation of partnership specialists; and with a special guiding framework. Partnerships are interventions insofar as they are new inter-organizational configurations developed to achieve specific aims, goals, and objectives (Gray, 2008; Lawson & van Veen, 2016). Notwithstanding some commonalities, partnership aims, goals and objectives vary. Consistent with intervention logic, these desired outcomes or results are consequential for partnership designs. In brief, partnerships as interventions need to be designed and evaluated contingently—in relation to the outcomes. In this partnership intervention framework, there is no “right or wrong” configuration.

Partnerships are efficient, effective, and successful insofar as they are fit for purpose, in unique contexts and at particular times; and also when they

add value (Lawson & van Veen, 2016). Chief among the added values are ones facilitated by simultaneous improvement and renewal configurations. They include knowledge creation, innovation development, and powerful individual, group, organizational and policy learning. The ultimate aim is better outcomes for partner organizations and better results for children, youth, families, and communities.

None of this work is easy because in practice every partnership intervention is an adaptive, social experiment, especially so when needs and problems are complex, and the policy environment is in flux. For these reasons alone, innovative partnerships routinely have sub-optimal features and, in the worst cases, they are plagued by deep flawed designs and operations. In fact, harm reduction frameworks are needed in all manner of partnerships (Allen-Scott, Hatfield, & McIntyre, 2014).

Thus, three significant partnership questions must be addressed. How does one fix a flawed partnership? Who is prepared for this sometimes-daunting responsibility? What extant theories, models and strategies are available to assist partnership interveners? Together these questions highlight needs for partnership and collaboration specialists. Ed schools and sister professional schools such as social work have the opportunity to assume leadership. In addition to the work needing to be done in community school start-ups and scale-ups, the same expertise is needed for Cradle-to-Career systems development.

Needs for the ninth priority are illuminated by the policy environment that surrounds the development of community schools and cradle-to-career systems. To reiterate: Sector-specific policy structures constrain and inhibit both innovations. Needs for special experts known as policy entrepreneurs are apparent (Mintrom & Norman, 2009). Fortunately, university public policy and public administration programs departments of Educational Leadership and Policy already have foundational curricula. What’s missing and needed are connections to Ed schools and their partners so that policy experts gain the specialized understanding and expertise needed to facilitate the development of community schools and cradle-to-career systems.

**Interdisciplinary Research and Development Initiatives.** Ed school-facilitated intra-university partnership configurations extend to interdisciplinary research proceeding in several traditions (e.g., social analysis, applied research, translational research, interdisciplinary team science). Granting their merits, the majority of these traditions are framed by the same,

dominant perspective: From research in the university-based disciplines to practice in schools and community agencies. A one-way relationship with a particular view of knowledge and its use dominates.

The preparation of researchers in the community-school assisted university framework provides a companion view of research, the knowledge it generates, and the dissemination channels (Nelson, London, & Strobel, 2015; Penuel, Fishman, Cheng, & Sabelli, 2011). It begins with the idea of design and development research in community school settings, and it extends to the idea of practice-generated theory and knowledge generation. Academically based community scholarship (Lawson, 1998) is one descriptor for this work, and it is a programmatic companion for academically based community service. Participatory action research and interdisciplinary, community-based participatory research provide two other examples (Lawson, Caringi, Pyles, Jurkowski, & Bozlak, 2015). There are others, and together they illustrate the rich, untapped potential of new research methodologies in service of much-needed knowledge, as facilitated by Ed school-mediated, intra-university partnerships.

### **University-wide Research and Development Partnerships with Community Schools, Private Sector Organizations, and Governments**

In the United States as well as in other nations, policy leaders and politicians have emphasized the pivotal role of higher education in economic development. The research-oriented universities, in particular, have received resources and supports for a three-cornered partnership configuration involving governments, the private sector, and universities. Known as the “triple helix” in some circles (Kliwer, Sandmann, & PaduRanga Narasimharao, 2013), these research and development partnerships include special facilities co-located on, or linked to, university campuses. For example, university-sponsored research and development parks now are signature features of a growing number of universities. These investments serve as reminders that innovation-intensive research and development is big business, and it depends on a critical mass of highly educated scientists and engineers.

Granting the merits of this dominant model for economic development, it is limited in several respects. For example, the educational benefits tend to be restricted to students in participating science and engineering disciplines, and urgent needs for a more

comprehensive, sustainable, and integrated social and economic development agenda tend to get short shrift. Chief among these needs is an a university-wide, anti-poverty agenda, one that capitalizes on higher education’s enormously important contributions to human capital development for the global economy (Becker, 1993). The growing number of young people whose families and communities are challenged by the terrible trilogy of poverty, social isolation, and social exclusion is a special priority. It is not an exaggeration to claim that America’s prosperity hinges on it (Ferguson & Lamback, 2014).

Community school-constituted, cradle-to-career systems provide a tailor-made solution to this social and economic development problem. Fortunately, there are higher education readiness indicators. Advanced cradle-to-career configurations already have higher education partners at the table, as described previously. The time has arrived to expand an agenda couched in the language of voluntary student, staff and faculty service.

A special research and development partnership aligned with a university’s central mission and core functions is a logical next step. Enlightened self-interest provides an incentive. For example, as the pool of traditional college-oriented students continues to shrink, while child and family poverty rates rise, these community school-constituted, cradle-to-career partnerships hold the promise of yielding growing numbers of academically-prepared, first generation college students. As succeeding generations learn, graduate, and gain advanced competence, human capital development is facilitated in tandem with the social development of challenging communities. These several benefits are especially timely and important as pioneering higher education leaders strive to transform the American university system from a prestige-driven system (with its implicit elitism) to one driven by educational opportunity and access with selective excellence as the standard (Crow & Dubars, 2014).

The realization of this enormous promise hinges a supportive leadership and policy framework, one that also facilitates evaluation-driven continuous quality improvement. To reiterate, policy councils consisting of state policy leaders, university officials, school and district leaders, and higher education officials provide one alternative (Lawson, 2013).

Another, related alternative is a systematic plan that complements the triple helix arrangement. With community school-constituted cradle-to-career systems as centerpieces, a “quadruple helix framework”

merits consideration as a state and national policy priority (Lawson & van Veen, 2016). Here, community schools, higher education institutions, the social and health service sector, and affiliated state departments are linked in a coherent plan for integrated social and economic development. Although human capital development is a centerpiece in this special research and development partnership configuration, so is the imperative to prepare succeeding democratic citizens. Social and economic development go hand-in-hand.

Sen's (1999) classic framework for development as freedom is a natural fit. Accessible, potent, and aligned education systems facilitate Sen's two, development-oriented freedoms. The best education systems facilitate freedom from social exclusion, poverty, oppression, and marginalization. At the same time, they help to create freedom to make informed choices and gain access to educational and economy opportunity pathways (Sen, et al., 1999). Viewed in this way, comprehensive community school-university partnerships focused on equitable, integrated social and economic development are exemplars for democracy in action.

### **In Conclusion: Partnerships for New Institutional Designs**

At the dawn of the 21st Century, historians, social analysts, economists, political scientists, visionary politicians, futurists, and other prescient leaders issued a clarion call for action. Already it was clear to them that America's social institutions were out-of-step with urgent social, economic, political and cultural needs, and they worried about the effects of this misalignment on America's future. They issued a strong, two-part reminder. The social institutions in place at the beginning of 21st Century are tailor-made for a fast-disappearing industrial society, and new ones are needed in service of society's members, extending to America's global connections.

American history includes several such challenge and response periods. The remarkable Progressive Era in American history, roughly covering the period between 1880 and 1930, can be characterized as a time of new institutional designs. Then as today, a significant transformation was underway—from an agrarian society to an industrial one. The industrial age, social institutions we have inherited are testimonials to their success.

Today's needs for another iteration of transformative institutional designs become more intelligible and feasible when leaders are reminded of

Americans' efficacy in designing, implementing, and continuously improving new social institutions during times of rapid transitions. Today's institution-building can build on a distinctive asset.

America's education system, especially its higher education system, can be reconfigured so that it is fit for purpose. Higher education's leadership for Cradle-to-Career systems development is one example. This same leadership can be extended to community schools and their multiple partners, extending to private sector organizations and governments.

In this context, Ed schools, oft criticized and sometimes marginalized in research universities, have the opportunity for a special Renaissance. The same claim applies to sister professional schools that also have had to fight for status and resources.

With Ed schools serving as backbone organizations, intra-university partnerships involving other professional schools and arts and sciences disciplines can be developed in tandem with community schools and cradle-to-career systems. Framed by the compelling idea of simultaneous improvement and renewal, redesign priorities in professional education and also in research agendas may reflect and fuel optimal configurations and best practices in community schools. This idea of learning and designing from practice introduces the generative power of a new idea—the community school-assisted university. It is a perfect match for the university-assisted community school.

Comprehensive university-community school research and development partnerships provide a second indicator of this generative power. With imperatives for integrated and equitable social and economic development in tandem with citizenship preparation, these new partnerships align Ed schools and sister professional schools to the central missions and core functions of 21st Century colleges and universities. A proposed quadruple helix arrangement involving entire universities complements research and development parks operating on many campuses.

At one time, bold visions like these might have been deemed idealistic and impossible. Owing to the new designs and remarkable achievements of the Netter Center's leadership team and their national and international partners, a build from strength strategy is available. Complementing the university-assisted community school exemplar with its strong service orientation, the time has arrived to develop the community school-assisted university.

This generative idea promises to stimulate multiple, interconnected innovations. Ed school-

facilitated, intra-university partnerships configured for simultaneous renewal with community schools are one such innovation. These partnerships will incubate other innovations such as interprofessional education, interdisciplinary and community-based participatory research, and practice-to-research theory development

Another keynote innovation is the development of comprehensive university partnerships focused on cradle-to-career systems development, with community schools as the core components. These new partnerships can be aligned with the university's central missions and goals and connected to local, state, and regional social and economic development. Like the other side of the coin for industrial research and development parks on a growing number of university campuses, these special research and development partnerships are focused on postsecondary education access and completion in service of citizenship preparation and human capital development in high poverty communities. This grand, timely social experiment depends on an expansive partnership configuration called "the quadruple helix." The main outcome is integrated, equitable, and sustainable social and economic development in high poverty communities.

In contrast to, but aligned with, partnerships driven by voluntary service with selective student, staff, and faculty engagement in external settings, this dual intra- and extra-university partnership configuration is central to research and teaching missions. More than something universities might do, increasingly it is clear that this new agenda is an imperative. While this research and development agenda is not the only priority for the reshaping of America's education and research systems, it is no longer an elective for the public universities. Pathways to prosperity for individuals, families, and communities depend on it, and so do each university's enrollments as America's child population continues to diversify.

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