Chapter 4

Building Compassionate School-Community Partnerships That Work

Our inability to see the potentials that lie before us is often rooted in the fact that we feel as though we must bear the challenges we face on our own. Our ability to see and affect a solution is directly proportionate to the number of eyes and hands on the problem.

-- Ron Hertel

Contents:

The Language of This Chapter

Asset Mapping

A formal process for listing the resources of a community. This includes names of associations and businesses. The asset map lists parks, hospitals, schools, colleges and universities. Natural resources such as lakes, rivers, and forests are highlighted. An asset map also includes the gifts and abilities of individuals who live or work in the community. In other words, the asset map provides a picture of the strengths of a community.

Community

A community is a specific area. It includes individuals and families who live in the area. It also includes businesses, schools, associations, and agencies. There is a common interest in the well-being and safety of those who live in the area.

Compassionate School

A school where staff and students learn to be aware of the challenges faced by others. They respond to the physical, social, and emotional challenges faced by students and families by offering support and guidance to remove barriers to learning. They do not judge the situations or responses of others.

Compassionate Schools Coordinator (CSC)

A person who is responsible for oversight and of a school partnership. This person holds the vision that was created by partnership. The coordinator has the experience and skills needed to network with a wide array of stakeholders.

Needs Assessment

A formal process for determining the needs of a community.

OSPI

The Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction is the Washington State Education Agency (SEA). "In collaboration with educators, students, families, local communities, business, labor, and government, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction leads, supports, and oversees K-12 education, ensuring the success of all learners."

School-Community Partnership

A relationship between the school and the community to achieve the goal of helping families find resources. The partnership is based on cooperation and responsibility to achieve this goal. A compassionate schools coordinator is responsible for the work of the partnership

Strengths-Based Problem Solving

A model that uses strengths to compensate for limitations. Strengths include assets, talents and resources. Limitations are needs. To be most successful, this type of problem solving requires a formal or informal assessment of both strengths and limitations.

Definitions

Schools in Partnership

School employees see students in the classroom, the lunchroom, the playground, and sometimes on field trips. They mostly see students at school or at school activities. Every student is involved in other systems outside the school as well. These other organizations affect the ability of the student to function at school. All students live in the context of an adult world. They learn different sets of behavior for each system. For example, a student may have different sets of behavior for school, home, sports, and social activities.

Community members outside the school have a different view of children. We define a **community** as the individuals, families, businesses, schools, associations, and agencies within a specific area. They observe the same children mostly when they are outside the school and with their families. When these two viewpoints are combined, there is more information for understanding how children and families contribute to their communities. When a school partners with the community, the needs of children and their families are more likely to be met and they are better able to focus on learning.

Children come from and return to families that are different from each other. Some live with their parents, extended families, or grandparents. Others live with foster families. Some come from and return to loving, nurturing learning environments where their safety and growth is of primary focus. Others come from and return to homes with problems such as mental or physical illness, addiction, violence, or poverty. Some children sing in church choirs. Some compete in bowling leagues. Some children spend hours playing video games, and others read books. Some do homework. Others do not. Some play with siblings or neighbors, and others retreat to bedrooms to spend hours in isolation. Some join gangs in order to find some sense of belonging. There is no way to see these aspects of children's lives from inside the school's walls. The events in a child's life outside the school affect the ability of the child to function within the school.

There are two purposes in writing this chapter. First, we simply want to share some thoughts about children and their families in contexts other than the school system. Second, we want to explore the benefits of school-community partnerships to children, their families, and school employees. Children must live in the world adults create for them. Adults can be intentional in creating an interdependent community that nurtures well being, fosters resiliency, and integrates school experiences with the other contexts of a student's life. Compassionate schools allow adults in the community to work with adults in the schools to do just that.

Every child must deal with the educational system in the larger context of his or her unique life circumstances. Just outside the walls of the school is a community that provides supports for the same children who attend the school. The community sees to the needs of its members, including children, families, and the school itself. A school partnership with the community uses the circular nature of systems to identify children with needs, connect with their families, and use resources in the community to meet those needs. The school is nested within other systems. Compassionate schools can only survive in compassionate communities. At the same time, compassionate communities will be the result of compassionate schools. In this chapter we will discuss (a) connections between education and community resources, (b) school-community partnerships that work, and (c) ideas for forming school-community partnerships.

Connecting Education and Community-Based Resources

Compassionate schools endeavor to address many needs of children and families. These needs are complicated and involve multiple factors. In this section, we will address mental wellness coordination, cultural recognition, integration, social justice, and ways to coordinate partnership activity.

Mental Wellness Coordination

Nearly every student behaves inappropriately at one time or another. This may be the result of many factors. It could be stress in their day or the desire to get attention. This behavior may be the result of a perceived threat or because of fatigue. Other times misbehavior may be the result of a lack of awareness of expectations. Then again, at times it is appropriate for young people to act against authority.

Most students can control their behavior when they decide to do so. However, there are a few who have a great deal of difficulty in doing so. Their behavior may be due to organically based processing difficulties, compromised cerebral functioning from chemical imbalances, congenital brain differences, or brain injuries. Some may be diagnosed with what is referred to as mental illness, personality disorders or developmental disabilities. These issues can result in impaired learning and behavior that includes: hyperactivity, impulsivity, emotionality, anxiety, inconsistent emotional responses, unpredictable intense mood swings, withdrawal, and episodes of rage.

Compassionate schools emphasize promoting mental-wellness but sometimes students are described as having mental health issues. These issues may be divided into mental health diagnoses and developmental disabilities.

Helping students self-regulate their behavior and seeing them as individuals, free of labels and capable of learning, is vital to positive teaching. Nonetheless, educators should be familiar with the labels used by mental health professionals to classify student behavior. The Mental Health Terminology chart on page 140 was designed to help educators sort through the alphabet soup of mental health terminology.

We strongly caution against labeling students with any diagnosis or using this chart to create a suspected diagnosis for a student. Obviously, that is work to be done by mental health professionals. Use the chart instead as an introduction to the language of the mental health profession. Use it as a pathway for further study.

Labeled or not, compassionate schools are concerned with the mental wellness of children and families. When many speak of mental illness, that focus on what is wrong with someone. When we think of mental wellness, we do our best to focus on ways to bring out the best in someone. When we work for the mental wellness of children, we are preparing them to be successful members of society.

Mental wellness needs are significant across the school community, yet treatment resources continue to dwindle. Often, these children are overlooked because school staff lack specific training or have increasing responsibilities for more demanding curricula and assessments of student learning. Twenty-one percent of children experience a severe emotional disturbance every year. Less than 20% of them receive service aimed toward social and emotional development (Kutash 2006).

Coordination of mental health services are hindered by the complex rules that govern the agencies that provide these services. Questions that we all need answered include: What makes a student who cannot afford private mental health services eligible for public mental heath services? How do you empower families to partake in services that require transportation when schedules for services do not align with the work schedule of parents? What can schools do, specifically, to address the mental health needs of their students?

Some schools have created dedicated space for public mental health agencies. These agencies are becoming more creative in applying public funding rules. In so doing, this benefits more students. In a few instances, through a more holistic vision, schools have formed partnerships with local health providers called School Based Health Centers. They have realized the value of mental wellness for students as a part of bolstering their ability to learn. As such, they have included mental wellness in their cadre of available services to any student who needs it regardless of their eligibility for public mental health services.

Some of the benefits to students, families and schools include:

- Create an economy of scale for mental health providers by having clientele assembled in a localized area.
- Increase the opportunity for social/emotional interventions because the school community is often one of the most significant social settings for children.
- Provide a safe place for students to deal with family issues.
- Provide school staff with convenient referral sources for assessment of mental health issues.
- Allow school staff to continue focus on the classroom.
- Allow an opportunity for peer groups that are often the best model for children and teens to increase understanding of their own behavior.
- Provide direct training to teachers and school staff involved in the lives of students.
- Use existing facilities for multiple purposes, reducing the tax burden.

Further information about mental health/school coordination can be found in a manual produced with funding from the Washington State Mental Health Transformation Grant. "Publicly Funded Mental Health and School Coordination Resource Manual for Washington State" is available at http://www.k12.wa.us/MentalHealthandSchools/pubdocs/MHResourceManual-2008.pdf.

Diversity and Strengths-Based Problem Solving

Every community has diverse members, and community partnership use that diversity in strengths-based problem solving. **Strengths-Based Problem Solving** is a model that uses strengths to compensate for the limitations. Strengths include assets, talents, and resources. Limitations include unmet needs. To be most successful, this type of problem solving requires a formal or informal assessment of both strengths and limitations. Once the assets and needs of an individual or group have been determined, it is a simple process to draw from the strengths to meet the needs.

According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2009), the population of the United States is diverse in several ways:

- 33% are people of color .
- 7% are under 5 years of age.
- 13% are 65 or older.
- 18% are school age (5 – 18).
- 15% (over age 5) are reported as having a disability.

Other types of diversity exist, too. Individuals experience differences in education, occupation, hobbies, and talents. People have differences of culture, gender, sexual orientation, spirituality, and social class. All of these differences can be viewed as strengths of a community and resources for a community partnership. Children are served by the school system, which exists, in part, because of taxes. Families own homes and businesses within the community. They rent houses, shop for clothing, and eat in restaurants, all of which contribute to the local economy. Families have an investment in the community and the school, and they are often willing to contribute their strengths to build a successful school-community partnership.

The diversity within a community provides a rich texture for school and community events. In addition to drawing from the strengths of that diversity, the partnership can consider issues from different viewpoints. It also teaches the children of a community how to build a stronger community through collaboration. The poet, Kahlil Gibran, said, "The strength of the columns is in that they stand apart." If a school-community partnership is strengths-based, that is, solving problems and meeting needs from the strengths within the community, it cannot overlook the strengths of a diverse community population. It is the differences, the standing apart, that support the community.

Mental Health Terminology

Anxiety Disorder:

Has an excessive, irrational dread of everyday situations that has become disabling. Has overwhelming anxiety and feelings of extreme self-consciousness in everyday social situations. Shows intense fear of being watched or judged by others.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Distracted by things beyond the classroom – e.g. excess worry about family, friends, health, etc. Inability to focus. Often times preoccupied and may need to have information repeated. In severe cases, student may exhibit signs of panic for unknown or unperceived reasons. May even result in physical symptoms such as pounding heart, weakness, sweatiness, or dizziness.

Classroom Strategies:

- Talk with the student during times of distress.
- Present calmly to student.
- Use low volume tones.
- Listen and encourage the student to see the school counselor, if warranted.
- Do not force student to talk during class by calling on him or her.
- Foster an environment of respect so student may slowly gain comfort interacting with peers.

Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD):

Hyperactive Symptoms include constant motion, fidgeting, difficulty with quiet tasks, and trouble sitting still. Impulsive Symptoms include interrupting conversations, blurting out answers, acting without regard for consequences, and impatience. Inattention. Easily bored, confused and distracted. Appear to daydream. Forgetfulness. Slow moving.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Difficulty paying attention during class. Disruptive behavior. Often distracts other students. Inability to self-regulate. Easily sidetracked. Frequently daydreaming. Certain events, situations, or health conditions may cause temporary behaviors that seem like ADHD.

Classroom Strategies:

- Structure, structure, structure.
- Early intervention before behavior escalates.
- Stand in close proximity to student if they are having trouble focusing.
- Medication monitoring by school nurse.
- Short lessons to encourage focus on work.
- Provide family support and social and emotional learning.

Autism Spectrum Disorders (ASD), including Asperger's:

Has difficulty communicating with others. May exhibit repetitious behaviors, such as rocking back and forth, head banging, or touching or twirling objects. Has a limited range of interests and activities. May become upset by a small change in the environment or daily routine. Severe and pervasive impairment in thinking, feeling, language, and the ability to relate to others. Has difficulty reading people and situations.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Social etiquette is often inappropriate. Social etiquette skills include how to comfortably join and exit a group of peers; good sportsmanship; good host behavior during get-togethers; changing bad reputations and owning up to a previously bad reputation; and handling teasing, bullying and arguments. May be a target for bullying or other harassment. Challenges with any kind of intimacy and relationship development.

Classroom Strategies:

- Often receiving specially designed instruction through an IEP.
- Dietary interventions.
- Teaching of social interaction skills. May also need greater one-on-one attention and help from a teacher.
- Provide personal space for student.
- Little routine change and a structured class.
- Break assignments into small steps.

Bipolar Disorder (Manic Depression):

Changes in mood from being extremely irritable or sad to overly silly and elated.
Manic Symptoms include distractibility, increase in talking, great increase in energy, repeated high-risk behavior, severe mood changes, unrealistic highs, and not allowing interruptions.
Depressive symptoms include persistent sadness, decreased interest in activities, frequent complaints of physical illness, irritability, and low energy levels. Shifts in not only mood, but also energy level and ability to function.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Disruptive behavior or anger towards others for what seems to be no reason and with no provocation. Teachers may have trouble gauging when mood swings may occur and have little chance of dispelling them. Medication frequently prescribed if diagnosed.

Classroom Strategies:

- Allow student to work on a creative or interesting assignment.
- Have an aide work one-on-one with the child.
- Allow the child to work in a study carrel.
- IEP to address accommodations to emphasize strengths, assets of student.
- Possible medication monitoring by school nurse.

Borderline Personality Disorder (BPD):

A serious personality disorder characterized by pervasive instability in moods, interpersonal relationships, self-image, and behavior. Extremes of mood occur. Attention seeking and often dramatic.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

This disorder disrupts individuals' sense of self-identity. Bouts of aggression may lead to issues with other students and teachers. Potential substance abuse. Poor boundaries. Issues of other students often become their own. Intense bouts of anger, depression, and anxiety that circulate through their daily lives. Often seeks to create a reaction in other students.

Classroom Strategies:

- Watch for signs that warn for something greater than a mere temper tantrum or bad day – over a prolonged period of time.
- Be very consistent and stable, not reacting to the student's provocation.
- Know who they are even when they are struggling with their own identity.
- Pay attention to signs of substance abuse and notify counselor if that is the case.

Depression:

Difficulty with relationships. Frequent complaints of physical illness. Frequent sadness or crying. Low energy, Low self-esteem. Persistent boredom. Poor concentration. Thoughts of suicide. Loss of interest in activities that were once enjoyable.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Unwilling to participate in class activities or even pay attention. 'Empty' feeling may lead to students disregard for anything and lead to disassociation with what is happening in the classroom.

Classroom Strategies:

- Offer support.
- Be there for students to talk to if they need to.
- Make sure counselors know that there is something going on with the student so they can best help.

Eating Disorders:

Severe disturbances in eating behavior, such as extreme reduction of food intake (Anorexia Nervosa) or purging (Bulimia) accompanied by feelings of extreme distress or concern about body weight or shape. Frequent trips to the restroom.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Preoccupied with food intake. May refuse snacks or overindulge. Obsessive about body image. May exhibit excessive weight loss or gain. Often quiet and depressed. Changes in weight are not always apparent (especially with Bulimia).

Classroom Strategies:

- Careful observation.
- Refer to school counselor for appropriate follow up. Do not expect the student to "admit" to the problem. Behavior is often very secretive.

Fetal Alcohol Syndrome:

Difficult to diagnose. Some symptoms are physical such as low birth weight; small size; small eyes; flat cheeks and nose; thin upper lip; shaking and tremors; sight and hearing problems; heart defects; joint defects, and a small, abnormally formed brain. Other symptoms include eating and sleeping difficulties; delayed speech; ADHD; an undeveloped conscience; lower IQ; poor coordination; behavior problems; impulsivity; and difficulty getting along with other students. May develop drug or alcohol dependency, anxiety disorders, and trouble controlling explosive anger.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Disruptive, out of control, inciting negative behavior in other students. Very short-term memory for instructions. Talking in the classroom. May appear as if they are simply disinterested in the material and are choosing to disengage. Difficulty in retaining what is learned.

Classroom Strategies:

- Assess the student's needs by reviewing the student's academic history through report cards and by speaking with the parents.
- Record the adaptations and/or modifications that will be used to support the student.
- Observe students' skills and productivity in the classroom.
- Extra patience, attention and help.
- Lessons need to be shorter in duration and actively seek to gain the attention and interest of the students.
- Use nonverbal cues.
- Prioritize the student's needs from most to least important.

Obsessive Compulsive Disorder (OCD):

Recurrent, unwanted thoughts (obsessions) and/or repetitive behaviors (compulsions).

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Student may be plagued by persistent, unwelcome thoughts or images or by the urgent need to engage in certain rituals. May be obsessed with germs, dirt, and washing their hands. They may be filled with doubt and feel the need to check things repeatedly.

Classroom Strategies:

- Interact with student one-to-one.
- Do not draw attention to behaviors.
- Refer to school counselor for potential referral for mental health services.
- Listen and encourage.
- Be aware of how much the student can comfortably handle.

Oppositional Defiant Disorder (ODD):

Throwing repeated temper tantrums. Excessively arguing with adults. Actively refusing to comply with requests and rules. Deliberately trying to annoy or upset others, or being easily annoyed by others. Blaming others for their mistakes. Frequent outbursts of anger and resentment. Seeking revenge. Swearing or using obscene language. Many children with ODD are moody, easily frustrated and have low self-esteem.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Anger towards the teacher for what may appear to be no rational explanation. Leads to student focusing on those feelings rather than the schoolwork and may disregard anything the teacher has to say relevant to the schoolwork itself.

Classroom Strategies:

- Students do respond to praise and should be given some flexibility; they also need limits and consequences.
- Consequences should be appropriate and meaningful, something they want to avoid. Choose consequences wisely.
- Separate actions from students and understand that their hostility is not personalized toward you.
- Family support.
- Social and emotional learning.

Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD):

An anxiety disorder that can develop after exposure to a terrifying event or ordeal in which grave physical harm occurred or was threatened.

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

May appear distracted or daydreaming in the classroom. Expresses fear and may speak of memories of the event in the class. Student may appear detached and be easily startled.

Classroom Strategies:

- Maintain a calm environment.
- Listen if the student chooses to talk about the event, being careful to terminate conversation if any anxiety begins to develop.
- Respectfully and carefully work with the school counselor and the family for potential mental health treatment.

Substance Abuse:

Recurrent substance use resulting in a failure to fulfill major role obligations at work, school, or home. Recurrent substance use in situations in which it is physically hazardous (e.g., driving an automobile). Recurrent substance-related legal problems (e.g., arrests for substance-related disorderly conduct). Continued substance use despite having persistent or recurrent social or interpersonal problems caused or exacerbated by the effects of the substance (e.g., arguments with friends and family about consequences of intoxication, physical fights).

Possible Challenges in the Classroom:

Repeat absences. Poor work performance. Substance-abuse related suspensions or expulsions.

Classroom Strategies:

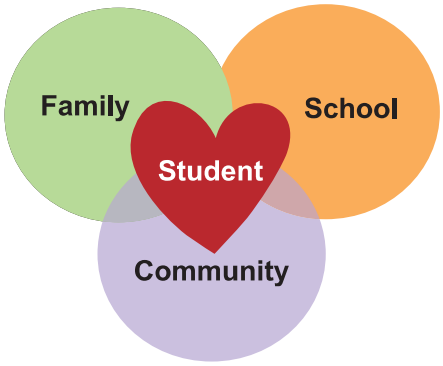
- Refer to a Student Assistance Specialist or other personnel for a substance abuse screening and potential referral for substance abuse treatment.

Information in this chart comes primarily from The National Institute of Mental Health http://www.nimh.nih.gov/health/topics/index.shtml and The American Academy of Pediatrics http://www.aap.org/healthtopics/behavmenthlth.cfm.

School-Community Partnerships That Work

A **school-community partnership** is organized to meet the needs of children and families. When needs are not met, they create barriers to learning. The partnership assists families in locating services and resources within the boundaries of the community. Regardless of household income, families need health care, basic needs, after school care, recreation, mental health services, and counseling of various types. People access services in different ways. For example, some people have insurance, and others must rely on services provided by public funding or non-profit agencies.

There are three parties to the partnership: the school, the families, and the community services. This is represented in the diagram below. Note that the student is at the heart of this group.

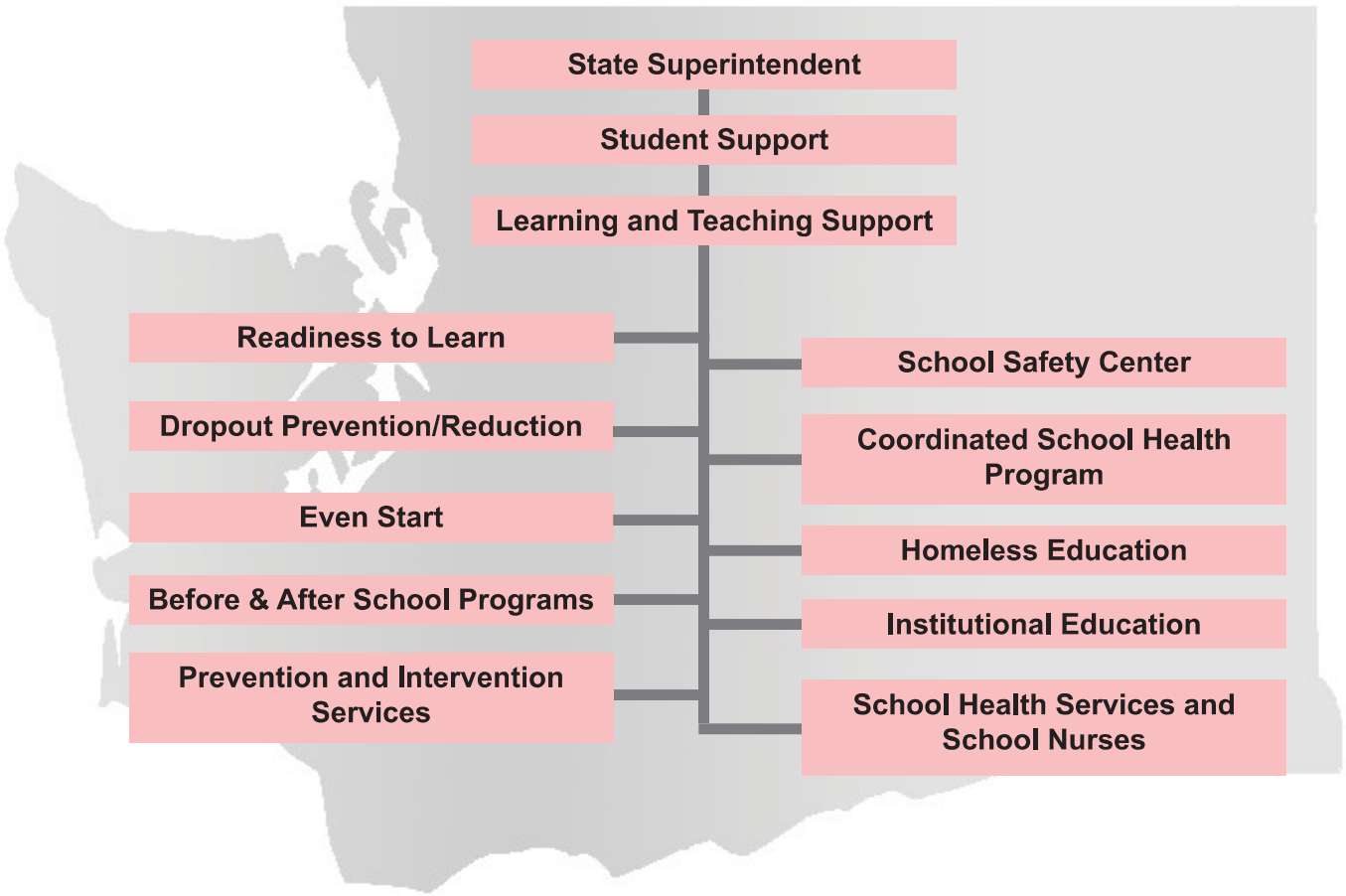


Someone must coordinate these three parties to ensure a stable partnership. In many school/community partnerships, that person is the **Compassionate Schools Coordinator (CSC).** The CSC assists students and families in finding the support and resources they need. The role of the CSC is different from that of a school counselor, school psychologist, or other school employee. The CSC acts to connect students and their families with a network of resources. The resources include natural supports and networks of community members as well as formal supports from agencies.

When a CSC is located at the school, teachers and school counselors can better focus their energies on the roles for which they were hired. In addition, schools with CSCs report that connecting families with support and services they need helps reduce at-risk behaviors. Schools and communities are discovering value in saving resources in the long-term through prevention and early intervention activities.

One person especially well-trained to perform the work of a CSC is a Human Services Professional (HSP). A HSP is a person with a college degree who has learned to deliver, coordinate, and administrate human services. An HSP can determine the needs of clients, locate resources, refer clients, and keep client information confidential. They also know how to advocate for clients, groups, and communities within larger systems. In addition, HSPs have the skills needed for community organizing and development.

Whenever school-community partnerships are developed, there needs to be a person who is responsible for holding the vision of the partnership and building the connections that form the partnership. Within a compassionate school, that is a CSC. There are several programs that are currently operating that use school-community partnerships as the cornerstone of their operation to varying degrees. The following are a few examples of programming under the **Washington State Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction (OSPI)** where school and community partnership play a vital role. OSPI is the Washington State Education Agency (SEA). "In collaboration with educators, students, families, local communities, business, labor, and government, the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction leads, supports, and oversees K-12 education, ensuring the success of all learners." The organizational chart shows how those supports are aligned at OSPI.



Readiness to Learn (RTL)

The Readiness to Learn (RTL) program began in 1993. It is a state-funded grant program that creates and utilizes partnerships between schools and community members to support families that are challenged and their children who are academically at risk. The intent is to reduce non-academic barriers to learning, bolster student engagement, and ensure that all children are ready to learn when they come to school. Each program utilizes an RTL Coordinator to build these partnerships. RTL functions as an early intervention dropout reduction program.

Supports include:

- Intensive outreach for families.
- Tutoring and mentoring services.
- Mental health and substance abuse services.
- Case management.
- Parent support and education.
- Transportation and financial support.
- Health services.
- Food, clothing, housing, and employment assistance.
- Individual, group, and community activities and services.
- Gang diversion.
- Extended learning, enrichment, and recreational activities.

A Real Life Example:

During the fall of 2008 while working as a Readiness to Learn Coordinator out of a rural Mason County school district, I met a young mother of two small children. The oldest child, who had just started kindergarten, was often dirty, under dressed and attended school on an irregular basis. I made a home visit with the public health nurse.

We found a dark, cold home and a scared young mother. The baby was asleep on a sofa that was pushed up next to a wood stove, their only source of heat. There was little food in the house and the parent had no transportation to get to the store or the means to purchase it. Clothing that had been hand washed was hanging around the house. The furniture consisted of one bed they all shared, a table without chairs and a sofa.

The family had been abandoned by the father of the children following repeated instances of domestic violence. The mother, who had previously lived in homeless shelters with her children, was desperate. She had lost her job because she had no transportation or daycare for her children. Her extended family was unwilling to help as they believed “what does not kill you will make you stronger.”

RTL authorized payment of the outstanding power bill to the electric company using community grant funds designed for that purpose. Beds, blankets, clothing and food were delivered that same evening.

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The local Kiwanis Club purchased the family a used car, grant funds were used to obtain housing and a Temporary Assistance for Needy Families grant was applied for and received. With local volunteers, the family was moved into a new rental. Furniture, clothing and household items were donated and car insurance was purchased by utilizing funds from the TANF grant. Mom and the children have also received long overdue medical and dental care.

The kindergartner was re-enrolled in an elementary school close to their new home and attends school regularly. Both children have been enrolled in daycare. Mom is beginning to feel a sense of a "can do" attitude and will eventually be able to better tend to the needs of her family.

Bonnie Miller, RTL Coordinator
North Mason County, Washington

A Real Life Example:

The Quileute Tribal School held their 2nd annual Welcome the Whales ceremony on March 26, 2008. The principal of the Tribal School invited the Forks public school district students to join them and invited the RTL program to help coordinate a field trip for 37 of the district's native and non-native students.

While the ceremony was taking place, Gray Whales were rolling in the surf. As the Quileute tribal members ended the ceremony with a "Calling to the Whales" song, four killer whales – two adults and two juveniles – appeared at the mouth of the Quileute River and swam out behind James Island! The tribal members say they are rare visitors and usually only seen out to sea. The power of the song welcomed them also.

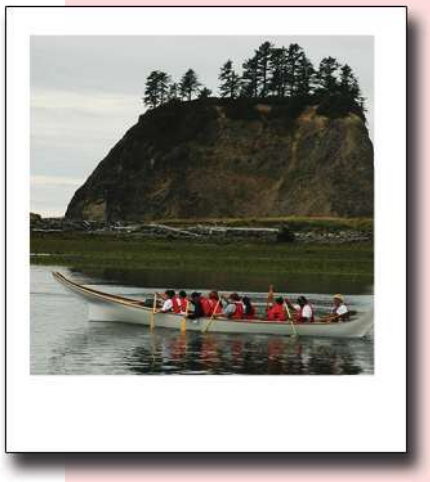

Photo by Chris Cook - Forks Forum

After the ceremony, young students joined the tribal dancers. One young American Indian student who has grown up in a foster placement with non-native foster parents was very hesitant to join the dancers. When one of the partner dances started I took him out and taught him the dance. By the end of the song, he had a huge smile on his face! As we were boarding the bus to go home, he told me that was his first "Indian dance." It was a great experience and the children loved being a part of that cultural ceremony.

Sandra Heinrich, RTL Coordinator
Forks, Washington

RTL uses many strategies to provide outreach to families. Some staff have found that having a place where families can gather, come to receive support, volunteer their services, engage with other families, and have their questions answered has been valuable. The best example of that has been through a Family Resource Center (FRC) model which is present in several of the RTL consortiums as the "hub" of activity.

Both FRCs and the Parent Engagement and Leadership Programs play a vital role in RTL programming. The following two sections provide more detail on these programs.

Family Resource Centers

An FRC is either located in the school or is easily accessed by students and their families. FRCs create a respectful, safe, relaxed, and comfortable place for families to explore advocacy, parent support, and community resources. They connect parents with training, case management, a resource lending library, and onsite technology. They focus on providing programs when no other resource exists.

Principles of Family Support		
Staff and families work together with equality and respect	Staff enhances families' capacity	Families are resources
Programs affirm and strengthen cultural, racial & linguistic identities	Programs contribute to community building	Programs advocate with families for services and systems
Mobilize formal and informal services	Programs are flexible and continually responsive	Principles of family support modeled in all programs

Families are recognized as the first teachers of their children. FRCs offer support to parents and other family and community members who assist children in learning. This support provides a foundation for schools to help reduce the effects of trauma and struggles faced by students and families. FRCs strengthen families and allow schools to harness the synergy that becomes available when family members are advocates, and supporters of the education system. Parents are a child's first teacher.

Benefits of Family Resource Centers include:

- Welcoming environments.
- Stigma-free services.
- Strength-based practices.
- Network of services.
- Reduction in service duplication.
- Students who arrive ready to learn.
- Opportunities to give back.
- Family voice.
- Sharing of personal stories.
- Interaction with the school board.

Parent Engagement and Leadership Programs

Parents, like their children, have experiences outside the walls of the school. They have jobs, friends, and extended families. They have knowledge and skills used in their jobs, families, faiths, and hobbies. Many work long hours and have long commutes. Still, many (if not most) of them are willing to be involved in schools if they believe their presence makes a contribution. When we think of family involvement, we should think of adults beyond the walls of the student's home. There is the potential for involvement by grandparents, aunts, uncles and adults who either do not have children or whose children are adults.

There are many ways for families to be engaged and involved in the life of their children. Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University has defined six different types of parent involvement. Those six types are 1) Parenting, 2) Communicating, 3) Volunteering, 4) Learning at home, 5) Decision Making, 6) Collaborating with the community. Further information on her work can be found on the Web at http://parent.sdsu.edu/aboutpi.htm. The website lists sample practices and activities to describe the involvement more fully. Her work also describes the challenges inherent in fostering each type of parent involvement as well as the expected results of implementing them for students, parents, and teachers.

Families are at the core of family-school partnerships. For children to succeed, families must succeed. Those families must be treated with respect, their strengths and abilities should be recognized. When developing a life plan for a family in chaos, it is important that the family has a central role in its design. That sense of ownership of the plan helps them become more successful. It is important to plan *with* families, not *for* them. What is more, family involvement in all aspects of programming is vital. Families are capable of contributing even though they may be experiencing difficulties, just as teachers are capable of teaching when they experience difficulties. Every parent, regardless of circumstance, has the ability to advocate for his or her child. The following list of practices place high value on recognizing the central role that families have in raising successful students.

- Utilizing practices that are responsive to diverse linguistic, cultural, ethnic values, and morals.
- Involving diverse adults in the classroom and school.
- Assuring equal ease of access to support.
- Helping families and students understand and navigate systems needed to move toward self-sufficiency. These systems include education, social services, health, career training/retraining, and local government.
- Guaranteeing parent and student voice/leadership in all aspects of programming.

Unfortunately, many school staffs receive little or no formal training in working with families. Therefore, schools often struggle with finding effective strategies to engage families. Community potlucks and gatherings are a good start. However, it is essential that events provide family members with a sense of ownership, purpose, and vitality in the work they are asked to do. They must be allowed to make a contribution that is meaningful to the children, the school, and themselves.

Across Washington State, there are several programs that not only involve parents as advocates for their own children but also as leaders to advocate for other struggling parents. These programs are considered best practices and are highly valuable to the communities that have fostered their development. Superintendents, principals, and teachers who have increased their understanding of struggling families have found this resource invaluable to their school communities, including staff, bus drivers, lunchroom staff, and paraprofessionals. The benefit is clear for both the mentor parent as well as the parent being mentored. Teaching skills that one has learned only reinforces their affect. There is a sense of ownership that begets goodwill throughout the school and community.

Schools that invite family involvement and engagement create an opportunity for capable families to act as mentors and role models for other struggling families. Many families bring leadership skills to their volunteer work, providing an excellent opportunity for other family members to also develop skills. It is often easier for a struggling family to accept guidance from a family with similar struggles that has been successful in the school system and other resources to meet their needs. This is especially true when language and culture are barriers to understanding these systems.

One example of a parent mentorship program is found in the North Shore School District where families are recognized as strong resources. In that district, the Washington Alliance for Better Schools developed and implemented the Natural Leaders Program to develop parent mentors. This program works particularly well with English language learners. Parents from many cultures are trained as helpers and supports for other families that are challenged by the system. They often need support to navigate the complex school system. In that model, the parents have a strong voice in shaping and actually running the program. Further information about the Natural Leaders Program can be found on the RTL website:
http://www.k12.wa.us/ReadinessToLearn/Resources.aspx.

What qualities would you look for in a parent to become a mentor? It is important to consider risk and fit within your community when recruiting parents as leaders. An inclusive group is stronger than an exclusive group for many reasons. If nothing else, it allows families in chaos exposure to healthy models of functioning. You do not learn to tie your shoes from someone who does not know how, and you do not learn good parenting if you are never around parents who have good parenting skills. Creating a partnership provides a platform for parents to feel valued through meeting other parents, creating opportunities to give back, sharing personal stories, developing strength-based views of themselves, and creating a vital network of services.

Dropout Prevention/Reduction Program

Building Bridges is a state funded grant program for school-community partnerships to build a comprehensive dropout prevention, intervention and retrieval system. These grants serve at-risk middle and high school students. Targeted student populations to be identified include youth in foster care, the juvenile justice system, special education and youth who have dropped out of school.

Building Bridges Partnerships provide all of the following programs and activities:

- A system that identifies students at risk of dropping out from middle through high school and that offers timely interventions.
- Coaches or mentors for students.
- Staff that coordinates the partners.
- Retrieval or reentry activities.
- Alternative educational programming.

In addition to the legislative requirements, programs also utilize a positive youth development approach, family supports, youth leadership, and community service opportunities.

A Real Life Example:

A young high school dropout named David was in the final stages of completing his paperwork to join Job Corps. He came to our school to get copies of his transcripts and was halted at the reception desk, but permitted to call his last school for attendance. He was told if he wanted the transcripts, he would need to come to come to the school campus. He did not have time. I could see his frustration; not anger. He asked if I could assist him.

He was in a dilemma, as he was scheduled to meet his supervisor, obtain his transcript, complete his paperwork, and leave for the Job Corps training camp, all by 2:00. To him, his future depended upon getting the transcripts. I asked if his mom could help. He looked at me as if I had used profanity. Finally, he said, “She can’t help me. She can hardly help herself. I ain’t in no gangs, I don’t use drugs, and I haven’t been to jail. I just want to get out of here.”

I called and emailed the principal from his former school, asking if he could have the transcripts faxed to me. The principal moved quickly to assist. The transcripts arrived but with a note that said I could not send the transcript to anyone due to unpaid fines. I called the Job Corps office and explained the dilemma. The gentleman said, don’t send them, but let me know what grade he completed. I shared that information, and David was permitted to enter Job Corps.

I was invested in this young man for a number of reasons and most of all because it was the right thing to do in the face of what could happen to him. This points out the importance of one significant adult taking the time to listen and following up with the offer of assistance before it was too late.

Jeanette Bullock, Building Bridges Administrator
Federal Way School District, Washington

Even Start

Even Start offers promise for helping to break the intergenerational cycle of poverty and low literacy in the nation by combining early childhood education, adult literacy (adult basic and secondary-level education and/or instruction for English language learners), parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities into a unified family literacy program. Even Start supports integrated family literacy services for parents and children, primarily from birth through age 7, and has three interrelated goals:

- To help parents improve their literacy or basic educational skills.
- To help parents become full partners in educating their children.
- To assist children in reaching their full potential as learners.

The term "family literacy services" is defined in section 9101(20) of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) as services provided to participants on a voluntary basis that are of sufficient intensity in terms of hours, and of sufficient duration, to make sustainable changes in a family, and that integrate all of the following components:

- Interactive literacy activities between parents and their children.
- Training for parents regarding how to be the primary teacher for their children and full partners in the education of their children.
- Parent literacy training that leads to economic self-sufficiency.
- An age-appropriate education to prepare children for success in school and life experiences.

Even Start projects must provide participating families with an integrated program of early childhood education, adult literacy (adult basic and secondary-level education and/or instruction for English language learners), parenting education, and interactive parent and child literacy activities. The program's design is based on the premise that these components build on each other and that families need to receive all four services—not just one or two—in order to bring lasting change and improve children's school success.

Even Start

In this story, one senior from Longview High School reflects on how getting pregnant her junior year made all the difference.

A Real Life Example:

"I had to straighten my act out because I had to and because I wanted to, for this person I was creating." She gave birth Dec. 12 to a daughter. "I didn't want it (the pregnancy) to happen, but now I'm glad it happened, because it totally changed my life for the better."

Her first two years of high school were rough. Her friends used drugs and didn't go to school, she said. Her classmates teased her about her weight and for being on the school's bowling team. She didn't fully understand her schoolwork due to a reading and writing disability. She was uncooperative with teachers and thinking about dropping out.

"Not that many people liked me. I really didn't want to be there, and I didn't do anything to prove I wanted to be there."

At the end of her sophomore year, she talked about her problems with her academic strategies teacher.

"I had to be straight with her," said the teacher, who teaches kids how to study and take charge of their education.

He talked to the student about his "seven ingredients of success," one of which is, if things aren't working, you must make a change. Another is the importance of connecting with the larger community by getting involved, he said.

"She sat there and I said, 'Here's what you gotta do.' ... And a little bit of a light bulb came on, and when she came back her junior year, she started those things."

A few months later, the student learned she was pregnant.

She decided to keep the baby, but her old reputation for being a slacker caught up with her. "I was like, everyone keeps telling me I can't succeed. I'm gonna prove them wrong. And I have so far," she said.

The student found a program for teen mothers called "Even Start." The program offers free day care while the moms work toward graduating and take parenting classes.

She enrolled in the program, applied herself to her school work and brought her grades up. She began hanging out with a new crowd, one that wasn't constantly in trouble. She made plans with her fiancé to move to Idaho after graduation.

After the baby was born, the new mom saw the importance of family time. It pleases her to feel like she has control over her and her daughter's life. Now, people finally must take her seriously, she said.

"My emotions have changed from being just a kid to being a mother and having to take care of someone other than just myself," she said.

Breanne Odden, Even Start Program Coordinator
Longview High School, Washington

Before and After School Programs

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) program is a grant based program administered by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The purpose is to establish or expand community learning centers that provide students with academic enrichment opportunities along with activities designed to complement the students' regular academic program before school, after school, or during the summer. The grant's specific purposes are to:

1. Provide opportunities for academic enrichment, including providing tutoring services to help students (particularly students in high-poverty areas and those who attend low-performing schools) meet state and local student performance standards in core academic subjects such as reading and mathematics;
2. Offer students a broad array of additional services, programs, and activities, such as youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, counseling programs, art, music, and recreational programs, technology education programs, and character education programs, that are designed to reinforce and complement the regular academic program of participating students; and
3. Offer families of students served by community learning centers opportunities for literacy and related educational development.

A Real Life Example:

Twenty first century has been good for me. I started the program in the 4th grade. I wasn't at grade level and was having a hard time with math and reading. The teacher who taught my class worked with me on my homework. My mom asked the teacher if she could help by giving us extra work to do at home that would help out. Ug…more work! My mom thanked the teacher and spoke about my improvement once before. When I asked her what she said this is what she told me, "The teacher you had took the time to give you tools that would benefit you and your learning process. She said 'every child learns differently and you need hands on and visual'. Then she showed us ways to use the tools to do my work. My parents were pleased. I improved on my scores. While not yet where I needed to be, I also didn't fall behind. The next year I attended again, only with a different teacher. The paraprofessional that worked with me also gave up some of her time to give me some extra help. She actually monitored my work and showed me different ways to solve problems and get the work right. To this day I do things differently but succeed. I have completed 6th grade and with much work have improved in my test scores and am working at grade level on my classroom math. I have more work to do but I am grateful for what the program did for me.

Lindsay Oswalt (submitted by one of her students)
Granger School District, Washington

Before and After School Programs

Prevention and Intervention Services Program

The Student Assistance Prevention Intervention Services Program (SAPISP) is a state grant program administered by the Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction. The program is a comprehensive, research-base program that places Student Assistance Specialists (SASs) in schools to address the problems of youth who have experienced barriers to learning because of substance use/abuse. The program is aligned with the nine components of a comprehensive student assistance program in accord with the National Student Assistance Association, including: School Board Policy; Staff Development; Program Awareness; Internal Referral Process; Student Assistance Team; Program Evaluation; Educational Support Groups; Cooperation and Collaboration; and, Integration.

The goals of the program are to: 1) reduce substance use; 2) increase knowledge of the risks associated with substance use; and 3) increase bonding to school.

The SAPISP provides supports for grades K through 12, and provides the following services:

- Screening to determine levels of substance abuse and mental health concerns.
- Individual and family counseling and other services specific to student substance use.
- Peer support groups to address student and/or family substance abuse issues.
- Coordinate and make referrals to treatment and other social service providers.
- School-wide prevention activities that provide healthy messages and decrease substance use.

A Real Life Example:

Joe, a junior, turned his life around from his involvement in drugs and alcohol. He was from a chemically affected family, and was on a fatal path just two years ago. Joe was facing the burden of drug-related legal charges that would have ruined his life. He was referred to the Student Assistance Specialists (SAS) in his high school, and after screening was referred onto chemical dependency treatment. The SAS monitored his progress in treatment and was able to provide transition back to school once he completed his inpatient treatment. Upon his return to school, he attended a weekly recovery support group facilitated by the SAS. After a great deal of work, Joe was experiencing successes socially, emotionally and academically. Joe was just 2 weeks shy of a year without any drugs or alcohol and was carrying close to a 3.5 GPA while taking double classes needed to catch up when he had a "slip" with marijuana at school and was facing expulsion. Instead of giving up, Joe told the assistant principal that he wanted to talk with the SAS. From his inpatient and outpatient experiences, he knew this was a critical step to avoid losing it all. The SAS worked with Joe and school administrators to develop a plan to get Joe back on track towards graduation and college. He now feels that this was supposed to happen so that he could learn from it. As Joe shares his story in freshman health classes, his charisma and authenticity often astounds the students who hear the difficult journey he has taken - and is still taking. Joe's personal and academic success has also allowed other students to evaluate their own destructive decisions. This speaks loudly to the power peers have to create norms in which others form new insights about themselves.

Gary Frost, Student Assistance Specialist
North Central High School, Spokane, Washington

Throughout the remainder of his junior and senior years, Joe continued to work his program. He "walked" at graduation with his peers this June, found a good paying transitional summer job, purchased his first "newer late model" car, and will be attending community college this coming September.

Another story highlighting the importance of the SAPISP comes in the form of a letter from a 15-year-old who had a sibling and parent with substance abuse problems attending a Children of Affected Others support group facilitated by an SAS.

December 20, 2007

Dear Mr. Steve,

Thank you for helping me through everything! I can really tell you care and I appreciate it more than you can imagine! I feel everyone in group and you have really helped me. I always look forward to group and discussing whatever.

At first it was really awkward and weird, but now I feel really comfortable. You've helped me discover a lot about myself and have given me new wisdom every time I see you. Thank you, thank you, thank you!!

This world is so cold, and with group and you, it doesn't seem so bad. By hearing tips and advice you give to people you have even helped me too. I haven't hurt myself in 8 months! I haven't touched a drink in 2 months, too! I feel much happier and healthier!

Thank you for everything.

P.S. Have a great Winter Vacation!

School Safety Center

The Safe and Drug Free Schools (SDFS) State Grants program is one of the federal government's primary vehicles for reducing drug abuse and violence in schools. SDFS initiatives are designed to prevent violence in and around schools, strengthen programs that prevent the illegal use of alcohol and other drugs, and support the healthy development of youth.

Efforts include improving the quality and availability of data related to drug use and violence. Safe and Drug Free Schools dollars support the following reports:

Healthy Youth Survey	Truancy	Behavior	Weapons

Safe and Drug Free School activities support the 'prevention-mitigation' piece of a comprehensive school safety plan (Prevention-Mitigation, Preparedness, Response, and Recovery) and contribute to positive school cultures and climates that prevent violence and substance abuse.

In Washington, SDFS dollars support 295 school districts who will each write individual prevention plans that highlight local needs for prevention programs.

One story that illustrates the work of this program is from Charisa Moore, a health teacher at Bainbridge High School in Bainbridge, WA. Charisa describes the suicide prevention curriculum HELP, which was developed in partnership with DOH and the Youth Suicide Prevention Program. The lessons students have learned there have helped them in difficult situations with their own friends, as in the case of the youth in this story:

A Real Life Example:

One student's story that stands out was a boy's phone call from his female friend. She was depressed and self-medicating for months. When he got the phone call, he quickly recalled his lesson from the HELP curriculum. As he was on his cell phone, he continued to talk to her and didn't allow her to be alone. At the same time, he called 911 from his home phone and got help on the way. Talking to the girl now, she would have taken her life that night if he hadn't called 911. The medics got there in time to save her life.

Charisa Moore, Health Teacher
Bainbridge High School, Bainbridge, Washington

School Safety Center

Coordinated School Health

The Coordinated School Health (CSH) program provides improved coordination, planning, and access to school health information and resources for local school communities. Washington receives federal funding for the project. The funding supports the work of a small interagency staff team at the state education agency (OSPI) and the state health agency (DOH) to provide information, training, and technical assistance.

Schools that use a coordinated school health approach share the perspectives of educators, staff, families, health care workers, the media, religious organizations, and community organizations that serve youth, as well as the of youth themselves, in order to coordinate school health activities across the following components:

- **Health Education:** A planned, sequential K-12 curriculum that addresses physical, mental, and emotional and social dimensions of health
- **Physical Education:** A planned, sequential K-12 curriculum that provides cognitive content and learning experiences in a variety of activity areas
- **Health Services:** Services provided for students to appraise, protect, and promote health
- **Nutrition Services:** Access to a variety of nutritious and appealing meals that accommodate the health and nutritional needs of all students
- **Counseling and Psychological Services:** Services provided to improve students' mental, emotional, and social health
- **Healthy School Environment:** The physical and aesthetic surroundings and the psychosocial climate and culture of the school
- **Health Promotion for Staff:** Opportunities for school staff to improve their health status through activities such as health assessments, health education and health-related fitness activities
- **Family/Community Involvement:** An integrated school, parent, and community approach for enhancing the health and well-being of students

Coordinated School Health

A Real Life Example:

At one southwest Washington high school, the change started with students who held a school-wide referendum on issues they saw as important. When one of the three winning ideas was making improvements to the food options available at the school, the students got to work and invited adults to join in.

The school team includes a social studies teacher, an English Language Learning instructor, an art teacher, a physical education teacher, a family and consumer sciences teacher, two science teachers, and many students from the different student organizations (informal and formal) that are active in the school -- all of whom are reaching out to nutrition staff and administrators with the school and district.

So far, students and staff have explored ideas related to improved nutrition, increased physical activity, staff wellness, school sustainability, waste reduction, increased recycling, composting, exploring partnerships with local farmers, and helping the nursing staff address the problem of student over-use of high-energy drinks… all of this in three meetings. They are off to a great start!

Greg Williamson, Supervisor of the Coordinated School Health Program
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Homeless Education

Children who are homeless are among our nation's most at-risk citizens. A lack of stable housing combined with frequent school moves can lead homeless students to fall behind academically as well as experience added social and emotional hardship. The federal McKinney-Vento Act ensures that students experiencing homelessness are provided the same opportunity to enroll, attend, and succeed in school as their housed peers. Further, public schools are required by the Act to provide special supports for homeless students to ensure school stability, even if students change residences multiple times during a school year. Key provisions of the McKinney-Vento Act include continued enrollment in the school of origin, school district transportation, categorical eligibility for free meals, access to all school activities, and immediate enrollment, even when a student lacks the necessary records. Additionally, the McKinney-Vento Act requires school districts to appoint a liaison to ensure that homeless students are appropriately identified and served according to the law. A district liaison works closely with homeless students and their families, serving as an important bridge between school and community resources. Additional information about the McKinney-Vento Act can be found at the National Center for Homeless Education (NCHE) website at www.serve.org/nche/.

A Real Life Example:

When I first met this family they were living in a tent - mom, dad, 10th grader, 2nd grader and 1st grader. After talking with mom on the phone, I drove to meet them at a local grocery store and spent an hour walking up and down the aisles getting to know them and letting them get to know me. I listened to mom tearfully relay her less than desirable experience of trying to get the younger students enrolled in school the day earlier. I went with dad to fill up the gas tank of their car and learned about what brought them to Spokane. I took the family to McDonald's for lunch.

While at McDonald's, I made a phone call to the Homeless Outreach caseworker at SNAP (Spokane Neighborhood Action Program). SNAP immediately started the process of getting the family out of the tent and into a motel. This motel was in the attendance area of another elementary school in our district. I called the school to find out if they had room at 1st and 2nd grade. They did, so I presented the option to follow me to the school after lunch, and get the younger kids enrolled that afternoon. Mom and dad were relieved and grateful to have the 1st and 2nd grader enrolled and starting school the next day. They felt listened to, supported and valued, unlike their previous experience.

Leslie Camdengoold, McKinney Vento Coordinator
Central Valley School District, Washington

Institutional Education

Another program for students in transition is for children who have been incarcerated or institutionalized and are transitioning to living in the community. This program is under the title Institutional Education. Across the state, over 35 school districts and four Education Service Districts provide a wide range of quality K-12 education services to incarcerated and previously incarcerated juveniles inside state-operated institutions and group homes, county-operated juvenile detention centers, residential habilitation centers, adult correctional facilities and community schools. These education services promote successful learning in alternative learning environments. It is the purpose of the Institution Education program to provide technical assistance and support to both the service providers and the institution administrators.

Other federal funds are also available to provide incarcerated juveniles with services needed to make a successful transition from institutions to further schooling, training or employment, to prevent at-risk youth from dropping out of school and to provide them with a support system to ensure their continued education.

A Real Life Example:

Marcy has been incarcerated at the Echo Glen for several months and has been participating in the Canine Connections program – a program that brings unwanted dogs and incarcerated kids together. The dog, Spiker, is a mix of German Shorthaired Pointer and Labrador Retriever. He's one year old and was abandoned by his owners.

Spiker is changing Marcy's life and Marcy is changing his. That is the nature of the program. Marcy has lived in Echo Glen for the past nine months.

Animal therapy is increasingly being used as a way to help youth connect to the outside world. Often times they are cut off from society because of attitudes or for the simple fact that they may be isolated. The residents of Echo Glen (boys ages 10 to 16; girls, 10 to 21) have committed serious, often violent, crimes, including robbery and murder. Most have a history of drug abuse, and 70% have been diagnosed with depression or other mental illnesses. Depression and other mental health issues often are present in youth who take part in delinquent activities. So, many of the youth who are in detention will benefit from having the unconditional love of a dog to bring them out of their shell. Many times, these are their first encounters with an animal and it opens up new doors of opportunity.

Marcy never knew her father; her mother died of a drug overdose when Marcy was 8. After that, she began shuttling from one foster home to another-more than 50 in all. Unable to get along with any of her host families, she ended up on the streets selling crack. She was regularly in trouble with the law and with juvenile court until a judge ordered her to spend a year at Echo Glen.

Though most of the offenders who reside at Echo Glen are serious offenders, the Canine Connection program has proven successful with the most hardened inmates.

Kathleen Sande, Program Supervisor, Learning and Teaching Support
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

School Health Services and School Nurses

School-community-family partnerships are at the heart of providing health services for students. School nurses (professional registered nurses – RNs) are the link between health care providers, schools, and families. They connect students and their families with insurance programs and health care services.

Student health conditions continue to increase in number and severity. Washington laws designate RNs to create individual care plans and train unlicensed staff, so as to better ensure student safety and wellbeing. School staff are trained to respond quickly and effectively to an emergency situation (especially life-threatening) when the nurse is not present. Care plans outline instructions for school staff to provide daily maintenance care and accommodations for students. School nurses provide student health counseling. They prepare for and handle episodic care, schoolwide medical emergencies, chronic conditions, and communicable diseases.

Health services in Washington's schools are assisted by the OSPI Health Services:

- Providing school health services consultation, recommendations, and resources to school staff, families, students, and community partners.
- Conducting a statewide district student health services needs assessment to look at the quality of services, and student safety
- Implementing the Washington State Home Hospital Instruction program (for students temporarily unable to attend school because of a physical and/or mental disability or illness)
- Administering the Washington State School Nurse Corps (SNC) program (established by the Washington State Legislature in 1999).

The SNC expands services to schools and communities and student success through 2 essential services:

- Students with critical physical and mental health needs, in rural districts, receive SNC RN services
- Nine regional SNC Nurse Administrators provide school health and nursing consultation.

A Real Life Example:

Mia, an elementary student was experiencing behavior issues, poor nutrition, frequent absenteeism, and issues with medication compliance. The school nurse intervened and collaborated with the doctor, parents, and student. The nurse then prepared an Individualized Healthcare Plan for the student. Following implementation of the care plan, the student's family and school staff reported:

- improved attendance to almost perfect
- reduced (significantly) aggressive behavior
- improved student academic success
- increased student weight to recommended healthy weight
- improved medication compliance at school.

Mia's story and outcomes demonstrate the critical link between health and learning.

Gayle Thronson, RN, MEd, Program Supervisor, Learning and Teaching Support
Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction

Compassionate Schools Initiative

In July of 2007, Pierce County sponsored a summit called Hurt to Hope. Those attending the summit examined two documents. One was *Helping Traumatized Children Learn* authored by the Massachusetts Advocates for Children. The other was called *Adverse Childhood Experiences Study* completed by the Center for Disease Control and Kaiser-Permanente. These two documents were created independently yet reached similar conclusions. After studying and discussing these documents, those attending the summit left with a clearer understanding of how trauma affects adult health and childhood learning and development. In April of 2008, Spokane County held a similar conference also titled Hurt to Hope. Approximately 1,000 people from across Washington State attended these two events.

After the Hurt to Hope summits in these two counties, OSPI began working with the Mental Health Transformation Grant to begin a Compassionate Schools Initiative. Because of their own local initiatives, Spokane and Pierce counties were chosen as pilot sites to develop Compassionate Schools into a working practice. The focus was to provide training to teachers and other school staff toward understanding how trauma affects learning. Much discussion ensued between schools and community members and trauma informed practices were put in place in 11 school buildings between the two sites. The goal of the project was to better understand the implementation, growth, and sustainability of Compassionate Schools and to distill a set of Lessons Learned as a final project outcome. The complete Compassionate Schools Pilot Sites Report can be found at http://www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/Resources.aspx.

In August 2008, a third statewide summit was held in Yakima. Participants as teams from various schools and communities across the state took an in-depth look at the Compassionate Schools framework. Several other schools have since also recognized trauma as a barrier to learning and have requested information to further examine principles that may help bolster student achievement. The following chart portrays some of the learning that has occurred. It is important to remember that Compassionate Schools is not a program, it is a process designed to uniquely fit each school and community it benefits. The learning continues.

Compassionate Schools Initiative

Developing a Compassionate School Infrastructure

What	Who	How
Engaging school leadership	It is vital to engage school leaders (superintendents, principals, counselors, health care staff, school board) who have responsibility for professional development and establishing the Supportive Learning Environment within the school.	Provide data to school leaders that show the correlation between physical, social and emotional health and learning. Invite them to key trainings regarding data and implementation.
Assessment	All school personnel who interact with students, community agency representatives, key public agency representatives (mental health and social services), business representatives, students, parents and parent organization leaders.	Look at available school and community data including academic environment, community demographics, culture, and poverty levels. Assess available assets. Provide a gap analysis. Determine training needs. Reassess after training.
Training School-Community	Build a solid foundation based on training in specific areas that address building healthy school-community partnerships. Core trainings might include: Adverse Childhood Experiences study, Social/Emotional Learning, Response to Intervention/Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports, Community Engagement/partnership strategies, Parent engagement/leadership strategies, mental health, domestic violence awareness, substance abuse awareness, self care for those who care, creative classroom strategies for working with challenging students.	Use assessment information to determine training needs. Hold training at accessible times and places. Provide outreach to let potential attendees know of available trainings. Use a mix of "home grown" and professional training opportunities. Take time to know your trainers and if their materials/methods are appropriate for your community. Use the Internet to determine other potential relevant topics.
Review of similar models	Allow an open forum/think tank of opportunities for looking at other "compassionate" models including other agencies, health care facilities, communities of faith, colleges, etc.	Provide an opportunity for looking at creative programs. Use the Internet, conduct site visits, have conversations about "lessons learned" from other serving agencies that have developed a compassionate environment.
Review of school policies and procedures	School policies should be reviewed by all members of the school and community and there should be an open forum for questions and answers. School leadership should take the opportunity to use feedback for aligning policies with a compassionate school environment.	Policies should be regularly reviewed and revised. The Compassionate School is an evolutionary process that requires flexibility and adaptability. Policies should support the well-being of students, parents, staff and the community.

Partnerships	Develop a core partnership of consistent participants who can make an ongoing commitment to this effort. Invite ancillary partners and those who are interested. Make all meetings public and provide broad-based community invitations. Use current members to "recruit" other members.	Establish clear roles. Provide equal voice for all partners. Develop a way to garner input from a variety of sources – open invitation.
Action plan with short- and long-term goals	All partners identified in the above section. Utilize small committees of people to implement individual strategies – reviewed by other committees for potential fidelity.	Develop a written implementation plan – short term and long term. Implement in small steps – one strategy or small group of closely related strategies at a time. One classroom or one school building at a time. Take time to "test" the strategy for fidelity in your particular setting. Conduct regular reviews for quality improvement and ongoing sustainability for each development phase and then for all pieces together once several steps have been implemented. Dedicate specific resources to the project. Align with other programs, policies and initiatives. Share learnings from one school building to another. Be sure to address staff wellness.
Reassessment and evaluation	Community wide invitation - Include all partners, parents, students and other stakeholders who have been active in the partnership.	It is vital to provide a continuous quality improvement (CQI) process within the partnership – a system of checks and balances – to ensure that all areas that need to be addressed are addressed and that all students that are at risk are being supported by the right provider, at the right time and in the right amount. CQI promotes accountability, flexibility, efficiency and effectiveness throughout the life of the partnership.

After the project was completed, there were statements collected from staff at both project locales that encapsulated the values they thought were important in establishing a Compassionate School.

Comments from pilot site staff included:

- "Our frequent discussions have helped us to reflect on the possible reasons for some students' behavior."
- "I believe we are looking at our students through different eyes—realizing there might be a reason for their 'outbursts.' "
- "Thinking differently about kids' behavior, teaching skills rather than punishing when kids misbehave."
- "Looking at how we view kids and how we treat them individually. Starting to show more understanding of what might be happening to them."

Key lessons learned from pilot sites included:

- Principals and other school leaders must see the need, understand, and embrace the process and see its value.
- Work must be supported by firm foundations. Programs must not move forward with assumptions. All participants should develop a shared vision together.
- Programs must, from the beginning, be intentional and thoughtful about how to sustain the work over time.
- Teachers need practical solutions to help their students now. Current ideas are well-grounded in research, but will take time to develop fully.
- Schools must be flexible. Programs should be individualized and tailored for each school building and community based on well-planned development. School staff need tools to adapt to changing realities; not a "one size fits all" solution.
- Staff must be supported so that they are able to maintain good boundaries and self care.
- Programs must invite broad participation and ideas from all levels in the school including janitors, lunch staff, bus drivers, para-educators, as well as teachers, counselors, social workers and school administrative staff.
- This is a step by step development effort. All involved should embrace it and savor its development. They should remember to be patient, letting go of pressures to move too fast.

Forming a School-Community Partnership

School-community partnerships have provided guidance for mapping the resources of a community and performing a needs assessment. All communities and all individuals have combinations of both strengths and limitations. The proverbial cup of human ability is not *either* half-full *or* half-empty. It is *both* at the same time. Everyone you will ever meet compensates for limitations by using strengths. It is the same with communities. The combined strengths of the individuals within a community compensate for the limitations of individuals in the community. In other words, a strong partnership will use the strengths of the individuals and community to solve the problems experienced by the community. It is a matching process of finding available resources to meet the needs of within the community?

If placed within the school, a CSC can be responsible for initiating and sustaining the community-school partnership through formal and informal relationships with associations and agencies, facilitating meetings, and providing continuity. The CSC can also coordinate both asset mapping and a needs assessment.

Strength-Based Problem Solving and Asset Maps

An **asset map** (Kretzman & McKnight, 1995) provides a picture of the resources and strengths found within a community. The main resources of the community are its individual members and the collective characteristics and resources of all members within the community. It also includes natural and other resources that may not have been developed, have been abandoned, or have not been used to further the interests of the community.

In general, the center of the map includes the gifts of individuals. It is suggested that those students and families that are experiencing hardship also be included. These individuals often have time to volunteer, and the opportunity to interact with others pulls them into the natural supports of the community and allows them to make a meaningful and important contribution. Such groups would include the elderly, those with disabilities or chronic mental illnesses, immigrants, and cultural or ethnic groups, family members, and youth. Youth have a unique view of the world. They are at “eye level” in terms of seeing what’s available and what’s needed. Youth are very capable of taking responsibility, have a lot of energy, and are often seeking opportunities to complete tasks vital to their communities. Other

individuals that should be included are artists of all types and those with sufficient incomes to provide monetary resources. Every individual within a community should be considered a resource of the community.

Another group of resources that should be mapped are citizen's associations. Citizen's associations include cultural groups, block clubs, churches, groups like the Kiwanis or Lions Clubs, Rotary Clubs, book clubs, and many others. These associations are already organized around work the members consider important. A network with associations compounds the energy expanded because contact with the leadership extends to contact with the group membership. Many of these groups are already concerned about their community and involved with various aspects of community well-being. Most of them already recognize and utilize the gifts of individual members.

Lastly, the institutions within a community may be viewed as resources. Among them are hospitals, public schools, community colleges and universities, parks and other publicly owned spaces, businesses, and public and nonprofit human services agencies. Most business owners want to be viewed as supporting the well-being of the community that houses them. Most have employees that live in the community. Business people understand that a local economy must be as strong as possible to support their presence. They want to be supportive of education and children and they want their support to be visible. In addition, institutions such as universities can often provide assistance with grant writing, fund raising, program planning and evaluation, and research.

Any resource paid for with tax money can be viewed as belonging to the public, not a board of directors (Kretzman & McKnight, 1995). This is a key concept in school-community partnerships because allowing the use of school facilities by individuals, associations, and institutions within the community allows a visible sign of partnership. Inviting the community into the school demonstrates a give-and-take relationship.

As mentioned above, the asset map provides a picture of the resources within the community. The resources can be matched to the results of a needs assessment. Completing an asset map before a needs assessment allows the community to bring out strengths that may not be required to fill a need. Focusing on the strengths builds community cohesion and resiliency. It is only when the needs of the community cannot be met from the resources within the community that an attempt to bring in outside or to develop new resources is invoked.

The Case for Needs Assessment

Understanding the local issues through available data is vital to establish a partnership that meets the needs of students and families affected by trauma. It is also important to understand that setting up such partnerships will benefit all students, whether or not they are affected by trauma, providing a school-wide benefit. Thus, a multidisciplinary assessment group comprised of school personnel, local public and private agency representatives, hospitals, business leaders, faith communities, parents, and students would provide a clear and accurate picture of the need. A CSC can coordinate both the needs assessment and an asset map. The same people are involved in producing both.

A **needs assessment** can begin by looking at the demographics of the school/community:

- Age, gender, race/ethnicity
- Poverty and wealth
- Student turnover
- Substance abuse and mental health
- Community geo-demographic indicators

Sources for such information may include but are not limited to:

- WSIPC (Washington School Information Processing Cooperative), or other school-based data collection systems
- School surveys
- Surveys and evaluations done by partners, e.g. public and private agencies, communities of faith, etc.
- Community archival data—county profiles
- Healthy Youth Survey

The perceptions of the participants are important elements in constructing the assessment of both the school and the community needs. The goal is one combined assessment that will drive the priorities of the school/community partnership. The needs assessment should be an ongoing tool to keep the partnership relevant to the changing needs of both the community and the school. This is another role that can be coordinated by a CSC.

Strategic Planning

Once an asset map and a needs assessment have been completed, the school-community partnership should form a strategic plan and or logic model. A CSC can facilitate this process to ensure the partnership has a clear vision and mission and that priorities are set accordingly. It is important that the partnership is focused on *power-with*, not *power-over*. *Power-with* means a balanced group where all members have equal voice, ownership, and "power" in the operation of the partnership. A strategic plan or logic model must be flexible and continually evaluated in terms of outcomes.

Defining School and Community Roles

Schools must take initiative for outreach to community members, inviting them to become active, involved, and engaged in creating an educational environment that benefits all students. They also must find creative ways to make the school building available after hours. This outreach will encourage people to participate in making decisions about programming, expressing their opinions, and contributing their talents. Doing so bolsters the engagement of community members who assist in meeting the needs of students through active partnerships. The educational community is rooted in the school but extends into the community, providing safe harbors for children to expand their interests and have a better understanding and a sense of belonging in the community where they live.

Historically, schools have seen their role as educators as delivering a curriculum and assessing student learning. The movement to recognize the profound affect that trauma can have on learning has been outlined in previous chapters of this book. If students are to find relevance in learning, schools must take a more holistic view of their students. A child that has been immersed in domestic violence will not be able to "be present" in the classroom until someone acknowledges the situation and assists the child in beginning to deal with the emotional impact of the event. These events often go unnoticed or unrecognized. The student with trauma may be the one who picks a fight or the one who sits quietly in the corner, trying to become invisible, sometimes successfully. Someone in the community who has expertise in domestic violence may be identified to provide training and support to school staff and/or direct support and guidance to the student and family. In a school/community partnership, the CSC knows who is available and how to work with them.

Communities have historically struggled in finding appropriate ways to be involved with schools. Some see students as future citizens and worth great investment. They provide developmental support in the right place, at the right time, and in the right amount to impact these future citizens. In a larger sense, they have a role in shaping the future of their community. It is important to have clear goals for building community resources and to communicate those goals to the public. The availability of resources can be made available around the community at places including local grocery stores, communities of faith, public service agencies, and local media. It is also important to look at opportunities for students to give back to their communities through service learning opportunities as well as AmeriCorps opportunities for learning. AmeriCorps is a federal government program partnering with non-profit organizations, public agencies, and faith-based organizations to provide focused services to communities.

Managing the Growth of Community Partnerships

Helping partnerships grow fast enough to meet the challenges they were created to solve is tricky business. The energy and time available to think outside the box is limited. We are immersed in the specific rules and regulations that govern our work. Most often, we are not aware of the capacity of allied agencies to assist in meeting the needs of our students. Trust, turf, confidentiality requirements, funding streams, and a host of other barriers keep agencies from working together. However, agencies that are able to work together for families have found efficiencies, expertise, and support in their combined efforts. In many ways, it becomes a second order change in that it would be almost impossible to return to old ways of doing business in silos.

Partnerships thrive when they have clear direction and goals, assigned leadership, and a strategic plan with specific outcomes. Expect partnerships to be a little awkward at the beginning. They take time and consistency to mature. Regular meetings with clear goals and assigned responsibilities can develop a core membership that will work to achieve the outcomes. Brainstorming exercises can lead to additional resources and support. A CSC with appropriate education and/or experience can provide assistance with group dynamics and facilitate processes for developing group roles, setting group norms, resolving conflict, and monitoring group performance.

When all members of the partnership feel a sense of ownership, there is more success for the partnership. The more members of a community are involved in activities of the school/community partnership, the more likely they are to become involved in the actual work of the partnership. Often times, partnerships come together around specific activities that can include community meals, topical groups, lectures, and community fairs.

Quick Strategies for Building Collaborations

- Lead with vision and integrity.
- Regulate ethically and fairly, and provide support for improvement.
- Cultivate the team and be willing to ask for help. Be inclusive.
- Value the relationships. It's not just about funding. Build relationships with mutual respect, values, and beliefs.
- Cooperate. Look for strengths in others.
- Determine what strategies you would use to invite/entice people/agencies to participate. What adds value for them? Develop a marketing plan.
- Create synergy by paying attention to volunteer development.
- Combine state and federal programs with common goals to meet the identified needs.
- Diversify the funding base.
- Continually learn from effective practice and create forums to share learning.

Strategies

Summary

Communities consist of interdependent systems that are made up of individuals, families, associations, health and human services providers, businesses, and government, communities of faith, law enforcement, and schools. The community has a collective purpose of living together within specified boundaries. Within that collective purpose are varying needs of the members and subsystems of the community. Too often, they view themselves as independent rather than interdependent. In their independence, they forget they need each other. A school/community partnership can benefit all parties within a community by building on the strengths of its members.

When trauma occurs in the life of a student or their family, it is seldom in isolation. It often ripples through the community. A School/Community partnership can build a stronger community, match assets with needs, and utilize the strength and diversity residing within the community. It can reinforce the local economy, maximize well-being for community members, and model healthy relationships for children and those struggling with academic achievement. Asset mapping, needs assessment, and community organizing and development and other resources come together to create a more holistic system of support. Placement of a well-informed CSC dedicated to the school provides a pivotal position for bringing the students, families, resources, associations, and institutions together in a vital partnership that promotes well-being within the school and community. While there is a salary cost, the benefits to the whole community including the school, especially in the long-term, greatly exceed the monetary cost.

Sometimes, questions are more important than their answers. Have we asked the right questions? Who is in the community? What are the traits of healthy communities? What is the role of the school within the community? What is the role of the community within the school? Whose responsibility is it to recognize and address trauma? What is reasonable to expect from school personnel? From the community? How involved should they get in the personal lives of students? What is the role of education in the developmental processes of children? Is the role of education to prepare children for business and work or is it to prepare children for citizenship, contributing to a healthy family and community? Neither? Both? Who benefits from partnerships between schools and communities?

Each community must therefore make its own determinations as each community has its own strengths, limitations, and unique set of issues to deal with that are very different from other communities. It is up to each community to individualize and tailor their partnerships to meet those needs and to keep up with the changing dynamics. It is our hope that this chapter has helped to guide you in that process.

Summary

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