

EDUCATION

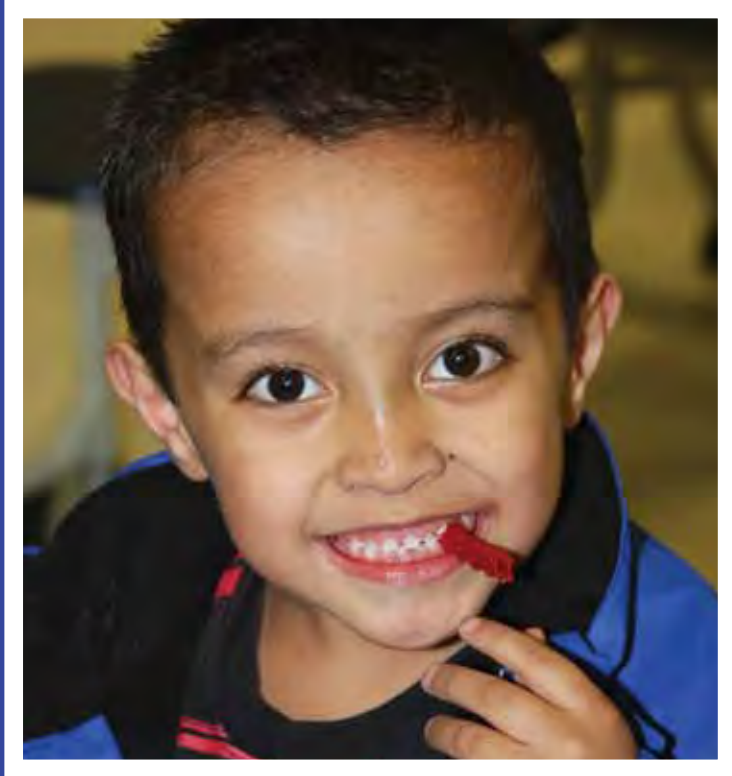
NORTHWEST MAGAZINE

WINTER 2010 / VOLUME 15. NUMBER 2



A School for the Whole Community

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ON THE COVER

A kindergarten student enjoys a treat at an open house held by Russian Jack Elementary School in Anchorage. The Title I school goes the extra mile to make new and current students and their families feel welcome, and focuses on social-emotional learning as well as core academics.

Photo by Lisa Wardle

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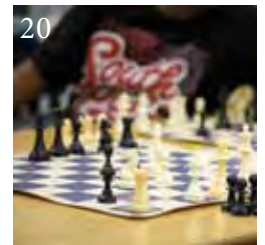
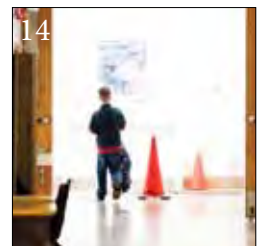
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Statement of Purpose

Education Northwest Magazine aims to promote a regional dialogue and to elevate teaching and learning by giving readers the best information, ideas, and personal stories from practitioners, researchers, and other experts.

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CEO'S MESSAGE

Dear Reader,

As this issue of *Education Northwest Magazine* goes to press, the nation is marking the first anniversary of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The Recovery Act's more than \$100 billion in education funding is entering its second and final phase, supporting major initiatives such as the Race to the Top (RttT), Investment in Innovation (i3), and School Improvement Grants (SIG). As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has noted, the size of the stimulus bill provides an unprecedented chance to put lasting education reforms in place, positioning the federal government to "move from being about compliance with bureaucracy to really [being] the engine of innovation and change."

Our focus on full-service schools is timely because ARRA offers opportunities to invest in a holistic approach to education that encompasses social-emotional learning, extended-learning time, and meaningful family and community engagement. Education Northwest has long partnered with schools and districts in the region to promote these outcomes. As the Oregon Parental Information & Resource Center we provide resources, information, and training to educators and family members to create school-family partnerships for youth success, especially for Hispanic and low-income families. We are also one of the nation's premier training and technical assistance providers for youth mentoring programs and initiatives.

Our Volunteer Leadership Center trains thousands of national service volunteers each year, preparing young and old volunteers to meet the needs of their communities. Many of those volunteers serve in schools in economically distressed neighborhoods. And, we've been active in helping schools implement (and evaluate) academic out-of-school time programs that provide students with the extra help they need to attain grade-level proficiency in core subjects such as reading and math.

As you consider taking advantage of the many opportunities that ARRA presents, we hope you'll remember that Education Northwest stands ready to partner with you—whether it's helping to build staff capacity for school turnaround, creating rigorous and relevant secondary schools, or using data to differentiate instruction. Or, if you just need some general advice on navigating the complexities of the Recovery Act, we're here to help with that, too. Check out our NW Education Recovery Clearinghouse (educationnorthwest.org/nwarra/) for more information.

Wishing you future success,



Carol Thomas
Chief Executive Officer

EDITOR'S NOTE

Sarah Giffrow



Tamela McBride, a family support worker for Tacoma Public Schools in Washington, is out in the community, in the schools, and in people's homes nearly every work day. Her job, by nature, puts her in direct contact with the most high-poverty, at-risk students and families. "A lot of what I'm seeing is families that are overwhelmed," says McBride. "They're dealing with depression, substance abuse, domestic violence, poverty, impending homelessness—they're just overwhelmed."

Even if relatively few of us are faced with such dire circumstances, we can nevertheless relate to a general anxiety—a disquieting sense that all is not right with the world and that it's not such a long drop, after all, from relative comfort to abject poverty. With health-care costs skyrocketing, unemployment rates lingering in the double digits, millions of homeowners upside down or in default on their mortgages, and a war escalating in Afghanistan, a sense of being overwhelmed may just be the defining mood of the historical moment.

Perhaps nowhere is this more apparent than in America's most underserved public schools. As Richard Rothstein, the former national education columnist for *The New York Times*, points out in these pages (see Voices, page 35), the achievement gap in public education is "all about socioeconomic class," and schools that serve the lower end of the socioeconomic scale continue to struggle.

After nearly a decade of trying to comply with the No Child Left Behind Act, many educators continue to feel that the call for greater accountability did not come with an equivalent investment of federal and state dollars. But that, of course, is changing. The American Recovery and Reinvestment Act has poured millions of dollars into public education, and its third wave, the Race to the Top competitive grant program, has yet to wash over the public school landscape.

It's no secret that the Obama administration and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan are using those dollars to push their most important education priorities. And among those priorities is the concept of full-service community schools—making public schools the center of a network of social supports. As Marty Blank, director of the national Coalition for Community Schools notes here (see Q&A, page 28), "What seems clear is that the Obama administration is trying to break down the false dichotomy between standards, testing, and teacher quality and the other array of supports and opportunities that young people need."

While England has scaled up community schools—known

there as "extended" schools—here the idea has languished in the shadows for decades. Compelling evidence of greater efficiency, cost savings, accessibility, and effectiveness has, until now, somehow failed to put community schools in the education reform limelight. Despite the fact that one recent study estimates there are currently between 3,000 and 5,000 such schools in the United States, their implementation from state to state and even within a district is inconsistent.

That this is true became apparent as we put together this issue of *Education Northwest Magazine*. Our search for established (and hopefully, effective) full-service community school programs in the Northwest region did not turn up a lot of candidates, especially outside the region's two largest urban communities, Seattle and Portland.

This does not mean, however, that the kinds of programs and services typically included in a community school are not being implemented in schools throughout the Pacific Northwest. Ron Hertel, director of the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's Readiness to Learn program is not alone when he says, "I see the full-service community school idea on a continuum. I don't know if there's a point where you say, 'OK, as of today, because you've done these things, you are now a full-service school.'"

What we offer in this issue is a sampling of schools and district from across our region that are moving along that continuum. The Multnomah County, Oregon, Schools Uniting Neighborhoods program (see page 20) is one of the most well-established community school programs in the country. Other stories here represent a districtwide effort to coordinate homeless services in Idaho; a high-poverty Tacoma, Washington, elementary school that has used multiple resources to address students' readiness to learn; an Alaska Title I elementary school that has created a schoolwide climate of respect by focusing on students' social-emotional needs; and a rural Oregon middle school that is in the early stages of implementing a full-scale community school program.

All of these stories profile schools and districts that could have collapsed under the weight of the many social problems that surround them every day, but didn't. Instead, they have pulled together, formed partnerships, and are doing everything they can to provide the best combination of academics and social services to the most at-risk children and families. That's what full-service community schools are all about. And that's why they may become the defining education reform of a decade that has just begun, but already feels a little overwhelming.

—Bracken Reed, Bracken.Reed@educationnorthwest.org

A School for the Whole Community

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Full-Service Community Schools

An Overview

“A COMMUNITY SCHOOL IS A PUBLIC SCHOOL THAT COMBINES THE BEST EDUCATIONAL PRACTICES WITH A WIDE RANGE OF IN-HOUSE HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES to ensure that children are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to learn,” as defined by the Children’s Aid Society in New York City.

The community school concept in America goes back at least 100 years, to the pioneering work of John Dewey and Jane Addams, who believed that schools should serve as the center for a comprehensive network of social services, in addition to providing academics. The idea has developed over time, and most proponents now consider a true community school one in which a school’s hours of operation are stretched to include before-school, after-school, weekend, and summer activities and services for both children and parents.

This leaves a lot of room for flexibility, and in practice few community schools look exactly alike. For example, some include on-site dental and/or health clinics, but many do not. Some have after-school programs, others do not. It is possible that with greater federal support many community schools would begin to look more similar, but flexibility and responsiveness to local needs are hallmarks of this approach.

Although full-service community schools have been around for several decades, the concept is gaining new currency under the Obama administration’s watch. For example, the responsibilities and requirements spelled out in the U.S. Department of Education’s recent four School Improvement Grant school

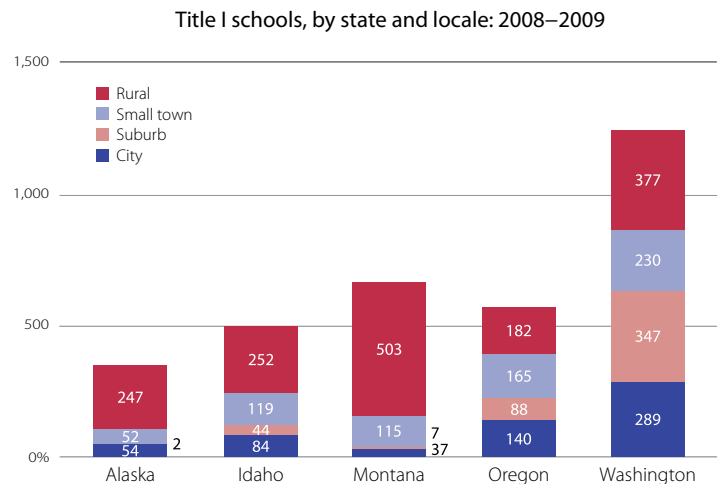
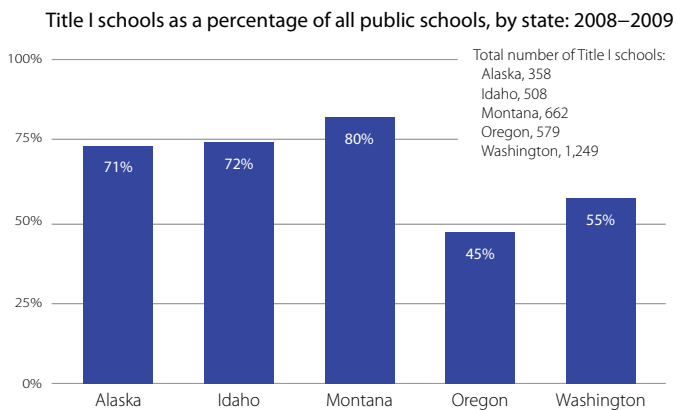
intervention models include two of the features of full-service schools: increased learning time and social-emotional and community-oriented services and supports. As Secretary of Education Arne Duncan has said, “If we are to put an end to stubborn cycles of poverty and social failure, and put our country on track for long-term economic prosperity, we must address the needs of children who have long been ignored and marginalized in chronically low-achieving schools.” Tending to the whole child is clearly part of that mission.

Another sign of growing support is the developing research base for community schools both in the U.S. and in England, where all 23,000 public schools will become community schools by the end of 2010.

“The empirical evidence we have says extended schools—community schools—work,” former British Prime Minister Tony Blair said last November at a conference in Washington, D.C., organized by the Center for American Progress. “What matters to those children is not simply what happens from nine o’clock in the morning until three in the afternoon. That is absolutely clear. In other words the school should become ... a center for the support and nurture of the future generation, not simply for education in the narrow sense, and a hub for the whole of the community.”

Last fall, the Center for American Progress published a study by researcher Saba Bireda that reviewed the national research and compared community schools in St. Paul, Minnesota, New York, Chicago, and England.

“The available research ... does show that sites across the



country are successful at overcoming poverty-related challenges to learning,” wrote Bireda. “For example, the COMPASS program at Central Elementary School in the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania saw an increase in the number of third-grade students scoring ‘proficient’ and above on state assessments from 26–54 percent in reading and from 40–66 percent in math between 2006 and 2008. Numerous examples like this can be found across the country.”

Much of the current federal support for community schools can be attributed to Secretary Duncan. During his tenure as superintendent of the Chicago Public Schools, Duncan pushed for all 613 schools in the district to adopt the community school model. Now Duncan is poised to take that philosophy national.

“We have a lot of hope with Secretary Duncan leading education that there will be more recognition that schools can be a place where children and families can access an array of services,” says Peggy Samolinski, director of the SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) community school program in Portland, Oregon. “That is a beacon of hope for the future.”

Some federal funding is already in place, and more is on its way. President Obama included \$10 million in competitive grants for community schools in his 2010 budget. The February 8, 2010, *Federal Register* includes a notice of proposed priorities and requirements for these grants, and cites a strong preference for programs using “strategies that support turning around [the] persistently lowest-achieving schools.”

In Congress, meanwhile, House Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Nebraska Democratic Senator Ben Nelson have joined

forces to propose a five-year \$200 million community schools program. And more immediately, states have included community schools—as Oregon has done—in applications to the federal Race to the Top program. President Obama has requested continued funding in 2011 for that program, to the tune of \$1.35 billion.

With a growing research base, the support of the federal government, and major media attention for community school programs such as Geoffrey Canada’s Harlem Children’s Zone, this may be the best opportunity yet for the community schools movement to catch on. In the Pacific Northwest, as elsewhere, there is no denying the need. The growing number of high poverty schools in the region—as measured by Title I qualification (see graphs)—cuts across both urban and rural areas and presents a major challenge for all Northwest region states.

As author and independent researcher Joy Dryfoos—perhaps the most avid supporter of full-service schools during the past two decades—wrote in 2008, “Those concerned with the improvement of education outcomes and the reduction of poverty would do well to take an interest in community schools.” This may be the year that the century-old idea finally hits the mainstream. ■



Helping Hands, Kind Hearts



Respect joins reading, writing, and arithmetic as a priority subject at a Title I school in Alaska.

Story by RHONDA BARTON
Photos by LISA WARDLE

ANCHORAGE, Alaska—On a chilly October morning the sun has yet to rise, but already the cafeteria at Russian Jack Elementary is buzzing with activity. The long tables are filled with youngsters gobbling up waffle sticks, Cheerios, muffins, and milk. Physical education teacher Scott Armstrong runs interference. His workday started even earlier than breakfast duty: Today he showed up at the school bus stop to accompany students on their ride in from two neighborhood trailer courts.

That isn't part of his job description, but it hints at what makes Russian Jack an exceptional school. "The whole idea is to let kids know we're watching them and we do care," says the youthful Armstrong. "If they can have a good bus ride from home to school it's a great start to the day. Here at school they can get breakfast and then go right into learning."

The Title I East Anchorage school serves more than 400 children, from pre-kindergarten to fifth grade. Some are recent arrivals from Native villages or from distant countries. Others are rooted in the community but struggle with generational poverty. All are treated with an extra dose of kindness and respect by a staff that values social-emotional learning as much as academics.

Keeping that balance is a challenge, admits Principal Sharon Story, who describes her job as putting "people first, paper second." The school failed to make adequate yearly progress (AYP) for the past two years and is now in Level 2 improvement status. Story points out that that's not as discouraging as it sounds. Of the 23 Title I elementary schools in the Anchorage School District, Russian Jack is the only one that has to make AYP in all 31 categories for all subgroups of students. Despite that challenge, "students with disabilities" is the only subgroup for which the school didn't meet AYP.

Because of the school's commitment to social-emotional development, Story has chosen to invest Title I funds in a social skills tutor and a family/school coordinator, as well as literacy and math specialists. "We take care of our children

because they are part of the Russian Jack family," says Story. "Working together with parents, many of whom struggle to survive from day to day, we make it a priority to give each child a safe and caring learning environment." From the 8:30 a.m. breakfast until after-school activities wrap up at 5:30 p.m., students are cloaked in that care.

After the Morning Bell

A typical day at Russian Jack begins with morning announcements on the closed-circuit television system. Six second-graders arrange themselves in front of the camera. "Wipe your noses and get your wiggles out," advises Sara Cross, their teacher. After leading the Pledge of Allegiance, the mini-broadcasters show off the reflective stripes that all students will get to put on their backpack straps, and then they share reminders about upcoming activities. The brief program ends with an enthusiastic group recitation of the school's motto: "Let's all remember to be respectful, responsible, safe, and kind!"

The announcements segue into morning circle, a ritual throughout the school's three wings. In Judi Westfall's first-grade classroom about 20 students settle on the carpet and tell a variation on knock-knock jokes. Everyone in turn answers the question, "Who's there?" with their first and last names, accompanied by a sturdy handshake and a smile for their neighbor. Saying their names out loud helps students feel acknowledged and affirmed.

The morning circle is part of the "Connected and Respected" curriculum that all Russian Jack teachers are trained in, though each puts an individual stamp on the practice. Teachers in upper-level grades often tie the activity into a content-area lesson. For example, fifth-graders studying natural disasters might take turns commenting on which type of event interests them the most. Social Skills Tutor Susan Conlin introduced the circles as one tool to integrate social-emotional learning into the school day. "All of us might arrive at school with different agendas," she remarks. "Some

Manners Café is a daily ritual where kids practice polite conversation.





Parents and siblings flock to Family Nights throughout the year, held to encourage adults to support their children's learning at home.

of us might have had a rough morning and be jangled, excitable. This is a way to center people and acknowledge and build community, which flows into the learning really gently." Conlin pauses. "A lot of what we do is about gentleness ... the world is not an easy place."

Dining at the Manners Café

Perhaps Conlin's most unusual way to encourage civility among students is the Manners Café, a five-year tradition at Russian Jack. A round table with a cheerful tablecloth, brightly colored napkins, and a floral centerpiece is positioned just outside the cafeteria. Each day five or six students are chosen to carry their trays out to the cozy spot and join Conlin for a sociable lunch. If a student is new to the school, he or she will be invited right away—just one way the school welcomes a highly transient population. By the time the school year ends, every child will have enjoyed at least one visit to the café.

As Conlin passes out the napkins—reminding her six-year-old lunch companions they can tuck them into their shirts or on lay them on their laps—she asks, "Can I have some manners words here?" Alexia pipes up with "thank you." Jarel says the folded napkin reminds him of a boat, which prompts Conlin to ask if anyone at the table has been in a boat. Jarel recounts a boat ride in his native

country of Laos, while Alexia offers that she's ridden in an airplane.

As the guests dig into chicken nuggets and rice, Conlin poses an intriguing question: "If you could catch a falling star, what would you do with it?" Xavier replies that he'd "stick it on the wall," while the others say they'd place it on top of the television, in a star collection, or in a case "where it wouldn't get damaged." That leads Conlin to ask, "If the star were an award, what would you get it for?" Each child considers his or her noteworthy characteristics. For Justice, it would be "for working my best." Jarel thinks he might deserve a star for playing nicely in the park, and Alexia proudly states that she "runs fast." When Xavier has trouble coming up with something that's star-worthy, the others point out that he's good at helping his friends. He smiles in agreement.

Conlin explains that the point of Manners Café is to provide students with an opportunity to play with the natural give-and-take of conversation without having to raise their hand. Also, it's a time when children can stretch their imaginations and have their opinions valued. "It's lovely to hear what they're thinking and how they're feeling," says Conlin. "Sometimes if two kids are in conflict I'll invite them to Manners Café

because when you break bread with someone it's somehow easier to solve a problem. Or, if a child is crying after recess or seems sad, I can use it as a teachable moment. It surprises me that in the scope of a day that's so packed with mandatory things, the humanity of this experience is so pure and spontaneous—and that gives me a lot of hope."

Reaching Out to Parents

Ministering to the practical needs of students and their families is the job of Family Resource Coordinator Marti Guzman. She shows off the emergency pantry stocked with cans of beef stew and other staples, partly purchased with the profits from a snack bar in the faculty lounge. Stacked nearby are new packages of donated underwear and bins of hand-me-down jackets, snow pants, and sweatshirts. A shower and a washer-dryer also share the space, available if a child lacks access to those amenities outside of school.

Guzman spends the bulk of her time "getting to know everybody and letting them know I'm available." That might translate into showing a family the location of the closest food bank, letting parents use her office computer to search for work, doing a "drive-by" to check that things are in order at home, helping a homeless mother apply for Section 8 housing, or making sure that new arrivals to Russian Jack settle in comfortably and have all the necessary school supplies. For families in crisis, Guzman stands ready "to help them pick up the pieces."

The wife of a career military man, Guzman knows what it's like to move around a lot. "I always remembered my kids' schools where somebody looked me in the eye and smiled and said, 'Hi, you're new. What can I do for you?' I felt welcome." In a school with a greater than 28 percent mobility rate, extending a welcome—and checking in with every new student on his or her first day—can go a long way.

Together with other staff members Guzman works to educate parents about their partnership roles in helping children thrive. "A lot of families believe that



Principal Sharon Story plays Mrs. Claus, handing out gifts to all students. The holiday treats and prizes at Family Nights are donated by community partners such as Alyska Pipeline.

I send them to school and [the school] will take care of everything. We say, ‘nope—you’re part of it,’” says Guzman. “Every time we meet with parents they learn a little more about how their actions impact their child’s education just as much as ours do, whether it’s putting them to bed at 9 instead of 10, or reading

them a book instead of letting them play video games.”

Parent education is also a focus for Title I Specialists Shannon Donley and Terry Loper. The pair organized a recent family math night, which attracted more than 300 people. Guzman provided dinner, while Donley and Loper orchestrated games and activities to build on the school’s Everyday Math curriculum. The stations were run by teaching staff, who stayed late to help. Parents were sent away with all the manipulatives and directions needed to continue the learning at home. A similar event aimed at literacy will be held in the spring. In between, parents are invited to small workshops that show them what to expect when homework comes home and how to help their children. Toward the end of the year, the emphasis switches to strategies to help children during the summer. “We provide breakfast at the workshops to encourage parents to come,” says Donley, “and give them information on public libraries and other activities to take advantage of when school is out.”

While their main job is to serve as a resource in the content areas of math and reading, the Title I specialists also have a strong connection to the school’s mission of nurturing social-emotional skills. “It’s a huge piece for us,” says Donley. “If you don’t have social-emotional learning in place or respect for each other, you can’t get any teaching done.” Loper adds, “I think we’re all on the same page. So, any student going into any classroom will hear the exact same language. You can stop any child in the hallway and ask her what our motto is here at Russian Jack and she’ll tell you ‘our school is respectful, responsible, safe, and kind.’”

Daily Kindness

That kindness plays out in a number of ways, big and small. Stroll down the entry corridor and you’ll come across a colorful display of “Kids’ Choice” awards dangling from clothespins. Each week, students nominate both their peers and staff members for recognition. A typical plaudit is from Berta to Marie: “She makes me feel happy when

I feel sad.” Down the hall, Sara Cross’s second-graders are practicing making compliments—about members of the class or their families—in a free association exercise. Meanwhile, in the full-day kindergarten, Monica Plantikow Dudley keeps a red bucket handy. “If a student sees someone doing an act of kindness, they take a glass heart from this pile and put it in the bucket. When the bucket is full, we take them all out and have a celebration,” she explains. The idea comes from Carol McCloud’s book *Have You Filled a Bucket Today?*, which serves as “a guide to daily happiness for kids.”

“Kind” is also an adjective the adults here use in describing each other. “That’s why we’re at this school and why we stay here,” says Guzman. “If I have a problem, I know there’s at least a dozen staff members I could go to—not just one or two people—who would understand me. Everybody at this school would have my back and help me if I were having a tough time.”

Principal Story says that a caring culture is part of what attracted her to the school as a principal intern almost a decade ago. Now in her sixth year at the helm, she observes that kids believe what they see. “When a school clearly teaches by example that self-control, self-reliance, and self-esteem anchored in achievement are the means to success, then the school’s own success inspires discipline, order, and confidence in its students,” she says. Story admits it’s hard work sustaining that vision: “We have a truly amazing staff that knows its work is about transforming children’s lives every day. And I support them in whatever way they choose, as long as it improves children’s academic and social achievement.”

A Refuge Into the Night

For more than a quarter of Russian Jack students, school doesn’t end when the afternoon bell rings at 3:30 p.m. The school offers a multitude of after-school programs such as math tutoring and geography and book clubs. The On Target Program, an extension of the Southcentral Counseling Foundation, supports activities for a group of high-risk students,

while Campfire cares for another group.

A 21st Century Community Learning Center, funded by state and federal grants, welcomes almost 100 students who need a little extra attention to attain grade-level competency. A teen aide and nine teachers—primarily drawn from the staff roster—provide homework help and build on academic interventions that students receive during the normal school day, such as the Lexia reading support computer program. There's also time to expose kids to new experiences, such as Nordic skiing, scouting, and Junior Achievement.

Five times a year Center Director Linda Wetherby and the school's Title I staff invite the families of students to participate in special evening programs. While the focus is often academic,

tonight it's a glimpse into Irish culture. Students who hail from all corners of the globe have been practicing Irish step dances, and their families will also have the chance to attempt a traditional céili or two and to sample special foods such as shepherd's pie from Wetherby's own kitchen. It may seem strange to introduce the traditions of the Emerald Isle to an audience ranging from Filipinos to Samoans, Laotians, Kenyans, Hmong, Koreans, Vietnamese, and Alaska Natives. However, it makes perfect sense when seen as part of Russian Jack's emphasis on honoring others.

All of the after-school programs are seen as an extension of the school day, where everyone follows the same expectations about respect, responsibility, safety, and kindness. Wetherby speaks

for the whole staff when she talks about the desire to help children embrace all the possibilities the world holds. "We have the opportunity to work with kids in a way that values what they have, but helps them realize there are other things out there they can take advantage of," she says.

As the night grows darker Russian Jack still hums with activity. Eventually Wetherby and other staff members will bid students and their parents and siblings goodbye. Principal Story will close her office door and head toward home. The school will finally grow silent, but it will still remain a beacon of light to a community that sometimes struggles to find its way. ■

Thanks to the Rotary Club, each student went home with a gift at winter break.



Creating a Safety Net

Doing the Hard Work To End Homelessness



Students fill the hall at Borah Elementary School, a Coeur d'Alene elementary school with many high-needs students—and many programs and resources to help.

A Northern Idaho resort community comes together to fight homelessness.

Story by JACQUELINE RAPHAEL
Photos by SHAWN GUST



COEUR d'ALENE, Idaho—Renee and John (not their real names) may look and act like ordinary high school freshmen, but their path to Coeur d'Alene School District, in scenic Northern Idaho, has been anything but typical. At 17 and 18, respectively, they are the oldest students in their classes, which doesn't earn them any bragging rights with their peers. One has spent time in a psychiatric ward, the other in juvenile detention, and neither has attended school much in the past three years. They've slept under bridges, on patches of grass, and over a hospital air vent to keep warm in the winter. Just getting to Coeur d'Alene from Spokane was a challenge: The trip took them more than 15 hours. A car ride would have taken just 40 minutes.

Renee lives by the motto, “Everyone is fighting some kind of battle.” She struggles with anxiety attacks and says it’s sad, but she can hardly remember her sister’s name. With short vermilion-dyed hair, delicate features, and a stainless steel ball chain choker holding a pendant against her neck, Renee looks casually rebellious. “I’ve always kind of gotten through my problems on my own,” she says. That includes fending off harassment from other students. When a classmate “sets off a trigger, something that would make me easily upset or bring up flashbacks, I generally try and let that person know,” she says. “I feel it’s better for people to know certain things about the situation I’ve been through so that they don’t upset me.”

John, who is originally from Texas, has had his own problems with other students, but he stands up for Renee as he would for a younger sister. Sporting a scruffy red goatee and a single gold earring, he looks more kind than tough. He keeps to himself a lot and says he gets “angsty” wondering what people think of him. “Are they my friend or my enemy?” he asks.

Shelly Blank has been teaching in Coeur d’Alene for nine years.



Renee and John have each met their share of enemies in their short lives. When they first met on the streets in Spokane, they were wary, but eventually they gravitated toward each other. When they both decided to head for Coeur d’Alene three months ago, an “unbreakable bond” was forged.

They came to Coeur d’Alene for a fresh start, but they faced numerous challenges to becoming high school students. Medical benefits and special education services, for example, were only available with parental permission, and Idaho law requires six months’ residency before waivers and flexibility are available—too much time to wait. Additionally, homeless teenagers are often difficult to place in housing. Luckily, Renee and John had landed in the right place at the right time.

Facing Hard Times

Renee and John are two relatively young members of the homeless population found in Coeur d’Alene. To meet the needs of school-age children and their families, the city and the school district have developed creative ways to work together.

As early as 1991, a state-commissioned study warned that Idaho needed more supports for affordable housing and home ownership, especially in tourist communities such as Coeur d’Alene, known for its year-round recreation and world-class resorts. Housing assistance would help keep pace with expected economic growth and counter the wealthy out-of-state buyers driving up property values. Otherwise, “slums and pockets of homelessness” would result, according to *The Spokesman Review*.

Indeed, particularly at the height of the economic boom, real estate prices skyrocketed in Coeur d’Alene, as did rents. The average rent for a single-bedroom apartment rose above \$700 a month, far more than many service industry workers and their families could afford. At that time, the main challenge was the lack of affordable housing. But soon after, with the onset of the recession, low-income earners faced myriad problems all at once. A larger cross-section of individuals and their families—and more of them—were unable to afford housing. Many slept in campgrounds in the vast surrounding forests, or tucked away in city corners, hidden from view.

Though cold, Coeur d’Alene is “no mecca for the homeless,” says City Councilor Mike Kennedy, the upward trend continues, with a nearly 30 percent increase in homelessness across Northern Idaho between 2008 and 2009. Kootenai County, of which Coeur d’Alene is the county seat, carries the second-largest homeless population in the state.

“The bulk of the homeless we’re dealing with now have jobs,” says North Idaho St. Vincent de Paul Executive Director Jeff Conroy. “They’re working at fast food chains and small retail shops.”

And 237 of their children are enrolled in the Coeur d’Alene school system. In presentations throughout the city, Kennedy says, this was the detail that caused his audiences to gasp. “You’re kidding me,” people would say. “We have 237 homeless kids *here*, in Coeur d’Alene?”

Building a Safety Net

The concept of full-service community schools has taken hold more fully in urban areas, particularly on the East Coast, where school districts may find it easier to partner with existing community-based networks. Small, rural communities, on the other hand, don't usually provide the same level of coordinated service.

But Coeur d'Alene has mobilized to meet its challenge. In 2008, the city brought community leaders together to create and carry out a 10-year plan to end homelessness. The previous year, Kennedy and others had met with Philip Mangano, former executive director of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, and others involved in efforts across the nation to end homelessness.

To address the cross-cutting nature of homelessness, the Coeur d'Alene effort involves multiple systems, including transportation, housing, employment, medicine, law enforcement, and schools.

"Once we put our weight behind the effort and said we have the political will to address this issue, lots of people showed up to respond to the call to action," says Kennedy. Volunteers came from nonprofits, community agencies, industries (including many from real estate agencies), and religious leaders. The resulting plan encompasses Coeur d'Alene and the cities of Post Falls and Hayden, the second- and third-largest cities in Kootenai County, as well as their school districts.

James Curb, the district's homeless liaison and extended-day program coordinator, is at the center of this activity, working closely with community outreach service providers and donors to provide a safety net for students and their families. A counselor by training, Curb spends only part of his work week in district office buildings; much of the time, he is traveling to homeless shelters, court rooms, and community agencies, especially the new H.E.L.P. (Helping Empower Local People) Center, the state's first one-stop service agency for the homeless, which opened last July. Curb and others meet individually with every homeless or precariously housed family with school-age children and refer them to a wide variety of services available in the region, including medical and mental health services, child care, employment services and support, and free legal consultations and information. Churches, along with shelters, provide temporary housing or the funds to rent. There is even transportation assistance so that family members can get to the various resources. Jill Hill, the district's transportation director, ensures that homeless students maintain attendance at their school of origin—even when they've moved to a neighboring city.

Once a family or individual is referred for services, various district and school staff check progress regularly. "It's decentralized," explains Curb. "No one person is responsible. There's always someone who makes it work. It might be a counselor, a nurse, a teacher, or a secretary who serves as an advocate for that family. Whoever has that relationship becomes the eyes on that family, to make sure they don't slip through the cracks." Individuals in this web of watchful caregivers distributed throughout the district "step up to the plate" to make sure



Borah Elementary School Principal Bob Shamberg discusses the commitment of his staff to helping children in any way possible.

struggling students and families receive the help they need.

Curb's work for the district includes both formal and informal facets. Many of his duties relate to specific federal grants and programs, most especially the after-school and homeless education programs. However, Curb's many other self-assigned tasks find him developing the network of individuals and programs throughout the community who find ways to help those in need. Some of Curb's contacts are well known, such as those affiliated with the Salvation Army and its 123,000 square-foot Kroc Community Center in Coeur d'Alene, or the Dirne Health Centers. But most often Curb makes other, more informal connections, such as when he learns of a teacher and service club that want to start a shoe drive, which sparked a citywide "Save Our Soles" campaign, collecting more than 700 pairs of shoes to be redistributed to homeless youth and underprivileged families. By personally connecting individuals, programs, and resources, Curb helps fill in gaps and strengthen the safety net. Although he's shy about taking credit, Curb's awareness of every "go-to" person in town who can lend a hand, and every far-flung potential resource, ensures that the district accomplishes much more for homeless or near-homeless youth and children than what is required by federal law—essentially, the same free and appropriate public education provided to other students.

The district's formal programs, including the CDA4Kids extended-day program for underprivileged youth, started out small several years ago, serving two schools through a federal 21st Century Community Learning Center Program. But the programs were strategically placed, according to Frances Huffman, the district's Director of Special Services, to meet the specific needs of that school neighborhood and to become self-sustaining once the federal funds run out. Over the course of the grant, the number of participating schools currently offering

extended-day programs to the district's lowest socioeconomic schools has grown from two to six.

Nowhere is the grassroots growth of programs more evident than at Borah Elementary School, where Curb started out as a counselor seven years ago. At one of the city's most needy neighborhood schools, the district's approach has helped put families back on their feet.

Staying Committed for the Long Term

At the end of 2004, Nancy Keillor and her sons were living at a women's shelter in Coeur d'Alene. "I'd lost my job and my car," she says, "but I was working at staying sober." She started participating in St. Vincent de Paul's transitional housing program, which required that she hold a job and pay a percentage of her own rent. Parenting classes were required, and she had to abide by a curfew. "The program was amazing," she recalls. "No matter what you needed, they found a way to help. If you'd been through the court systems and had lost your driver's license, they helped you get work and then pay for the license over time. They helped stop the cycle of poverty that keeps people stuck and outside the system."

In May 2009 Keillor graduated from North Idaho College and started working at a family practice as a medical records technician. In November of that same year she married a man she met at St. Vincent's who had faced down a drug addiction that had landed him in prison. The couple recently finished a three-year program with Habitat for Humanity, earning a two-bedroom home of their own in Post Falls, Idaho, where Keillor's boys are doing well in school.

Keillor remembers that everything started to improve for her family when she met with Borah Elementary School Principal Bob Shamberg in 2004. She told him that her 25-year alcohol problem meant she hadn't enforced good study habits with her boys, and that they were well behind academically. The family was still living in a homeless shelter. Keillor said she wanted help for her sons. Shamberg told her unequivocally that he would arrange to have the school bus stop near the shelter and bring her sons to school. At Borah, teachers took a special interest in her boys. "They saw I was trying to turn my life around," says Keillor. "They gave the boys extra help and anything else they needed, including school supplies, winter boots, even haircuts." Her eldest boy caught up so quickly in reading that he was placed in an on-grade level class, and her younger

son overcame his math difficulties. It was a point of considerable pride for Keillor when that same son, along with seven other students, won a mountain bike, donated by a community business, for his perfect attendance in the fifth grade. But it also showed her what Coeur d'Alene is all about: "For the community to come together to donate these rewards says it all."

Although no one school in Coeur d'Alene meets the technical definition of a full-service community school, Borah, with over 70 percent of its students eligible for free or reduced-price lunch, probably comes the closest. For many of its students, Borah is a "home away from home." Indeed, for many the school day is long, starting with early morning reading programs and ending at five in the after-school math and homework programs. Students receive breakfast, lunch, and after-school snacks. For these students, Borah may be the most stable force in their lives. The entire building feels safe and homey, full of adults who wave and greet the children in the halls.

"Remember kindness," says second-grade teacher Dianne Pratt to a boy who nearly topples a female student while running down the hall. "Kindness" is this month's character trait, to be studied and practiced in every classroom at the school.

In a first-grade classroom, behind the teacher's desk, is a hot oil fryer carefully supervised by a Hispanic parent volunteer. The smells of fried dough are intoxicating, but the students keep working busily under the guidance of several paraprofessionals as the teacher provides one-on-one attention to a young boy at his desk.

Teachers need to have a heart for this kind of work to teach at schools such as Borah, according to Pratt. "There's no preparing for this. Some of these students have watched their fathers get arrested. For some of them, Christmas and other holidays

Homeless Liaison and Extended-Day Program Coordinator James Curb listens to City Council Member Mike Kennedy discuss Coeur d'Alene's 10-year plan to end homelessness.



are not times of relaxation and joy.

“We’re a bunch of problem solvers,” Pratt continues. “We fill in gaps. In reading, for example, our students might have the ability but lack the background knowledge and vocabulary that would have been developed at home in different kinds of families.” Indeed, Shamberg, who was at Borah for 7 years and has been in the district for 17, remembers being surprised several years ago to learn that most of the students had never been to the city park down by the lake, about a mile and a half from the school.

Borah’s special programs for disadvantaged youth were started more than 10 years ago by teachers who wanted to do more for their neediest students. At first the teachers conducted the programs on a volunteer basis. Eventually, the Wake Up and Read, Homework House, and Math Motivator programs were supported through the district’s 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, awarded in 2005. In these programs, teachers and paraprofessionals combine academics with students’ personal needs, however small. Staff members might help a student brush or braid her hair. They might do laundry or schedule an appointment with a school nurse or a counselor.

“Even beyond the many programs we have now, I’m always surprised at who steps up if, say, a parent needs gas money, a job, a coat, or Christmas assistance,” says Shamberg. “There’s a network out there, so 9 times out of 10, the need is filled.” As evidence of their extraordinary commitment, Shamberg cites the fact that staff chose to give up some of their prep time to start the school day 15 minutes early. With the help of Curb and others at the district level, a seamless web of coordinated services ensures that needy students and their families are put in touch with community agencies ready to help.

Despite the challenges facing its students, Borah regularly scores as well or better than other elementary schools in Coeur d’Alene. Disciplinary problems are minimal, and students across the building use a common language to deal with difficult feelings and interpersonal conflicts.

The Hard Work Continues

Coeur d’Alene didn’t set out to be a leader in providing wrap-around services to homeless and other disadvantaged students and families. Indeed, the hard work has just begun. Many of the programs currently in place have not been formally institutionalized across the district. However, the community’s 10-year plan to end homelessness has unified efforts throughout the county. “Instead of having a bunch of outreach programs for the needy, we now have a comprehensive network of service providers working to identify and address needs and ultimately end homelessness,” says Curb. Through grassroots volunteerism and a willingness to stay connected, the loosely knit safety net has slowly tightened, getting stronger and more seamless.

That coordination of services recently helped the North Idaho St. Vincent de Paul, in Coeur d’Alene, receive the largest chunk of stimulus money in the state under the federal Homeless Prevention and Rapid Rehousing program. The organization was awarded \$854,354 to address homelessness in the five counties

of Northern Idaho.

“And we’re just getting started,” says Curb, who is putting the finishing touches on an application for a second 21st Century Community Learning Center grant to provide more extended-day programming throughout the district.

The hard work also isn’t finished for Renee and John, students who could easily have fallen through the cracks long ago. John continues to struggle: He was recently suspended from school for fighting, and the district is working to address his problems and get him back on track. Meanwhile, Renee—with a scholarship to music school waiting for her after she graduates—was getting A’s and B’s in her classes until recently, when she became homeless again.

“We’re making sure she gets her medical benefits in Washington state, where she’s eligible,” says Curb. “Then we’re going to try to find her a home and make sure she stays enrolled in high school so she gets those credits and moves forward toward her diploma.”

While other districts might have written these two troubled students off as a lost cause, Coeur d’Alene continues to do everything it can for them. That commitment is a hallmark of the district, and continues to give hope and a second chance to students and families who might otherwise be left out in the cold. ■



Dianne Pratt, a second-grade teacher, says staff at Borah recognized they needed to do more for their students.

Here Comes the SUN

Lightening the Load for Poor Students and Families

Story by HELEN SILVIS
Photos by SARAH GIFFROW

PORTLAND, Oregon—In a brightly lit classroom, at 5 p.m. on a chilly January afternoon, an excited band of fifth- and sixth-graders are learning how to operate a video camera. Just across the hall in the gym, volunteer dads are teaching two teams of aspiring basketball players how to dribble, pass, and shoot. Peek through another classroom window and you see a ballet class—10 small bodies standing tall with heads held high.

Welcome to Humboldt School, the latest addition to Multnomah County's innovative SUN community school initiative. Short for Schools Uniting Neighborhoods, SUN schools are full-service community schools, which offer an extended school day and access to social services via neighborhood schools. In 2009, the SUN school program served 14,773 K–12 students in 53 schools—most of them in high-poverty neighborhoods.

Humboldt's after-school array includes free classes in everything from art, music, and dance to sports, science, and computing. Class teachers are paid to hold tutoring and homework clubs.

This winter term, 175 members of the school's 275-strong student body have enrolled in the after-school program.

"It's something I truly believe in," says Willie Poinsette, the school principal. "It helps us level the playing field. Our kids may come from homes where they can't afford to take classes in piano, art, hip-hop, chess—the list goes on," says Poinsette. "Being able to offer this program gives them access to the arts that they wouldn't ordinarily have. And on the academic side, they have tutoring and help with their homework. It all helps keep them hooked into school."

Part of a nationwide community schools movement that places schools at the center of the social services safety net, SUN aims to help low-income students succeed in school and life, and their parents to become self-sufficient. Healthy breakfasts, substantial suppers, and social services run alongside rigorous academic programs.

"Kids come to school with a lot of baggage," says Peggy Samolinski, who administers the program for Multnomah County. "If they are hungry they don't learn well. If they haven't slept well they can't pay attention. If there is

domestic violence in the home, they're disturbed by that. If they are worried about their mother, if they are sleeping in their car, if someone is abusing drugs or alcohol—all those things are the baggage that kids bring to school. SUN tries to be the hub for those kids, either delivering or brokering services to meet these many needs."

Partnerships Are Essential

Multnomah County's \$4 million SUN school program is just one of seven programs in the \$27.2 million SUN Service System that serves children and families across the county. The county pays the lion's share of the funding, supplemented by significant contributions from the City of Portland, six school districts, dozens of nonprofits and businesses, and a federal 21st Century Community Learning Center grant.

"The SUN program is our largest anti-poverty initiative," explains Multnomah County Chair Ted Wheeler. "People ask me 'Why is the county involved with education? That's a state responsibility.' My answer is: 'No, it is all of our responsibility. As an anti-poverty agency we have a vested interest in keeping kids in school.

SUN after school sports teams and arts programs capture children's enthusiasm and hook them into school, says Humboldt School's principal Willie Poinette. "It allows us to develop the whole child," she says.





The nonprofit Chess For Success runs chess clubs in 87 schools around greater Portland and in Southwest Washington. Students can compete in regional and state tournaments.

We want families to be success-generating units, and this is the most cost-effective way to do that.”

Every SUN school is different, forming its activities in response to the specific needs of its student body, but all have a full-time paid site coordinator and a common core of services: breakfast and supper, an extended school day, summer programming, fun after-school activities, homework support, tutoring, and health services. The SUN site coordinator works closely with the school principal and other school personnel to create programming for that school.

SUN schools also run classes for parents—citizenship or adult English as a Second Language classes, for example. Many also act as community centers holding craft nights, weatherization workshops, and more.

SUN’s goals are ambitious: to provide health and social services to disadvantaged children, to increase educational achievement, to strengthen links between families and schools, to promote a wide range of school-community partnerships, and to eliminate the achievement gap that mires poor and minority children in poverty.

Partnerships with outside agencies help SUN schools meet those goals. SUN schools refer families to health providers and for food stamps. They refer at-risk teens and homeless families to case management programs. They broker help with energy and rent assistance, mental health services, and drug and alcohol

treatment. One SUN program supports gay, lesbian, and transgendered teens. More than 350 nonprofit and business partners and 2,100 volunteers help make SUN successful.

“The model in Multnomah County is very strong,” says Shital Shah, a research associate with the Coalition for Community Schools at the nonprofit Institute of Educational Leadership. “It’s very much a partnership-driven strategy and has a big family and community engagement component, which I think is very important.”

Each SUN school is managed by one

Research Earns SUN Political Support

In 2004, some Multnomah County commissioners, facing tough fiscal decisions, questioned the value of the SUN Service System. “They wanted to know, was it something with real relevance or was it just fluff?” says Peggy Samolinski, who coordinates the \$27 million program. “They looked at what we were doing and said: ‘It’s a sewing club. What can that possibly have to do with anything, and how can we be funding that, when we have so many other problems in our community?’”

Program administrators pointed to a 2003 Annie E. Casey Foundation report that praised SUN schools’ “impact, influence, and leverage.” The foundation had helped seed the SUN program with \$575,000 over five years. Casey program researchers understood how deprivation hurts children physically, emotionally, and academically. SUN schools seemed to offer a practical solution. Still missing, however, was hard educational data.

To provide that data, administrators commissioned Education Northwest (formerly the Northwest Regional Educational Laboratory), to independently evaluate the SUN program. The report, published in January 2006, described a program exceeding its goals in service delivery, and successfully targeting academic enrichment and social services to the county’s most disadvantaged students. Calling the results “promising,” the report found that 80 percent of SUN-involved students had improved their test scores in reading. In math, 75 percent had improved. More than 90 percent of the families receiving case-management services reported their problems were being addressed, with 70 percent meeting almost all their case goals.

Samolinski says the report consolidated community support for the initiative. “It gave us the credibility we needed to build the foundation and the ongoing support with our local politicians,” she says.

of 10 nonprofit human services contractors. They include IRCO, an immigrant and refugee support agency and El Programa Hispano, which works with Latino families. Self Enhancement Inc. (SEI), an education nonprofit with a strong track record and roots in Portland’s African American community, manages six K–12 SUN schools, including Humboldt.

Site Coordinator Is Crucial

Natalie Christiansen works from 10 a.m. to 6:30 p.m., four days a week as Humboldt School’s SUN site coordinator. A Multnomah University graduate, Christiansen hoped to land a job in public relations. But, while working with children at an after-school club she discovered her passion. Four schools later, Christiansen is a seasoned after-school program manager.

“I love it,” she says, “You have a role somewhere in between a mentor and a teacher, so you get to do a bit of both. It’s fun, and the parents really appreciate it.”

Ably supported by Stephanie Harvey, a part-time program assistant with family connections to the school, Christiansen organizes and schedules classes and tutoring, builds relationships with

parents and volunteers, exchanges information with teachers, and keeps records. And it is Christiansen who nurtures the school's relationships with the dozen nonprofits that offer enrichment classes in culture, sports, and the arts.

"It takes a highly organized person like Natalie," notes Cherie Davis, SUN manager for SEI. "Somebody with a creative vision and somebody who can connect with the community regardless of income level or color."

Working closely with the principal, teachers, and school student support team, Christiansen helps identify children and families who need help from other agencies. She's the go-to person for equipment, problem solving, and help with after-school classroom management.

"Most after-school programs are crucial because parents are working until 5 or 5:30," says Davis. "It would not be good to have kids hanging out with nowhere to go. You want the students to be safe and to have opportunities."

The role of site coordinator is central to SUN. It's also one of its strongest features, says Shah. "The key, I think, is that relationship between the principal and the community schools coordinator. That person is almost a community

The SUN Service System by the Numbers

	FY2010 Funding
Case management for at-risk youth 6–17 years	2,641,191
Extended school day activities and services	4,082,401
Early childhood playgroups and parent education	1,473,829
Emergency assistance for heating and energy	13,623,355
Rent assistance and transitional housing	4,563,517
Alcohol, tobacco, and drug assessment and treatment for teens	240,845
Support for sexual minority youth	126,670
Case management and support for Latino families	480,385
Total cost of SUN services	\$27,232,193

organizer who works to lower the barriers that our kids face.

"It's a strategy, and we see sustained stakeholder buy-in where there is that person who works alongside the community. They are the glue. They are the bridge. This allows the principal to focus on academics and on the faculty. All schools across the country have programs, but what they lack is this coordination driven by results."

Tough Times Demand Strong Measures

Humboldt School's students are among the least privileged in the county, with the entire student body eligible for free or reduced-price school meals. The county average is 71 percent. About 60 percent of the student body is African

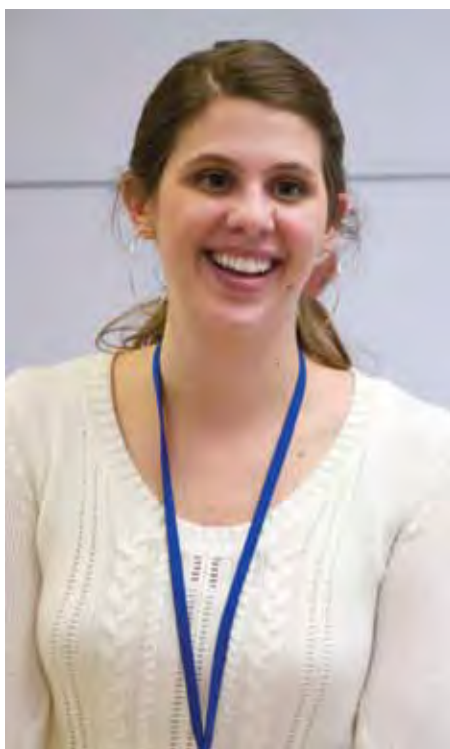
American, and about 24 percent Latino. Historically, test scores have been below the state and district average. Without intervention, research suggests these students could be destined for the bottom end of the achievement gap.

Raising achievement takes time, but research suggests the approach does work. Currently, SUN students' school attendance rate is 93 percent. Teachers report 75 percent of SUN school students show improved behavior, while 75 percent demonstrate gains in reading and 77 percent made gains in math. Of students who attended at least 30 days of SUN programming, 80 percent met or exceeded state benchmarks.

But, these figures are only part of the picture. The program also delivers impressive results in keeping students in school, helping families stay housed, and linking them to health, income support, and other social services. More than 90 percent of SUN students say they like coming to school, feel safe after school, and feel successful at SUN.

The need is not in doubt. According to figures from the U.S. Census's American Community Survey, about 17.5 percent of the state's children—or 148,000 children—live below the official 2009 poverty line of \$22,050 a year for a family of four. However, families earning up to twice the official poverty rate also struggle to meet their basic needs for housing, health care, and food. The National Center for Child Poverty estimates 40 percent of Oregon children live in low-income families. That's also the national average. With the SUN program, at least some of these children and families in the state's most populous county can feel a ray of hope. ■

SUN site coordinator Natalie Christiansen (left) and her assistant Stephanie Harvey (right) manage everything from student discipline to scheduling after-school classes.





On the first day of chess club, students practiced moving their pawns.

REACHING OUT

The collective effort of teachers, parents, and community members ensure that an Oregon middle school is a place where each student is known.

Story by JENNIFER STEPANEK
Photos by SARAH GIFFROW

ST. HELENS, Oregon—School is out at St. Helens Middle School and the hallway traffic rises and then falls as students make their way to buses and waiting parents. There are a few hubs of activity: teachers tidying their classrooms, the basketball team warming up in the gym. But the real action is in the cafeteria, where about 200 students are gathered to share an afternoon snack. The sixth-, seventh-, and eighth-graders are participating in the supervised, extended-day activities offered by the St. Helens Community School.

Monday through Thursday, the community school offers 18 classes and clubs for students after school. Last year, the school had an average of 227 students participating in the club activities. In the first week of the 2010 program, St. Helens was seeing similar numbers.

Diane Kandolph-Ray is the community school coordinator, and she deftly guides the students through cleaning up snacks and putting tables away before organizing them into groups and sending them off to their clubs. The groups scatter to the available spaces—the chess club uses the lab tables in a science classroom for their game boards and the dance club meets in an alcove above the gym.

CREATING A STATEWIDE NETWORK

St. Helens is a small town on the Columbia River in Northwest Oregon. The town once served as the primary port in Oregon, but was eventually replaced by Portland after the docks burned down twice. St. Helens later thrived as a mill town, but since the sharp decline in timber jobs more than half of the population

now commutes to Portland and surrounding areas. The town is one of five start-up sites awarded grants through the Oregon Community School Initiative and St. Helens Middle School is in its second year of implementing a full-service community school. In 2007 the state legislature allocated funds to support the demonstration sites. The Oregon Commission on Children and Families oversees the state's initiative, supporting the demonstration sites and providing training and technical assistance to create a statewide network of community schools.

The state initiative has identified a number of service components for full-service community schools, including high-quality instruction, support from caring adults, extended-day activities, health and social services, service-learning, and adult education. Marilyn Miller serves as the regional coordinator and lead staff for community schools at the commission. Community schools are not just another program, but a vehicle for delivering a comprehensive set of school-based services and activities, says Miller. "What those services are and how they are delivered is based on local needs and the priorities of the community."

Miller was serving as the director of Portland Impact—a nonprofit that provides a range of services to help people living in poverty—when the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) program began in Portland in 1999 (See article, p. 6). "At the time, poverty intensified and began to more severely impact the working class and we were seeing that in



One of Diane Kandolph-Ray's responsibilities as community school coordinator is ushering students to their clubs.

the schools," she says. "The community school model there was especially effective at reaching people who had not used the poverty system and were very reluctant to access the services that were available to help them. That on the ground experience—seeing how it works, how it can have an impact on students and the whole community in a nonstigmatizing way—is what really sold me on the community schools approach."

The extended-day activities for students are the primary focus of the St. Helens Community School. Some of the activities target academics. Students can sign up to use school computers, receive extra help with math or reading, or complete school assignments. Homework Club is available every day and gives students a chance to get help from a teacher or to work with a tutor. There is also a math club for students who are just under the performance target on the Oregon Assessment of Knowledge and Skill (OAKS) and a science club specifically for English language learners.

Most of the clubs focus on informal activities and hobbies. This year, one of the most popular activities is cooking club—almost half of the student body wanted to join. The school had added a second club meeting and was considering offering a third. All four days have opportunities for physical activity, including dance, jump rope, running, and tae kwon do.

CONNECTING ADULTS AND KIDS IN NEW WAYS

On a Thursday afternoon in February, a parent volunteer leads a creative writing group. A table in the classroom is covered with photos, and the students each select one picture that interests them. After providing them some time to study the photos, the club leader asks the students to write and share a few sentences about their photos. They can give the person a name, describe what they are doing or feeling, and explain why they appear in the photo. "I named him George because he reminds me of my uncle," says one student. "He is there because there is a parade going on. He is dancing."

Many of the activities are led by teachers. "What has been really successful for us has been the willingness of our staff members to share their skills and knowledge beyond their typical content areas," says Principal Joanna Tobin, who is an enthusiastic advocate of the community school. "So, for example, our counselor does a knitting club, and while the kids are learning to knit, they also have a place where they can talk and build those social relationships—boys and girls, all grade levels. Our ELL and reading teacher is teaching sign language, and another language arts teacher led a touch-rugby club last year. Students see teachers coming alive in this different way."

The community school does not currently provide access to health services. However, the St. Helens School District houses the Sacagawea Health Center in nearby Lewis and Clark Elementary School. St. Helens School District Nurse Robin Loper founded the center in 2000 with the backing of Northwest Health Foundation, Legacy Health Systems, and the district. The center provides students with both medical and mental health services.

The community school offerings also include activities for parents and other community members. Last year the school offered a computer class and a financial planning class. This winter adults will be able to take fitness classes with yoga, Pilates, and movement. These offerings were designed to spark people's interest, a strategy that has paid off. More than 20 people signed up for the first session. In addition, the community school will hold a health exhibit in March with information about nutrition, physical activity, and disease prevention. Participants will also have an opportunity to get assessments of their diet, body composition, and other health indicators.

"I believe that community schools are becoming even more important in Oregon because of the shifts in our population," says Miller. "We have an aging population and a growing number of people who have moved here who have no connection to the schools. So it's more and more important for schools to reach out to the community. We want broad and diverse involvement so everyone can have the opportunity to learn, give, and be contributing community members within and outside

Joanna Tobin, principal of St. Helens Middle School, drops in on the homework club.





Ed Rose, a volunteer from the community, leads the tae kwan do club twice every week.

of schools. We need all partners.”

“The goal of a thriving community school is to be sustainable, so we really need that volunteer base to come forward,” says Tobin. “We also need to bring in parents and bring in the community, and let them know that the school is open to them.”

PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS ARE KEY

Getting the word out to the community is one of the coordinator’s roles. In St. Helens, personal connections are just as important as press releases and Web site announcements. “It’s really been the coordinator’s role to be very visible, to go to local meetings and make sure people know about the community school activities,” Tobin explains. “One of the reasons we’ve been able to get things up and running so quickly is Diane Kandolph-Ray. She’s lived in the community for many years and has a lot of connections. She’s been able to tap into her own network in many ways.”

Another of Kandolph-Ray’s strategies is to ask the current club leaders to invite one other adult to volunteer and help with the activities. This approach gives new volunteers a chance to build their comfort level with leading kids, while enhancing community support and expanding the extended-day offerings.

Community support is crucial, in part because the community school at St. Helens is dealing with significant budget cuts. In the first year of the program, the state provided more than \$70,000 for St. Helens. This year, Oregon provided only \$15,000

and the school obtained matching funds to raise the total to \$30,000. As a result, the school was not able to offer any activities during the fall. “We are dealing with a significant cut this year, but we feel very fortunate to have any dollar amount coming to us for the community school,” says Tobin. “We are in the brainstorming stages of figuring out how to make this program sustainable. Our superintendent, Patricia Adams, is very supportive and she recognizes the importance of the community school for adolescents.”

On a more positive note, last year the St. Helens Middle School and the Columbia County Commission on Children and Families were able to bring in approximately \$140,000 in leveraged resources. According to the state commission, the five demonstration sites were all successful at leveraging the state’s investment, raising more than \$1.1 million from local partners. The community school partners in St. Helens include Columbia County Community Partnerships, Oregon State University Extension, and Columbia County Health and Community Action Team.

“It’s the energy and enthusiasm of the people involved that have kept the program going in spite of the funding cut,” says Marilyn Miller. “Joanna and Diane at the school and Jan Kenna, the director of the Columbia County Commission on Children

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BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS

A Conversation With Marty Blank

Marty Blank is the president of the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) in Washington, D.C. In that role, Blank also serves as the director of the Coalition for Community Schools, which is staffed by IEL. The coalition is an alliance that brings together leaders and organizations in education, family support, youth development, early childhood, community development, government, and philanthropy. Partners advocate for schools as centers of their communities where school and community resources are organized to support student success, strengthen families, and build healthier communities.

Blank is the coauthor of *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*; *Together We Can: A Guide for Crafting a Pro-family System of Education and Human Services*; and *What It Takes: Structuring Interagency Partnerships for Comprehensive Services*. He has been a leading spokesperson for school, family, and community partnerships and for the full-service community school movement for nearly two decades. He spoke with *Education Northwest* from his office in Washington, D.C.

Q: In March 2001 the American Youth Policy Forum released a report titled *Is the Concept of Full-Service Community Schools Ready for Federal Support? That support never materialized in the No Child Left Behind era. Nine years later, is it finally the case?*

It certainly is the case, and in fact there is already a \$10 million federal appropriation for full-service community schools. Five million has already been awarded in a first round of competitive grants and there will be a second round of grants coming up this spring for another \$5 million. This is a special appropriation. There is no underlying legislative authority for it at this time, but we are optimistic that full-service community schools will be included in a reauthorized Elementary and Secondary Education Act. This initial appropriation was designed to help move the community school idea forward into the federal policy landscape.

What other signs are there of growing federal support?

President Obama's recent budget outlines the development of a new framework for supporting student success, and within that framework the department's fact sheet talks about the

development of full-service community schools. In addition, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan is a strong supporter of community schools. He created 150 community schools in Chicago and has been working hard to embed this approach into federal policy. What seems clear is that the Obama administration is trying to break down the false dichotomy between standards, testing, and teacher quality and the other array of supports and opportunities that young people need. From my perspective, and based on research from the Educational Testing Service, both approaches are necessary, and community schools do both. Secretary Duncan has said pretty much the same thing.

There are many ways to envision and design a full-service community school. Are there basic principles that the Coalition for Community Schools promotes?

At the coalition we talk about full-service community schools as being built on four cornerstones: comprehensive services for students and their families; after-school and extended-learning opportunities; deep parent and community engagement; and an engaged, world-focused curriculum. We see a community school not solely in terms of the additional supports it provides, but also in terms of the importance of engaging young people in their own learning by focusing on real-world issues and community problems. A key to making the community school work is a full-time coordinator who can connect the work of the school and its community partners in a really intentional way. Community leadership from people across the boundaries of education, government, higher education, and the nonprofit and community sectors is absolutely vital to getting community schools going and keeping them going.

How does the delivery of social services mesh with core academics?

We need all of this to work together. More well-off students typically have enriched learning opportunities after school. They are lucky to have, in most instances, a supportive family. They often have a curriculum that is challenging and engaging. And they tend to have the social services they need. Full-service community schools are dedicated to making sure that every child in this country has that kind of support. A strong core curriculum is absolutely a key element of what we're trying

to put in place, but that core curriculum also has to be exciting and engaging. At a time when young people have so many other ways of connecting with the world, school has to work even harder to make that connection. Otherwise learning seems to be far less relevant than it should. After-school and extended-learning opportunities should have similar qualities and be closely linked to the school curriculum.

Why has building a research base for community schools been so challenging?

What community schools are trying to do is create all the conditions that are necessary for young people to learn. That's reflected in the four cornerstones that I mentioned. What we do know is that quality after-school programs improve academic success. Deep parent engagement improves student success. Young people who are involved in civic education and service-learning typically do better. In addition, research has clearly established the importance of quality early childhood intervention and has also made it clear that sustained intensive support for our most vulnerable children, throughout K–12, is what's needed for their success. We're trying to promote all of those things. Certainly that is a complex challenge for evaluators. I should also note that since there is no "community school program" at the federal level, dollars for evaluation are hard to come by.

So the existing research is primarily available for the related areas rather than for specific full-service community school efforts?

That has been the case in the past, but new research is also beginning to come from community schools themselves, which are performing at high levels. We issued a recent report on our Web site [www.communityschools.org] about high school community schools. In those case studies graduation rates improved, student attendance improved, student academic success improved, and as a result an array of partnerships developed that are consistent with trying to meet the many needs that students have. Our data are beginning to show improved academic achievement for specific community schools as well as improved parent engagement, increased attendance, and other indicators that connect directly to academic achievement.

Are there specific models that are beginning to emerge as the most effective? Or perhaps, if not full models, best practices?

We can point to several successful models, but that is not the main focus of the coalition. What we have found is that there are a few major principles that are essential to making community schools work. Number one is partnership. The assets and resources necessary to educate all of our children aren't located solely within our public schools. They're also in our communities: community-based organizations; public health and human services and family services agencies; institutions of higher education; faith-based institutions; and neighborhood and community groups. Community schools try to bring all of these stakeholders together in an intentional, focused way to help improve student success. A second major area is accountability. Results

have to drive everything we do. This is not a feel-good operation. People are doing this because they know that attendance matters, engagement matters, parent involvement matters. And so they want to focus on the results that are most crucial for their own communities, and on results that have been proven to be important to student academic success. Third is site coordination. Successful community schools have someone at the school on a full-time basis coordinating the work of schools and community partners. These are critical factors.

How does accountability look when there are potentially so many different organizations or groups of people involved?

The requirement for accountability drives the work at each level. If one submits a proposal to the federal government to organize full-service community schools, what we advocate is that the community identifies the key results that it wants to achieve and the measures it's going to use to determine whether it's making progress toward those results. The name for this approach is results-based planning and accountability. As long as everyone at the community level and at the school site agrees on those results and indicators then it's perfectly reasonable for people to be evaluated against the outcomes they have identified. But we need to make sure that there is some flexibility at the local level and that the results are not driven solely by the federal or state government. Our communities must have greater ownership of their schools if we're going to educate all children effectively. That means we need flexibility at the federal level, and in response we need greater accountability at the school and the community level. That is the framework that the Department of Education has outlined, and we are supportive of that. We want federal money to be used as incentives for the kind of partnerships that community schools represent.

Do you think there is the potential, in the United States, for the kind of national scaling up of full-service schools that is happening in Great Britain? Are we moving in that direction?

I think we are beginning to move in that direction. As I indicated earlier, the president's new budget proposal helps move us in that direction. Health and Human Services Secretary Kathleen Sebelius will be coming to speak at our upcoming community schools national forum, underscoring the importance of the link between the Department of Education and the Department of Health and Human Services. This is going to require additional investments, some of which President Obama has proposed. It requires a policy that enables local people to link together the programs and services that are already out there. We have too many silos of disconnected activity. We think the leadership that Secretary Duncan is showing and that Secretary Sebelius is showing will help us begin to break down those silos. ■

Join the Coalition for Community Schools for their 2010 National Forum, Building Innovative Partnerships for Student Success: The Key to America's Future, April 7–9, 2010, Philadelphia, PA.



Hearts *and* Minds

A Tacoma, Washington, elementary school takes steps to address students' nonacademic needs so it can get down to the business of learning.

Story and photos by
BRACKEN REED

TACOMA, Washington—A principal's job is hard enough without worrying about getting hit in the head. That was not an unlikely scenario when Mary Wilson took over as principal at Manitou Park Elementary in fall 2006.

"My first year here it was a very violent place," says Wilson. "I had gangs out on the playground after hours. Police here all the time. And the fights between our own students were not just pushing and punching—they were full-on assaults. I've been hit over the head myself, quite a few times, by a little person."

It's the "little person" part of that statement that can make you want to laugh—until it breaks your heart. We're not talking about high school or even middle school students here. We're talking about a climate of hostility and violence in a K–5 elementary school.

This is the south side of Tacoma: one of the rougher neighborhoods in a city that has the highest crime rate in the Pacific Northwest. It's a tough place to grow up and a challenging place to teach.

All of which makes Manitou Park exactly the kind of high-poverty, high-minority, at-risk school that the standards and accountability movement and the No Child Left Behind Act were designed to improve. In that regard, the terrible condition of the school climate when Wilson arrived is potentially instructive.

Many critics have argued that the standards and accountability movement has sometimes downplayed the impact of social class and social conditions on students' ability to learn. The effect, those critics argue, is a kind of fantasy world in which academics

are presumably unaffected by external factors: As if everything going on outside the school—in the home, the neighborhood, the community, the "real world"—did not come spilling off the school bus and through the front doors every morning.

That illusion becomes impossible to sustain when you show up to work and find a dead body on the playground—as happened during Wilson's first year here—or when someone leaves a death threat on your voicemail because you have had the audacity to call the police to break up a gang-related fight.

In fact, when Wilson arrived at Manitou Park the social problems endemic to the south Tacoma neighborhood were completely overwhelming the school. Many of its 600 students were not ready to learn when they showed up at school in the morning, whether due to physical factors such as hunger, inadequate clothing, or lack of health care, or to mental and emotional traumas more difficult to detect. Many of the youngest students lacked basic social skills or any sense of self-regulation. Teachers often spent more time trying to manage their classrooms than they did teaching lessons. And Wilson and her assistant principal felt inundated with disciplinary issues and hostile parent interactions.

By the end of her second year, Wilson knew that along with its commitment to improving student achievement, the school would have to address the wide range of student needs that went beyond academics. The first step, it turned out, would be to look deeper inside students' hearts.

A Glimmer of Hope

In summer 2008, Wilson got a call from Sharon Stauffer, the former coordinator of the School, Family, and Community Partnerships program for Tacoma Public Schools. It would prove to be a turning point. Stauffer was part of a small, informal group of Washington educators, social workers, and mental health professionals who called themselves the Hope Initiative. The group had formed the previous summer after participating in a roundtable at a two-day From Hurt to Hope conference in Tacoma.

For many of the conference's 250 attendees it was their first introduction to an influential 1998 research study on adverse childhood experiences, a term used by researchers to describe a range of potentially damaging childhood experiences—or traumas—and the long-term connection between those experiences and adult medical issues ranging from obesity to drug addiction to depression and suicide.

The conference also featured the work of Massachusetts Advocates for Children, whose book *Helping Traumatized Children Learn: Supportive School Environments for Children Traumatized by Family Violence* explored the effects of traumatic childhood experiences on students' ability to learn. The 2005 book included a framework and an action plan for providing support in a public school setting. Members of what would become the Hope Initiative saw the great potential for adapting this work to meet the social-emotional needs of Washington's most at-risk students.

In spring 2008, Ron Hertel, the director of the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction's (OSPI) Readiness to Learn program and a member of the Hope Initiative group, helped make that potential a reality. Hertel offered to use the remaining funds from a federal school mental health grant to support a small pilot project. The extremely limited funding meant the project would last only 10 months, from March to December 2008, and include two counties, Pierce (which encompasses Tacoma) and Spokane. Between the two counties there would be three school districts and a total of 11 schools involved. They called the project the Compassionate Schools initiative, and one of the first schools invited to participate was Manitou Park Elementary.

A New Way of Understanding

As OSPI's Hertel describes it, Compassionate Schools is not so much a formal program or a rigid framework as it is "a process, an attitude change—a new way of looking at and thinking about students."

Participation in the pilot project gave Manitou Park staff members access to professional development and a chance to explore the adverse childhood experiences research and the work of the Massachusetts Advocates for Children. The impact of that professional development was transformative.

"If I could show you a picture of the people at those first training sessions," says Wilson, "you could see it on their faces: 'Now I understand!' Over and over again I had people saying things like that. 'Now I understand why he acts that way. Now I know.'"

Whatever the name—adverse childhood experiences, helping traumatized children learn, or Compassionate Schools—the heart of this approach is a profoundly human act: making a genuine effort to understand the day-to-day realities and inner emotional lives of children and adults whose life circumstances may be much different than your own.

As in many at-risk schools across the country, there is a significant cultural gap at Manitou Park between a majority of the school staff and the student and community population. Before the Compassionate Schools training, teachers were no less caring, they simply did not have the understanding to help them cross that cultural divide.

"In many cases, these kids are dealing with things that were not how I, or most of my staff, grew up," Wilson admits. "Unless you've lived it, you can't use your own experience as a model for how to deal with, interact with, or understand a child that's been abused or is living in deep poverty or has dealt with a truly traumatic experience. But you can get training and learn how to be aware of and attentive to that child's needs."

Calming the Storm

Of course, empathy alone is not enough. Liz Frausto, director of the School, Family, Community Partnerships program for the Puget Sound Education Service District (ESD), says that in order for Manitou Park to improve academically it first had to address school and classroom management issues as well as a variety of social-emotional, physical health, and family-related issues.

"What they've done here is to say 'OK, we understand that we have a lot of kids who are dealing with various traumas in this school,'" says Frausto. "They recognized the need to develop classroom strategies and schoolwide efforts to address the lack of social skills and self-regulation, as well as the other barriers to learning these kids were facing. That was the work that needed to be done, had to be done, in order for kids to be able to sit down and focus and get on with the work of learning."

Manitou Park accomplished this in three main ways: training

Although the Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction does not currently fund a Compassionate Schools initiative, it has shown its support in many ways. Most important is the recent publication of *The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success*. The book explores the implications of research on adverse childhood experiences and its application to school settings. It includes a framework for constructing a "compassionate curriculum" and a chapter on the role that school-family-community partnerships can play. There are also case studies, vignettes from educators, and three heart-wrenching student essays about traumatic experiences. OSPI's Ron Hertel, a coauthor of the book, says it is already finding its way into teacher preparation programs in two Washington state universities. "In general, future teachers have not learned enough about the psychology of students," says Hertel. "This book can help educators understand that if students have traumas in their lives, then it's going to affect learning, and that there are some pathways to addressing that."

The book is free and is available online at www.k12.wa.us/CompassionateSchools/.



Building and classroom management strategies, as well as a focus on compassion, have helped Principal Mary Wilson and her staff change the school culture.

in a behavior modification strategy called Calming Curriculum; a schoolwide adoption of a building and classroom management model called CHAMPS; and continued participation in the state-supported Readiness to Learn program.

The impact of the Calming Curriculum is most striking in School Counselor Linda Johnson's yoga sessions. Johnson, who had no previous experience with yoga, came out of the Calming Curriculum training a firm believer in its ability to improve student behavior and even student learning. She began implementing yoga and other calming strategies with kindergartners, but it quickly became a part of the school culture.

Visit a first-grade classroom, for example, and you may see students sitting in a semicircle in front of Johnson, their eyes closed, concentrating intently on their breathing, and following her instructions as she leads them through a listening exercise designed to help them stay focused. Or walk past a line of kindergartners waiting for a bus at the end of the day and you might catch them practicing yoga poses.

Wilson jokes about her initial wariness that parents would see yoga and other aspects of the Calming Curriculum as “something flakey—like we were burning incense in the classroom.” Instead, students, parents, and teachers embraced it immediately.

“It's definitely become a part of our culture,” says Wilson, “and it's even gone beyond the school. We've had parents tell us that their kids are using these strategies to calm themselves down at home.”

In Wilson's view, Compassionate Schools and the Calming Curriculum are about “how we treat each other,” while the CHAMPS program (Conversation, Help, Activity, Movement, and Participation) is about providing structure—a day-to-day, nuts-and-bolts framework for putting those values and principles into action.

Created by Dr. Randy Sprick, the founder of Safe & Civil Schools, CHAMPS is similar to other positive behavior support strategies, but it puts even greater emphasis on active student involvement. In CHAMPS, adults and students work together to define how behavior should look throughout the school—in the hallways and cafeteria, on the playground, and during assemblies.

Meanwhile, each teacher has the flexibility to work with

students to define how CHAMPS is used in their classroom. Teachers might ask their students: “What will it look like when I'm instructing? What will our conversations be like? What will it look like when we're taking a test? What will it look like when we're participating in an activity?”

Because students help develop the answers to these questions, they are very clear about the resulting school and classroom guidelines. For example, as Wilson is walking down the hallway on a Friday afternoon, she sees two third-grade boys break out of a line that is heading from a classroom to the library. They lag behind and then weave between the iron bars of a handrail, laughing and pushing each other. Wilson calls out to them, pulls them aside, and asks: “How do we walk in the hallway?” The boys both give polite and clear answers and are soon on their way.

Removing the Barriers to Learning

OSP's Hertel sees Compassionate Schools as a perfect fit with the Readiness to Learn (RTL) project that he directs. “Compassionate Schools helps move teachers from an ‘I want to discipline this kid and get them out of my class’ mentality to more of an ‘I understand where you're coming from and I can help connect you to the resources and supports you need’ way of thinking. And connecting to those resources is exactly where Readiness to Learn comes in.”

Originally funded by the Washington state Legislature in 1993 as part of a major push for education reform, RTL was intended to be a pilot project that would spread statewide, encouraging all public schools to create the kind of community partnerships and network of services that are characteristic of full-service community schools. Budget deficits waylaid those plans almost immediately, however, and the program has been level funded since its inception.

And yet, RTL has thrived. The program currently serves 28 district consortia across the state and approximately 500 individual schools within them. On average, each consortium has managed to leverage \$250 for every \$100 of funding it gets from the state, due to strong community partnerships.

The Pierce County consortium serves a total of 7 districts and 60 schools, with only 12 full-time family support workers and 4 family resource centers. As required of all consortia, Pierce County contracts with a local agency—in this case a mental health agency—to hire the family support workers and other staff at the resource centers.

Kelli Hoekstra, the coordinator of the School, Family, and Community Partnerships program for Tacoma Public Schools, who works closely with the four family support workers who serve the Tacoma School District's 37 elementary schools, says they are indispensable partly because they are the district's only home visiting program. “As a rule, school counselors do not do home visits,” she says. “The family support workers are really the best way we have of getting beyond the school and into the home, so we can get families the support they need,

whether that's housing, food, medical services, counseling, mental health services, or whatever."

Although those supports are nonacademic, there is a direct connection to student achievement. "The goal of RTL is to reduce the barriers that might hinder a child's success in school," says Tamela McBride, a family support worker who serves Manitou Park and other Tacoma-area schools. "We're always asking: 'What can we do to make sure this child is attending school every single day and coming to school clean and clothed appropriately and well fed and ready to learn?'"

The family support workers are available to any school in their assigned area, but also have high-needs "focus" schools they work with more frequently. McBride took on Manitou Park as a focus school toward the end of last year and has been impressed.

"All of my interactions with them have been very positive," she says. I think they really understand how to use RTL as a link between the school, the family, and the resources that are there for the family."

A Whole New Culture

Walking the hallways and visiting the classrooms at Manitou Park now, you would hardly recognize the chaotic and frequently hostile place it was just a few years ago. Some of the changes are easy to measure, such as drastically reduced suspensions and disciplinary actions, while others are more subtle.

"The biggest change—and it's more anecdotal than data based—is how the staff speaks to children now," says Wilson. "I have a terrific staff. They have always cared deeply for these kids, but you can see a difference in the way they interact with them now. They're less reactive, more proactive and preventative."

That deeper understanding of students has also had an outcome that Wilson did not foresee: For the past two years fewer students have been referred to special education. "Again, it's difficult to prove a correlation," says Wilson, "but the numbers have definitely gone down. In my mind there's no question that they're connected."

Although the Compassionate Schools pilot project is over, Manitou Park continues to support related professional development projects using Title I funds. Last spring they received training in "compassion fatigue," which has encouraged staff members to consider their own physical and mental health needs. And, this year the entire staff is participating in a book study using OSPI's new publication *The Heart of Learning and Teaching: Compassion, Resiliency, and Academic Success* (see sidebar).

With all of these pieces in place the school is now able to focus more effectively on academics. "We feel like we've got the social-emotional part under control," says Wilson, "so now we're really looking at cognitive things and identifying the best academic strategies to use."

It just goes to show: Sometimes you've got to look inside a child's heart before you can expand his mind. ■

REACHING

Continued from page 27

and Families, and the many volunteers and partners are the reason that the community school is continuing this year. The results we are seeing at the state show us that their efforts are making a difference in kids' lives, including academic results."

FOCUSING ON RESULTS

One of the payoffs for St. Helens has been positive outcomes in student behavior. "If we just look at typical adolescent data, we know that many at-risk behaviors are taking place from three to five p.m.," says Tobin. "And it makes sense because those are typically the most unsupervised hours for youth. If we look at that data, we know we are impacting those hours with positive activities." Tobin reports that Stan Mendenhall, director of the Juvenile Department for Columbia County, has seen positive results for student behavior as a result of the community school activities, including a drop in court referrals.

St. Helens students have also seen academic growth since the community school began. "For our math club last year we targeted students who were in a specific range of meeting their OAKS test," says Tobin. "Two of our math teachers, Kelly Mickelson and Daniel Bailey, looked at strand data and identified the areas that students really needed to improve in. And we saw the students make tremendous gains—as large as 13 points. That is not typical of a gain from one test session to another."

Tobin makes it clear that the results she sees are not exclusively the result of the community school activities: "It's hard to separate out what exactly has been the kernel of success. We know that much of that is the result of intentional intervention and matching instruction to meet students' specific needs. We do see connections to test scores, but more importantly the community school program has helped our students build learning confidence."

The connection between learning outcomes and the community school activities extends beyond the specifically academic clubs. Like many middle schools, St. Helens is organized into smaller groups called teams that are taught by interdisciplinary teams of teachers. Tobin explains that the community school enhances this approach. "With our team system, students are known during the day," she says. "The community school really builds on that. They have a place to be after school, that gives them an interest and somewhat of an identity. We have students who didn't have that connection before, and they had many behavior referrals and attendance problems. It's powerful to hear them talk about it—they're so excited to have a place beyond the school day to belong. Once they got connected you could just see their engagement in school progress." ■

The Root of the Problem: A Conversation With Richard Rothstein *By Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood*

Richard Rothstein is cochair of the national advisory council of the Bolder Broader Approach to Education campaign (www.boldapproach.org) and a research associate of the Economic Policy Institute (EPI) in Washington, D.C. From 1999 to 2002 he was the national education columnist of *The New York Times*. A frequent speaker and panelist, Rothstein is known for his often provocative views on the No Child Left Behind Act and the achievement gap. He is the author of *Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right* and *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*. Other books include *The Way We Were? Myths and Realities of America's Student Achievement*, *The Charter School Dust-Up: Examining the Evidence on Enrollment and Achievement*; and *All Else Equal: Are Public and Private Schools Different?* A full listing of his articles and books on education policy can be found at www.epi.org/pages/economist/#rothstein/.



Anne Turnbaugh Lockwood is a senior advisor at Education Northwest where she is a policy researcher and analyst working on a variety of educational issues. For nearly a decade she has researched, analyzed, and evaluated the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program. She is the author of seven books and numerous articles. Lockwood's most recent book is *The Principal's Guide to Effective Afterschool Programs: Extending Student Learning Opportunities*. Prior to coming to Education Northwest she was issues analysis director for the American Association of School Administrators and an associate researcher for the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. The American Educational Research Association presented her with their prestigious Interpretative Scholarship Award, given for writing that connects research to practice.



She was appointed an Honorary Fellow in both the Department of Curriculum and Instruction and the Wisconsin Center for Education Research at the University of Wisconsin–Madison. She holds a Ph.D. in Educational Psychology from the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

It's all about socioeconomic class. That's the "most important issue," Rothstein tells me, and the foundation for our discussion of full-service programs and community schools.

Enlarging his point, Rothstein tells me: "The most important issue for educators isn't implementation of programs. It's whether children come to school ready to learn."

But this "ready-to-learn" message has sometimes been misinterpreted as an effort to provide an "excuse" for educators who feel helpless against the harsh effects of poverty. And sometimes it's been misinterpreted as an indictment of high-poverty parents. Rothstein rejects each of these inferences.

Instead, he indicts the social policies that have stranded high-poverty, mostly minority students without the multiple supports they need to enter school and succeed. Their middle-class peers, however, come to school prepared by regular visits to the pediatrician, adequate nutrition, and the cognitive enrichment that comes both from more literate home environments and high-quality preschool experiences. And it is only a matter of course that their mothers received solid prenatal care.

"Preschool is too late," Rothstein says bluntly. "The cognitive gap between middle-class and disadvantaged children is well established by age three. Children need these services from birth. They need to be exposed to a rich intellectual environment. They need to participate in the activities provided in

high-quality early childhood programs."

"Children need routine and preventive health-care services that middle-class children typically have. And that's not a matter of simply providing insurance. Low-income children have some health insurance, both through Medicaid and the S-CHIP program, but they still lack the health care they need."

Access to physicians in low-income neighborhoods is another complication. "There are relatively few primary care physicians in the neighborhoods in which these children live. The ratio of population to primary care physicians is extraordinarily high in these neighborhoods compared to middle-class neighborhoods.

"Secondly," he continues, "parents work the kinds of jobs—if they have jobs—that don't permit them time off to take their children to doctors for routine, preventive care—dental, pediatric, and optometric. Of course, if the children are sick, the parents will take off from work even if they'll be fired as a result."

The consequences of poor health care start early. "One consequence," Rothstein adds, "is that some low-income children can't read simply because they can't see well—they need corrective lenses that middle-class children would receive as a matter of course.

“Another consequence is that low-income children are absent from school about 30 percent more than middle-class children for reasons of illness.”

While educators do need to improve instruction and curriculum, it is more difficult for a child to benefit from these improvements if he or she has a toothache or views words on a page as a blur.

This is where full-service schools have the most potential to close the achievement gap, Rothstein argues. Whether the services are provided by schools or another provider in the community, educators do have a responsibility to influence the provision of these services.

To ensure that all children are indeed ready to learn, Rothstein believes that schools should be the site for full-service pediatric, dental, and optometric clinics. These clinics would provide necessary services for children—even prenatal care for prospective mothers.

Supplementary, after-school, and summer programs also play a role in supporting what schools can offer high-needs students during the regular school day. With a mix of academics and enrichment activities (including cultural, civic, organizational, and athletic opportunities), such programs also ensure that students are safe, off the streets, and supervised.

“If children don’t have these experiences, a school needs to do whatever it can to ensure that these services are provided, whether by the school or by other providers in the community. But one way or another, these services must be provided so that children come to school ready to learn.

“In this country, we have developed a myth that if only school instruction were improved, there would be no difference in the achievement levels of students from different social classes—the only things that matter are the quality of teachers, principals, and instruction.

“Once that myth is in place, any discussion of other services sounds like an excuse for not improving high-quality instruction. People have been intimidated from talking about the conditions in which children come to school, because they have been accused of simply making excuses for their own inadequacies.”

While Rothstein does not argue against the need for improved instruction, he is adamant that a focus on academic instruction alone paralyzes policies that would help to close the achievement gap.

The current economic struggles of the middle class are well documented. Foreclosures abound. “For sale” signs bristle in previously stable neighborhoods. Unemployment continues to

soar. The middle class now experiences the pinch of economic insecurity and its effects. What effects, I asked Rothstein, could this economic collapse have on the achievement gap?

He answers with a prediction—and it is not comforting. “I predict that the achievement gap is going to widen substantially in the coming years, no matter how we improve schools and instruction.

“That’s because, although the overall unemployment rate is now close to 10 percent, the unemployment rate for parents in minority and low-income communities is several times higher than that. When a child’s parents suffer unemployment, that child’s achievement is likely to suffer. It suffers because the family has more stress at home, because the family is more likely to move from its housing, because children are less likely to get medical care and adequate nutrition. When children experience this kind of suffering, their achievement is more likely to fall.”

There is pending legislation that he supports. “We need health-care reform,” he says. “The Obama administration’s proposed Promise Neighborhoods grants will provide for schools that coordinate after-school, early childhood, health, parental support, and summer programs. We need funding for high-quality preschool programs to replace the now-commonplace day-care settings where children are parked in front of TV sets.”

The national dialogue about full-service, integrated programs is one that has continued for decades, Rothstein says—a source of considerable discouragement. Yet with the funding that has been proposed, and programs in some cities already in existence with very little federal funding, full-service community schools may become more available to children who need them.

But Rothstein believes in realism. The time it will take for a program to see results is lengthy. “Ultimately, disadvantaged children need added services beginning in utero,” he says, “and continuing for the next 18 years until high school graduation.

“But,” he concludes, “we might as well get started. It will take a long time but 19 years is better than having the same conversation 19 years from now.” ■

*For additional information about the coalition of educators, health care, and social policymakers who advocate full-service, integrated programs, visit www.boldapproach.org. For a fuller explanation of the social and economic causes of the achievement gap, see Rothstein’s book, *Class and Schools* (www.epi.org/publications/entry/books_class_and_schools/).*

RESEARCH BRIEF

Building a Research Base *By Jennifer Stepanek*

The impact of poverty on academic outcomes begins in the earliest years of schooling and continues into high school and beyond. Findings from a U.S. Department of Education early childhood longitudinal study showed that pre-kindergarten children in the highest socioeconomic group had average scores that were 60 percent above children in the lowest socioeconomic group on cognitive measures (Lee & Burkham, 2002). Students from low-income families have also been shown to have a dropout rate that is four times that of students from higher income backgrounds (Snyder, Dillow, & Hoffman, 2008).

In the United States, the idea that schools can and should make up for the impact of poverty has existed for more than a century. It is a belief that is fundamental to the current Elementary and Secondary Education Act, established in 2001 as the “No Child Left Behind Act”—namely, that schools are accountable for eliminating any achievement gaps based on race, gender, or socioeconomic status. In practice, this leaves teachers and schools responsible for addressing the myriad issues that can hinder children’s ability to learn; issues that are inherent in a system that leaves large groups of people without adequate food, shelter, or health care (Berliner, 2006).

Supporters of full-service community schools believe that we cannot expect schools to address these daunting social problems alone. Instead, people from across the community should work together to develop local solutions to the problems they face. The community schools model went in and out of favor during the 20th century (Dryfoos, 1994). Today, community schools are experiencing another wave of interest, with programs such as the Harlem Children’s Zone making national news and U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan championing the cause.

Because full-service community schools have such a long history, some may find the lack of a well-established research base surprising. However, to date there has not been a well-funded research agenda to investigate community school models. Individual programs have collected data and monitored outcomes, and some organizations have attempted to aggregate those findings, but there has not been a large-scale effort to measure their effectiveness.

Nevertheless, evidence is accumulating that community schools are associated with at least modest improvements in student outcomes. For example, the Coalition for Community Schools compiled evaluation results from 20 community school initiatives. This synthesis revealed that 15 programs reported improved grades or test scores and 8 reported improved attendance (Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003). The evaluations varied in the extent to which they measured outcomes for families and for the community, but 11 studies found a positive impact on a range of indicators, including improved stability for families, improved communication with teachers, improved knowledge and perception of schools, and increased use of school facilities.

An example of the results from a single program comes

from the Community Schools Initiative, launched by Chicago Public Schools during Arne Duncan’s tenure as CEO. The program started with 20 schools in 2001 and now includes more than 150 community schools. The results of a three-year evaluation published in 2007 reported on numerous student outcomes, including student participation in out-of-school time activities, improved grades and standardized test scores, and decreased disciplinary incidents (Whalen, 2007). According to the teachers surveyed, students improved their completion of homework, classroom behavior, and

overall academic performance. (For an example of a program evaluation in our region, see the sidebar on page 22.)

For evidence from a large-scale implementation of full-service community schools, one must look to England. In 2004, Parliament passed national legislation known as “Every Child Matters” to reform children’s services, including public education. One aspect of this initiative was the gradual conversion of all public schools to “extended schools” that are open to the community, provide child care and support for parents, help refer children to special services, and offer a wide variety of nonacademic activities. In the first year of the program, the initial cohort of extended schools improved student achievement at twice the national average rate (Department for Children, Schools and Families, 2007).

“For nearly half a century, the association of social and economic disadvantage with a student achievement gap has been well known to economists, sociologists and educators. Most, however, have avoided the obvious implication of this understanding—raising the achievement of lower-class children requires the amelioration of the social and economic conditions of their lives, not just school reform.”

(Rothstein, 2004, p. 11)

In a three-year evaluation of extended schools, which included case studies of 17 projects, the researchers found that the full-service approach had a positive impact on student achievement—as well as student engagement with learning and family stability—and produced positive outcomes for families and community members (Cummings et al., 2007). The evaluation included a cost-benefit analysis which determined that the costs of the extended schools approach were high, but that the benefits balanced or outweighed these costs. The evaluators reported that the initiative represented a good investment, particularly because of the benefits they produced for children and families facing the greatest difficulties. All 23,000-plus public schools in England are slated to become extended schools by the end of this year.

One thing that may hinder efforts to establish a research base is the complexity of full-service community schools as a model. As the snapshots above show, community schools attempt to produce positive outcomes for students in many areas, not only academic achievement. The integration of services is intended to improve outcomes in health, attitudes, behavior, engagement, attendance, and safety, among other areas. Moreover, students are not the only targets—community schools serve all members of the community. Trying to track positive outcomes for participants who are outside of the school system can be especially challenging.

These challenges do not mean that large-scale studies of community schools should not be attempted. There is much to be learned about the impact that integrated programs and services have on children and communities, as well as how the different models work. But at the same time, it is important to remember that community schools develop different approaches based on the unique needs of the population they serve and are primarily accountable to those local stakeholders. Building evaluation capacity at the local level is essential in order to ensure that community schools succeed in improving the lives of children, families, and communities. ■

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END NOTE



“Tattle to Obama” lets kindergartners at Russian Jack Elementary take their complaints and frustrations to the top. Teacher Monica Plantokow Dudley reports she sometimes has a line of students waiting to “share” their problems with the White House. Even though it’s a one-sided conversation, she says talking out their problems on the phone seems to help the students. *Photo by Lisa Wardle*

Oregon Zeroes in on Culturally Competent Instructional Leadership

For the past decade, the Oregon Leadership Network (OLN) has been dedicated to improving learning and outcomes—particularly for low-income and minority students—through leadership development. Since that time the OLN, part of the national Education Leadership Action Network and primarily funded by the Wallace Foundation, has grown to represent 28 school districts, which serve 52 percent of Oregon’s students.

The aim of OLN is to work toward closing the achievement gap by modeling culturally responsive leadership that drives high-quality teaching and learning. To this end, the network disseminates lessons learned and best practices across its member districts to other high-need districts across the state.

What sets Oregon apart from other states’ leadership networks? First, it is the only statewide leadership initiative that focuses on equity as a primary lever of reform. Second, according to Education Northwest’s Nanci Schneider who serves as the OLN partnership liaison, “OLN has built a broad alliance that extends beyond state agencies and school districts to include professional associations, such as the Oregon Council of Professors of Education Administration, and research firms like Education Northwest.” This collaboration among key stakeholders has resulted in improvements such as Oregon’s adoption of administrator license standards, which give unique attention to cultural competence.

One avenue for disseminating information about what districts have tried and what the research supports are the biannual leadership institutes that Schneider helps coordinate. The latest—held in December and cosponsored by the Hillsboro School District—drew about 300 education leaders from across

the state. “These professional development events are about problem solving, not proselytizing,” states Schneider. “Presenting administrators are very candid, saying ‘We tried this approach and it bombed, and this is how we handled it.’ Teams of administrators take home valuable lessons learned from practitioners in the field.”

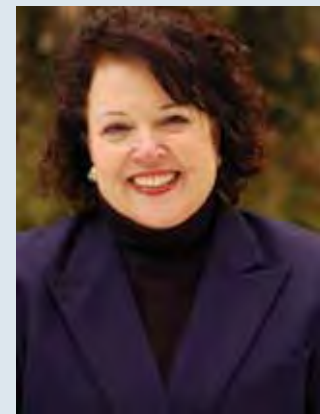
The OLN has also influenced policy and practice in leadership development through recruitment and preservice preparation, induction, and mentoring, as well as publications used by administrators throughout Oregon. OLN’s work group on assessing leadership performance recently published two years’ worth of findings on effective leadership assessment systems.

The aim of OLN is to work toward closing the achievement gap by modeling culturally responsive leadership that drives high-quality teaching and learning.

Education Northwest has been in partnership with the OLN since its beginning. OLN’s director, Rob Larson, now directs Education Northwest’s Center for Classroom Teaching and Learning, where he continues to promote the link between learning and achievement for all students and strong leadership. Education Northwest is currently working with the network on finding other sources of funding when the decade of support by the Wallace Foundation ends in September. “The partnerships that have developed and the improvements to school and district leadership that the network has brought to the state are just too important not to sustain this work,”

says Schneider.

For more information about the OLN or how Education Northwest can help other states establish strong systems of leadership, contact Nanci.Schneider@educationnorthwest.org, 503.275.9557. ■



Two New REL Northwest Reports Connect Research to Practice

REL Northwest, the regional educational laboratory arm of Education Northwest, has produced two new reports as part of the Institute of Education Sciences' Issues & Answers series. The series is designed to connect scientifically based research to practice on topics of regional concern. The reports, and others in the series, can be found at educationnorthwest.org.

INDIAN EDUCATION POLICIES IN FIVE NORTHWESTERN REGION STATES

Researchers at Education Northwest recently conducted the most comprehensive examination to date of policies governing the education of Native American students in the five Northwest region states. The resulting report, published in October 2009, provides policymakers and organizations representing American Indians and Alaska Natives in the region with an analysis of state-level policy initiatives and the legal methods used to adopt them.

Based on 13 key policies identified in the literature, Education Northwest's Richard Smiley and Susan Sather categorized the Native American education policies of Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Oregon, and Washington. They found that six of the key policies had been adopted by all five states:

1. Adopting academic standards to teach students about the history and culture of America's indigenous peoples
2. Including Native American culture and history as part of the academic curriculum
3. Involving Native Americans on advisory boards
4. Promoting Native American languages through the certification of teachers who speak Native American languages
5. Allowing students to learn their

native language as part of their education program

6. Providing scholarships or tuition assistance for college-bound Native American students

Smiley and Sather also examined how Northwest states approach adopting Indian education policies through mechanisms such as statutes, regulations, and executive orders. "What surprised us was the wide range of mechanisms states use to adopt Indian education policies," Smiley states. "We anticipated statutes, regulations, and state plans, but were surprised that in some cases policies were formulated by executive orders and proclamations. In one case, a policy was adopted through a simple administrative action by a state official."



NEW AND EXPERIENCED TEACHERS IN A SCHOOL REFORM INITIATIVE: THE EXAMPLE OF READING FIRST

This report, published in November 2009, compares the experiences and perceptions of new teachers with those of their more experienced peers in schools that have implemented the federally funded reform initiative Reading First. The REL Northwest study reports that little attention has been given to new teachers' experience with reform; even though schools adopting reform models, such as Reading First, tend to have a high proportion of new teachers.

Reading First, the largest federal reading initiative in history, has been implemented in more than 5,880 high-poverty, low-performing schools across the country. The initiative, which is no

longer being funded by the federal government, was intended to help all students read at grade level by the end of third grade. Data for the study were collected from evaluations of 235 schools that adopted Reading First in six western states. Education Northwest served as the independent external evaluator of Reading First programs for Alaska, Idaho, Montana, Washington, Wyoming, and jointly for Arizona.

The report compares new and veteran teachers' experiences or perceptions in four areas of Reading First: instructional coaches, teacher collaboration, teacher use of assessment data, and support for reform. Differences in new teachers' experiences with their reading coaches, as well as their confidence level in using data to guide instruction, are revealed in the study. Perceptions about other elements of the federal program, such as the value of collaborative grade-level meetings, were the same for both groups.

"We believe the study's results have implications not only for educators implementing reform models, but also for anyone involved in initiatives to support and retain new teachers," says the study's principal investigator, Kari Nelsestuen of Education Northwest. "Hopefully the findings will serve schools using instructional coaches by helping them think more deliberately about how coaches are, or could be, part of a support system for new teachers." ■



SLC Work Continues: National Institute and On-site Trainings Provide Practical Wisdom on High School Redesign

The small learning community (SLC) movement of the last decade has been pivotal in creating more rigorous, relevant, and coherent middle and high schools programs. But some key funders of this reform initiative have begun to redirect their attention and resources to new priorities, leaving schools and districts that chose to restructure wondering what their next steps should be.

Diana Oxley, director of Education Northwest's Recreating Secondary Schools (RSS) Program and author of *From High School to Learning Communities: Five Domains of Best Practice* has seen the effects of school leaders' dropping one initiative in pursuit of another that brings new funding. She explains that "following the money" leads to a loss of resources, momentum, and credibility with staff members who got on board with the previous reform. "With any large reform movement, it's critical to synthesize old with new ideas in order to build on our successes and remedy our failures," says Oxley. "That's what learning and improvement are all about."

The RSS Program continues to support schools and districts nationwide that are restructuring into SLCs, small schools, and career academies. Its portfolio during the past eight years includes serving as the technical assistance provider to more than 1,200 federal Smaller Learning Community Program grantees; documenting and evaluating SLCs and small schools; and carrying out site visits, design studios, and district dialogues. The program staff's main avenues for disseminating its expertise are through a national annual institute and on-site training and coaching services.

NATIONAL INSTITUTE

The third annual institute, *From Structure to Instruction: Sharing Best Practices and Lessons Learned From High School*

Redesign, will take place on the campus of the University of Nevada—Las Vegas, June 28–30, 2010. Building on the success of the 2008 and 2009 conferences, the planners (who include a national advisory group of practitioners) are developing this year's institute to feature:

- Sessions by practitioners with "in the trenches" experience in transforming high schools
- Personalized coaching sessions that give teams and individuals access to expertise as they tackle the intensive work of instructional improvement and structural change
- Preinstitute workshops (June 27) on Aligning Instruction With Essential Knowledge and Skills; Refining and Sustaining SLCs; How Interdisciplinary Teams Personalize Instruction; and Shifting Resources To Close the Achievement Gap
- Motivational keynote sessions (including one by the 2009 National Superintendent of the Year Dr. Beverly Hall of Atlanta Public Schools) and opportunities to network with practitioners from across the country

This year's presentations target six topics that will help participants move their schools from structure to instruction:

1. Accelerated Learning in English and Mathematics
2. Continuous Program Improvement
3. Career Academies and Career/Technical Education
4. Postsecondary Readiness
5. Detracking Issues and Practices
6. Planning and Supporting High School Transformation

Persons who register by March 31 and/or as a team of three or more qualify for discounts. Registration is now open, and early registration is advised (space is limited to 550 participants and the previous two years' institutes sold out). Visit education-northwest.org regularly for up-to-date information.

ON-SITE TRAINING AND COACHING SERVICES

The only compelling rationale for school redesign is instructional improvement. To accomplish instruction-focused redesign, a school staff has to mobilize people, resources, and structures. RSS services help you address each of these challenges:

Rigorous and Coherent Instructional Programs

Would you like to see more interdisciplinary collaboration, but schedules, groupings, and standards seem to limit you? In this training, your leadership team collaboratively defines a standards-based program that can overcome obstacles to interdisciplinary teaching and learning.

Best Practices for Small Learning Communities

Successful small learning communities, career academies, and





small schools share a common set of practices. This training helps district and school leadership teams redesign high schools so that all parts of the system—structures, curriculum, instruction, assessments, professional development—are aligned with preparing students for postsecondary success.

Interdisciplinary Units and Projects

Interdisciplinary teaching and learning teams are the basic building blocks of effective learning communities. This training positions interdisciplinary teams of teachers to provide continuity of instruction across grade levels and classrooms for increased student achievement.

Resource Allocation To Close the Achievement Gap

Typical patterns of resource use are often inconsistent with schools' improvement priorities, especially closing the achievement gap. In this training, school leadership teams examine the resource allocation strategies of schools that created rigorous instructional programs with improved outcomes for all students.

School Improvement Proposal Development

Our experienced team helps schools and districts craft a winning strategy for school improvement. We can help you assess high-need areas to target, identify research-based strategies to address them, integrate individual programs into a systemic strategy for improvement, and plan for sustainability.

Secondary School Improvement Coaching

We work with your school and district leadership team to help you meet the evolving challenges of systemic change.

RSS coaches and trainers are experts in customizing each service to meet a school or district's unique needs. Their focus on sustainable organizational improvement means that by training school leadership teams to lead this work themselves, teams can strengthen the skills of the entire staff. For more information on RSS services, contact Katie.Luers@education-northwest.org, 503.275.0689 or visit educationnorthwest.org. ■



Photos by Sara Sellards

Conference Call

Visit Education Northwest's online calendar of events at educationnorthwest.org to register and learn more about these upcoming workshops and conferences.

6+1 TRAIT® WRITING ACROSS CONTENT AREAS INSTITUTE

March 11–12, 2010
Portland, Oregon

This new institute—created specifically for middle and high school teams—explores how to use the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment to incorporate writing-to-learn activities across the content areas, including subjects such as math, science, and social studies. Facilitated by former Texas Teacher of the Year Roberta Young, teams will practice using the traits to create a common language and to set clear goals for writing. Additionally, teams will learn to use the traits to improve and assess longer, more formal writing assignments. For questions contact Mark Workman, Mark.Workman@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 572.

TURNING AROUND LOW-PERFORMING SCHOOLS: A RESEARCH FORUM FOR MONTANA LEADERS

March 24, 2010
Helena, Montana

This free event, which follows the annual MASS Spring Conference, is designed for leaders of elementary and secondary schools facing corrective action or restructuring in Montana. Leading the forum is Dr. Sam Redding, coauthor of the Institute of Education Sciences' practice guide *Turning Around Chronically Low-Performing Schools*. A panel of Montana principals who have led successful improvement efforts at their schools will

discuss the successes and challenges they faced. For questions contact Meg Waters, Meg.Waters@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 635.

6+1 TRAIT® WRITING INSTITUTE FOR PRESENTERS

June 15–17, 2010
Cannon Beach, Oregon

This advanced institute will train literacy coaches, teacher leaders, administrators, and curriculum coordinators to conduct their own in-district, trait-based workshops. Participation in an introductory trait institute and classroom experience teaching the traits are prerequisites. The institute includes examination of the research supporting the 6+1 Trait® Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment, lesson design and curriculum mapping, and how to incorporate adult learning strategies into professional development workshops. For questions contact Mark Workman, Mark.Workman@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 572.

6+1 TRAIT® WRITING INTRODUCTORY INSTITUTE

June 22–24, 2010
Portland, Oregon

This introduction to Education Northwest's 6+1 Trait® Writing Model of Instruction & Assessment addresses grades 3–12 in one session, and grades PK–2 in another. Participants will learn to formatively evaluate student writing across seven dimensions of performance: ideas, organization, voice, word choice, sentence fluency, conventions, plus presentation; discover how to build a learning community that shares a common vocabulary and vision of quality writing performance; and much more. For questions contact Mark Workman, Mark.Workman@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 572.

FROM STRUCTURE TO INSTRUCTION: SHARING BEST PRACTICES AND LESSONS LEARNED FROM HIGH SCHOOL REDESIGN

June 28–30, 2010
Las Vegas, Nevada

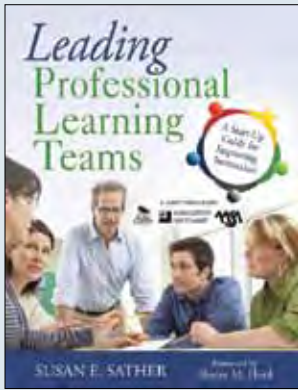
Attend this third annual institute with your school or district team to learn valuable tools and strategies on improving high schools, as taught by experts and practitioners. Work with your team and an experienced coach to develop plans for your high school's redesign. Register by March 31 and/or as a team and save. For more information about this institute see page 42. For questions, contact Suzanne Hay, Suzanne.Hay@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 634.

6+1 TRAIT® WRITING AND MATHEMATICS INSTITUTES

July 13–16, 2010
Portland, Oregon

For the first time, two of Education Northwest's best known professional development institutes—6+1 Trait® Writing Across Content Areas and Fostering Number Sense and Algebraic Reasoning—will be offered together! This exciting four-day learning opportunity for K–2 and 3–5 teachers is designed to increase capacity in both math and writing instruction. Participants will engage in meaningful, hands-on activities that can be used immediately in the classroom. Mark your calendar and watch our Web site for registration information. For questions contact Jan Littlebear, Jan.Littlebear@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 581, about the writing portion, or Linda Griffin, Linda.Griffin@educationnorthwest.org; 800.547.6339, ext. 169, about the math portion. ■

View Education Northwest's complete listing of products and services at educationnorthwest.org.



Leading Professional Learning Teams: A Start-Up Guide for Improving Instruction

Strengthen teacher expertise and expand instructional leadership through focused professional learning teams!

Although a generous amount of research describes professional learning teams (PLTs) as a positive structure for developing a vision of school change through informed, data-based decision making, little guidance exists for schools wanting to create and sustain this type of team initiative.

Leading Professional Learning Teams provides a field-tested model for implementing PLTs that strengthens teacher collaboration in professional learning communities, improves instruction, and increases student achievement. Four chapters highlight important elements to ensure alignment with objectives:

- Action: Steps for starting a PLT
- Voices From the Field: School leaders offer insights from actual PLTs
- Tools: Resources with information about PLTs, plus at-a-glance road maps for each step of the implementation process
- Leadership Team Discussion: Discussion suggestions for implementation leaders

(2009; 170 pp.)

Item #S004

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External Evaluation Services

Your Local Experts in Evaluating Federal and State Grants and Contracts

Education Northwest's portfolio of evaluation services is backed by 40 years of meeting the rigorous requirements of evaluating federal, state, and local grants, contracts, and programs. Our evaluators provide an experienced, fresh, and independent perspective to help clients build successful programs. The strongest evaluations start as the initiative is being planned and last the duration of the project, but we can also join ongoing projects and assist with data collection and/or analyses.

Education Northwest's portfolio of recent work includes:

- Evaluation design, implementation, and reporting of data for local, state, and federal reading initiatives, including Reading First, Early Reading First, Reading Tutoring, and Striving Readers
- Assessing program and curriculum effectiveness for achieving adequate yearly progress
- Evaluation design, implementation, and reporting of data for local, state, and federal initiatives including charter schools, English language learner programs, small learning communities, and safe and drug-free school programs
- Language and literacy research and development, including effective American Indian and Alaska Native educational practices
- Research and evaluation in the areas of history, math, science, and technology

For more information about how Education Northwest can help with your evaluation needs, contact Bob Rayborn, Bob.Rayborn@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 587.



ARRA and i3 Grant Application Assistance

Improving Student Achievement With Education Northwest

Education Northwest can help your school or district apply for i3 funds that are now being offered as part of the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The grants are designed to support local efforts to start or expand research-based innovative programs that help close the achievement gap and improve outcomes for students. Funding includes **scale-up grants** for programs and practices with the potential to reach thousands of students; **validation grants** to improve the evidence base of promising programs; and **development grants** to further study new high-potential practices.

If you're considering applying for one of these grants, we can provide:

- Advice on identifying effective practices to include in your proposal
- External evaluation services
- Analysis of current research
- Coordination of networks of schools and districts collaborating on grant proposals
- Help in documenting evidence about your promising practices and programs
- Grant-writing support
- Assistance in implementing reforms

For more information, contact Steve Fleischman, Steve.Fleischman@educationnorthwest.org, 800.547.6339, ext. 507.

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EDUCATION NORTHWEST
101 SW Main Street, Suite 500
Portland, OR 97204
educationnorthwest.org

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