

Breaking Bonds, Actualizing Possibility: Schools as Community Hubs of Social Justice

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Abstract

One of every two children in the world lives in poverty, with no access to safe water, health services or adequate shelter to the extent that 25,000 children die every day. Thirty-seven million Americans, thirteen million of whom are children, live below the poverty level. Of the developed world, despite our wealth and sophistication, the United States has the most children who live in poverty. Rather than race, ethnicity or gender, it is poverty, socio-economic class and deprivation that account for poor performances in school, to the extent that young people from poor families are three times more likely to drop out of school. Alone, neither schools nor communities can adapt to or realize the overlapping and contextually interacting needs presented by students and their families. Collaboratively, where schools are beginning to offer quality, equitable education at the same site in which access to requisite health, social and human services for children and families are provided, both educational and psycho-social outcomes are enhanced. Using a holistic position and an ecological model of resilience, this paper would suggest that these community schools, serving as hubs of social justice, are mitigating the academic and nonacademic needs of vulnerable children and families.

Introduction

Alone, neither schools nor communities can adapt to and realize the needs presented by aggressive changes in demographics, economics, politics and social welfare; alone, they cannot help children become successful students and productive citizens, for the problems they and their families face are complex, contextually interacting and overlapping. Community schools that are collaboratively offering a quality, equitable education at the same site in which access to requisite health, human and social services for children and families is provided, graduate students with enhanced educational and psycho-social outcomes. Schools that serve as hubs of services are mediators of social justice in vulnerable and marginalized neighborhoods.

Marginalization and Vulnerability

Half of the world lives on less than the cost of a fast-food hamburger. One in every two children in the world lives in poverty. In the developing world, one in three lives without adequate shelter, one in five with no access to safe water, and one in seven with no way to attain health care. 2.2 million children die every year because they are not immunized and 15 million, or the whole population of the Netherlands, is orphaned due to HIV/AIDS.¹ Daily one billion children,

1. Anup Shah. "Poverty Facts and Statistics: Global Issues," <http://www.globalissues.org/article/26/poverty-facts-and-statistics> (accessed June 1, 2010).

that is one in three children in the world, live in a city slum while 25,000 children die because of poverty.²

Every thirty-three seconds a baby is born in poverty in the United States.³ In rural America three out of four people live on less than \$1.00 a day. In 2006 thirty-nine percent of the nation's children, more than 28 million, lived in low-income families, while 32 million Americans had no form of health insurance, and nearly 18 million lived in families where no parent had full-time, year-round employment.⁴ The 1998 census indicates there were over thirteen million children under eighteen who were poor and nearly five million under six while ten years later, there were 14.1 million children living below poverty.⁵ Yearly, there are nearly 3.5 million homeless people in America, one-third of whom are children.⁶ Of the developed world, despite our wealth and surface sophistication, the United States has the most children who live in poverty.

These young people are the disconnected and the dispossessed born of the environmental genetics which breed and perpetuate disenfranchisement and dissolution. They charge contemporary society to revisit and revitalize its historical connections and forge new, collaborative links within the overlapping communities of care, services and counsel. By recognizing that these contextual interconnections resonant in the whole child-family, the structuring of linked-services begins to alter what otherwise might have been poor outcomes on behalf of the nation's low-income students.

In Partnership: A Look Back

The United States has enjoyed a rich history of providing noneducational services at school sites. In the colonial days of the 1600 and 1700s, towns and villages provided support services to families and friends in need. For those who were not established residents, the federal government provided assistance. Unfortunately, as the number of transients and poor folks grew, so did the lack of community concern and care. "Undergirding these constructions of social policy lay a profound operational ambivalence regarding the role of society in the service to the poor,"⁷ a posture still prevalent in the 21st century.

Following the Civil War, America showed greater compassion and support for human services. Freed slaves, displaced families and orphaned children increasingly needed subsistence housing, food and medical attention. The Charity Organization Societies (COS) was created to

2. UNICEF. "State of World's Children," UNICEF, <http://www.unicef.org/sowc05/english/index.html> (accessed June 1, 2010).

3. Children's Defense Fund, "The State of America's Children 2008 Report," Children's Defense Fund, <http://www.childrensdefense.org> (accessed June 4, 2010).

4. Annie E. Casey Foundation, Kids Count Data Book: State Profiles of Child Well-Being (Baltimore, MD: Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2008).

5. United States Bureau of the Census, *Income, Poverty, and Health Insurance Coverage in the United States: 2008*, Report p. 60, n. 236, pp. 50-55.

6. The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, "Homelessness and Poverty in America," The National Law Center on Homelessness and Poverty, <http://www.nichp.org/hapia.cfm> (accessed June 2, 1020).

7. Sharon Kagan, *Integration Services for Children and Families: Understanding the Past to Shape the Future* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1993), 4.

coordinate the often overlapping work of hundreds of smaller service groups and charities. The subsequent reduction in income disparity and in social disorder posed the COS as an effective arbiter of the adverse effects of poverty, fragmentation and alienation.⁸ Their success led to the first settlement house, which opened in late 1886 in New York, soon followed by Hull House in Chicago. The settlement houses tended to provide more comprehensive, coordinated and personalized services than did the charity groups which were often out of touch with their constituents.

At the turn of the century the Progressive Movement called attention to the ‘plight of the down-trodden’, the imperiled generation, by bringing health and social services into the schools. In speaking of the desperate lives of students in the city slums, lives burdened by crime, ill health, poverty and general depravation, sociologist Robert Hunter notes, “The time has come for a new conception of the responsibilities of the school. If the school does not assume the responsibility for bringing up children, how shall the work be done?”⁹ A fellow activist concurred: “The school should serve as a clearinghouse for children’s activities so that all child welfare agencies may be working simultaneously and efficiently, thus creating a child world within the city wherein all children may have a wholesome environment all the day and every day.”¹⁰

Settlement house reformers supported two other types of social services: visiting teachers (the precursor to the school social worker) and vocational guidance counselors. Visiting teachers were volunteers, supported by charitable contributions, who bridged the gap between the immigrant home and the school. They served as advocates for new immigrants as they became assimilated into the mainstream culture.¹¹ Using the settlement house construct, reformers brought to the school community-based social services that served the entire child; i.e. the child and the family were seen as a single unit. Reformers advocated for school lunches, medical, dental, and mental health services, for clinics, vocational training and placement, classes for the disabled, for social workers, child welfare services for truant and delinquent youth, and for summer recreational and learning programs for young people—all at the school site. There were English classes for new immigrants, job training, crafts, sports and civic instruction. Because of this broad and inclusive community orientation, settlement houses were successful.¹² Public school personnel eventually adopted this model and brought integrated services to the school campus.

At the same time public health physicians who wanted to stave off the spread of disease immigrants were suspected of bringing to crowded city housing, proposed vaccinations, hygiene

8. Robert Halpern, “Supportive Services for Families in Poverty: Dilemmas of Reform,” *Social Service Review* 65, no. 3(1991): 343-364.

9. Robert Hunter, *Poverty* (New York: Harper & Row, 1905), 200.

10. Walter Wirt, “Ways and Means for a Closer Union Between the School and the Non-school Activities,” in *Addresses and Proceedings of the Sixty-first annual Meeting of the National Education Association* (Washington, D.C: National Education Association, 1923), 446.

11. David Tyack, “Health and Social Services in Public Schools: Historical Perspectives,” *The Future of Children* 2, no. 1 (1992): 19.

12. Kagan, *Integrating Services for Children and Families*, 14.

training and health check-ups. In some instances free health clinics were established in schools. However, many of the more intrusive services were not only resisted but protested by angry parents. Upon receiving a letter from a medical examiner that her son smelled bad, a mother sent a letter back to the teacher which stated: "Teacher, Johnny ain't no rose. Learn him; don't smell him."¹³ Unfortunately, parental rejection of health care was viewed as evidence of immigrant ignorance.

Cooperative work between public schools and volunteer groups assimilated many of the volunteer services into the general practice of the school, with people trained in specialized service provision. Humanitarian groups who believed teachers were overburdened, contended students would do better work if noneducational services were provided at the school. Often these early services were provided on a volunteer basis by dentists, doctors or local public health practitioners who hoped local school boards would recognize the value of service integration and assume funding responsibility.

During this time many philanthropic women's clubs provided free and inexpensive lunches because they felt hungry children were inattentive and couldn't learn. They pushed schools to provide these meals not as charity but as part of the service of the school. Additionally, these groups offered classes for disabled youth, transportation for those in ill health, playgrounds for exercise, and before- and after-school programs. Some of these same women philanthropists negotiated with school boards to use empty school buildings during the summer for vacation schools for poor urban city children. While the buildings were used without charge, the women's groups paid teachers to provide experimental learning experiences such as field trips, plays, museum and park visits and trips to the country. There soon became far more demand than could be serviced.¹⁴

Business people supported these services because they believed young people would grow up to be healthier worker-contributors if requisite health services were provided at school. Progressive school personnel supported these broader services, due to the new kinds of tensions immigrant children brought to the school and because of the child labor laws. Conservative school personnel argued the additional services diverted the focus, attention and scarce funds to nonacademic activities when the explicit focus of school was academics-an ongoing debate.

While some services may have been worthwhile, they were not integrated into the school if they had little effect on the student's performance. Hungry students in ill health, who came from crowded tenements rife with delinquency and violence, presented looming problems to teachers in the heterogeneously grouped classroom. Therefore, they welcomed social workers, psychologists, school nurses, dentists, nurse practitioners and physicians.¹⁵

13. William Reese, *Power and Promise of School Reform: Grass-roots Movements during the Progressive Era* (New York: Methuen Publisher, 1986), 225.

14. Judith Trolander, *Professionalism & Social Change: From the Settlement House Movement to Neighborhood Centers, 1886 to the Present* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1987).

15. Mina Carson, *Settlement Folks: Social Thought and the American Settlement Movement, 1885-1930* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1990).

In these early settlement house reforms and community-based, on-site social services, reformers felt they knew better what the immigrant family needed than the family itself. These ‘elitists’ went so far as to say the immigrant families were deficient in their knowledge of proper health care for their children, of the civic and moral values of their newly adopted country and even unaware of how to rear their children. Reformers felt they could ‘fix’ all that was perceived wrong with the immigrant family; e.g., if the children had good dental care or clean mouths, they would have clean minds; therefore, adenoidectomies would prevent failure in the classroom.

Despite this mismatch, families did take advantage of the vacation schools and classes in English and sewing. By the 1940s united charities buildings, neighborhood councils and area projects became the sites for integrated services. The War on Poverty, the Great Society and the Civil Rights Movements of the 1950s mobilized large-scale community- and neighborhood-based action programs that integrated services. More than any single social phenomenon, the Civil Rights Movement became the most influential mobilizer of services and support for the poor and for minorities.¹⁶ School personnel began to target all students for services linked to the school, noting that even the most stable families may need help in the challenging task of rearing children.

Between 1920 and 1960 many of the services intended for the poor disproportionately went to the rich because of local property tax structures. Those who suffered the most were rural African Americans. Then with President Johnson’s continued War on Poverty, some of the same programs that gained currency during the Progressive Era in the early 1900s were reinstated. However as he extended his Great Society ideology, the local government’s control was replaced by the federal government’s resolve, that services, commitments and strategies be in place in every state and community.

During this period of social movements and cultural awareness, when attention was paid to previously ignored groups such as women, Hispanics, African-Americans and the disabled, education became the rallying point. Amid the expected struggle between federal and state monies targeted at balancing service provision for the whole family, serious questions were raised concerning the top-down model of the professional care-giver. While service providers seemed to be cast in the Progressive Era’s adenoid-removers, responsive reformers attempted to demystify their own expertise by placing racial minorities and the poor in positions of autonomy and authority. Staunch New Dealers were skeptical of school personnel’s intents, to put federal and state funds where they belonged—with the poor. Therefore, they channeled money directly into community action agencies.

The 1960s Head Start Initiative rekindled emphasis on the value of economically deprived families’ involvement in their child’s education. Amid specialization of funding and services, there was once again particular emphasis on the concept of the whole family.

But by the beginning of the 1980s, with a return to state and local government control, the focus on the intensification of school requirements replaced the restructuring of service

16. Michael Sedlak and Robert Church, *A History of Social Services Delivered to Youth, 1880-1977*, Final Report to the *National Institute of Education* (Washington, D.C: 1982).

provision. Although there were some consequent academic gains, by the end of the decade these strides were not enough to overcome the prodigious barriers to learning, i.e. health, safety, sustenance, basic elements of family and community that affect students' lives. And although this is often looked at as the decade of interagency collaboration, at the close of the decade, when the Health, Education and Welfare (HEW) initiative began to wane, service delivery became increasingly fragmented, categorized and uncoordinated.

While the people in the 1960s searched for one overall solution, by 1990 they realized there were many programs and interventions necessary to address needs, both inherited and created. In response to the preceding generation's fragmentation of services, the number of linked-services initiatives reached new heights. Once again, they represented a holistic, community-based, pro-family perspective with interagency case plans, case management, decategorized funding and co-location of services. By the middle of the decade HEW Secretary Elliott Richardson had spurred hundreds of federal and state-level service integration initiatives and programs.

At the turn of the new millennium with a new national administration and President Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*,¹⁷ the dominant role of the federal government in K-12 education was redefined. Critics often cited the competition for funds between the newly joined Education Department's Safe and Drug-Free Schools¹⁸ and the 21st Century Community Learning Centers¹⁹ initiatives. Proponents maintained it would streamline existing programs and target them for funding. . In the early part of the 21st century, as the economy became more tenuous and families more vulnerable, school-based health centers refocused on physical examinations, mental health counseling, asthma control and dental services.

The debate over effective services seems a polemical contest centered on the issues of the politically-fluctuating role of federal government, its priorities and programs. This may suggest that things happen in cycles and if so, the notion might offer valuable perspective on the interpretation and consequent attempts to change prevailing norms. Changes in climate, historical events, social patterns, economics, philosophy, ideology, the arts, literature and education may be seen to flourish in cycles; e.g. the alternate influences of monasticism and scholasticism from the middle ages to contemporary times. Interpreting our history of attendance and service provision to the poor and underclass through a cyclical lens, despite the complexity of social phenomenon, may well help us disentangle critical aspects valuable for re-innervation, critical thinking and improvement.

Unlike the primary goal of the earliest efforts at providing health and social services at schools, vis-à-vis, to assist immigrant children 'overcome' their differences and to assimilate them into the prevailing American culture, a crucial and compelling aspect of the current

17. *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, 107th Cong., 2nd sess., Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor and Pensions, (January 8, 2002): PL-107-110.

18. *Safe and Drug-Free Schools Act*, Title IV, Part A of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 107th Cong., 2nd sess., United States Department of Education, (January 8, 2002): RL30482.

19. *21st Century Community Learning Centers Initiative*, Title IV, Part B of Elementary and Secondary Education Act, 107th Cong., 2nd sess., United States Department of Education, (February 15, 2003): PL107-110.

movement is the recognition of individual student-family's resilience and diversity. Whereas the Progressive Era attempted to divorce schools from the community they were established to serve, the contemporary movement reclaims, reconstitutes and reconnects these same bonds. Where earlier efforts at linked-service delivery reflected the Marxist position that schools were capitalist agencies of social, economic, cultural and bureaucratic reproduction, current programs reflect the concepts of personal reclamation, emancipation and connectedness. They reflect the democracy of collaboration, of discursive coupling, of the reconciliation of social discrepancy, of the doctrine of belief, of place in the social order and the dialectic definition of self, of contextual identity and of power.

The current problem, then, is less with the provision of services than with their coordination. The proposed solution? Community schools—school-linked services, the proponents of which believe “poor education, health and social outcomes for children result in part from the inability of current services systems to respond in a timely, coordinated and comprehensive fashion to the multiple and interconnected needs of a child and her or his family.”²⁰ Further, if agencies' services were not only co-located but also coordinated according to goals developed and shared by the family, fewer of a child's needs would go unmet and his/her behavior and academic achievement in school would improve.

Service Integration and Community Schools

Service integration is the intensive intervention in assessment of a student's needs and the cooperative provision or management of services. Conceptually it reflects the notion that schools are relational,²¹ reflectional bodies, activist communities in their own right. They are seats of radical democracy,^{22 23} rather than separate entities removed from the communities they serve.

Attempting to close the achievement gap, California's Healthy Start Support Services for Children Act and other 1990s legislation charged communities to develop site programs based on local services and needs, to develop ways which would engage participants in overcoming barriers in accessing these services and to construct an intergovernmental plan for implementing and evaluating school-linked service systems on a statewide basis. With an 87% free and reduced lunch and 45% English language learners population, Hanshaw Middle School, Modesto, had no coordinated approach to provide these services on or near the school site, until it secured two operational grants. Healthy Start intended programs to be comprehensive, accessible, family focused and culturally congruent. The evening the Modesto Board of Education met to ratify the acceptance of the initiative, the room was full of parents, community members, teachers and

20. Center for the Future of Children, “School Linked Services,” *The Future of Children: School-linked Services* 2, no. 1(1992): 8.

21. Michael Apple, *Official Knowledge: Democratic Education in a Conservative Age* (Washington, D.C: The Falmer Press, 1993).

22. Henry Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education* (New York: Routledge, 1992).

23. Kitty Epstein, *A Different View of Urban Schools: Civil Rights, Critical Race theory, and Unexplored Realities* (New York: Peter Lang, 2006).

local business people. A parent spoke of the violence in the students' homes, in their environments, in their lives:

There are fathers and mothers in or just coming out of prison systems, drug abuse, alcohol abuse, inadequate medical care, dental insurance, many of our children witness gang-related deaths right from their front porches.²⁴

She spoke of the shooting of family members, of drugs and guns being sold in their homes, of children taken by the probation department following drug raids. And of this daily trauma she noted,

You can't just leave that at home when you go to school and be expected to learn...and the teachers are expected to teach them. And the kids come to school and say, 'My cousin got shot last night. My brother's brains got blown out last night.' And who do they say it to? Their parents say, 'Shhh, don't tell anyone. Don't say anything. What goes on at home stays at home. Don't trust anybody. Don't ask for help.'

Her voice broke and she continued,

Yet they go to school. We have a lot of little babies, children with emotional trauma, their teeth rotting out. They can't even eat or drink the milk in the cafeteria. We have children that are sick and the parents don't even have \$1.20 to put in the bus and go take three or four more kids clear across town to get the medical attention they need for their kids...How do you expect these people to help their children? They can't even help themselves. Their children are dying. Every day! Please help our children.²⁵

Another parent approached the microphone, paused collecting her emotions and her pride:

I am a parent y'all having (sic) been talking about tonight. When my child gets sick, I do not have the money to go way across town to get help. I have three small children. My son now has a problem and he said to me the other day, 'Mom, I don't feel too well.' I said, 'Mom just don't have the money.' To have to tell your child who is sick and know that you're sick, too, 'I'm sorry, sweetheart. There's no transportation...'

I'm one of those who doesn't have \$1.20. I'm impoverished now, but if you guys just give us a chance. We're not asking for money, we're asking to be a part...Please give us a chance.

It was not charity for which she asked, but justice in the exercise of democracy. A gentleman from the Housing Authority spoke of the challenges the immigrant must confront in this country:

24. Parent speaking before the Modesto Board of Education Meeting, August 3, 1992.

25. Parent speaking at Modesto Board of Education Meeting, August 3, 1992.

As a Spanish-speaking individual from a third-world country, a person who has come to your country, I have found third-world conditions in your back yard. It seems sometimes like nobody cares about it...

A teacher, also a school board member, summarized the stories shared that evening as she quietly observed, "The part of this program that makes this so exciting is that it offers hope."

Yet neither hope nor hard work is enough to meet the needs of young people and their families. A letter to the editor of the local newspaper referred to Hanshaw Middle School as a, "refugee center for kids who are trying to succeed and those that are trying to stay out of trouble."²⁶ But barrio life is not easy. Robertson Road fifth and sixth-graders speak of the constant gang violence which surrounds them:

Juanita: My cousins' house has red on it and last week the red gang passed by And started shooting at the house. And the car got messed up.

Oleo: And we were eating at their house and these bullets started coming in the house. We looked later and there were holes there.

Jorge: There were a couple of Laotians in this park I was riding by and just That quick a drive by came up and started shooting.²⁷

Hanshaw was built on the notions of the common good and the respect for difference as part of the shared struggle to extend the quality of life both individually and collectively.^{28 29} As student and community needs became clearer, social services were added to the school nurse, mental health clinician and aides who assisted immigrant populations. Although the school's primary focus was on education, it concentrated resources on the center for health and dental care and an interagency case management team. The reform-from-within thinking that has shaped the Hanshaw community extends the sense of community and neighborhood based on the principles of human dignity and social justice.

Community schools are an extension of service integration. They are both a public place that is the center of the local community, one that offers a vast menu of services tailored by the community and the school for their people; and a philosophy that integrates health, human and social services with best-practice teaching and learning.

Community schools focus on two goals: the success of students and the health of families and their communities. In crafting services that mitigate the barriers to these goals, schools tap into a community's social and cultural assets and build mutually beneficial bridges to families and to the larger neighborhood. In the spirit of the settlement houses, but with an ideological

26. "Letter to the Editor," *Modesto Bee*, October 19, 1995, A-9.

27. Interview with student, October 19, 1995. Modesto, CA.

28. Peter McLaren, *Life in Schools: An Introduction to Critical Pedagogy in the Foundations of Education* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 2003).

29. Jonathan Kozol, *The Shame of the Nation* (New York: Three Rivers Press, 2005).

shift to an ecological rather than a deficit view, community strategies and services move families and neighborhoods forward into health and well being. The school encourages youth citizenship and democratic learning through community projects and rich academic service learning.

Distinction of Terms. The argument for linked services is predicated on a fundamental understanding of systems change and on the concept of collaboration. Systems change does not imply reshaping of the format of school or of service delivery, but an authentic revision of the ways in which people and institutions think. It implies a critical transformation in behavior and in the use of resources that effect types, quality and degree of service delivery to children and to families. Linked services are guided by collaborative strategies which include partners sharing vision, establishing goals and using resources in the implementation and delivery of education and services.

School-linked services are initiated and founded on a philosophical change or reawakening in how we view ourselves and our interrelationships, and how we negotiate the dominant-subdominant powers, as well as the dispositional spheres of influence, in the macro and microcultures. They embrace a candid understanding of the distinction between justice and charity.

Schools, by virtue of their national investment, can be the axis of conversation about and access to student and family services. The broad terms school-linked and school-based are used to characterize this intersection. The ‘school-linked’ approach employs the collaborative, fully integrated, environmentally and holistically conceived model delivered in the form of coordinated case management. In this paradigm, services are coordinated and provided by personnel located at or near the school, who is an equal player. This often requires some agencies to move staff and/or services to the campus. ‘School-based’ services are linked physically and fiscally on the school campus. These are often call ‘full-service’ schools which are characterized as umbrellas for the emerging models of school-based health centers, youth service centers, family resource centers, community schools and Beacon/lighted school houses because they are open twenty-four hours a day, every day, year round. This comprehensive ‘one-stop’ education and service center model is referred to as collaboratives, cooperatives, partnerships and/or contractual relationships. The school, like the earlier settlement houses, is a pivotal stakeholder as it becomes the vehicle for the mobilization of the community. Just as the Progressive Era attempted to remove schools from politics, thus divorcing them from the communities they were designed to serve, the movement to full-service is a systematic attempt to reconnect both.³⁰ These community schools reflect the five areas of program and service development suggested by the national Coalition for Community Schools: quality educational services, youth development programs, family support services, family and community engagement and community development.³¹

30. James Garvin and Alma Young, “Resource Issues: A Case Study from New Orleans,” in *The Politics of Linking Schools and Social Services*, eds. Louise Adler and Sid Gardner (London: Fulmer, 1994).

31. Coalition for Community Schools, “Community Schools Across the Nation,” Coalition for Community Schools, <http://www.communityschools.org> (accessed June 23, 2009).

No matter the term, linked services provide prevention, treatment and support services to children and to their families.³² Their effectiveness depends on their coordination, flexibility, comprehensiveness, and their results-oriented, pro-family provision or management of services. Their attention to students' developmental needs and their collective decision-making at the local level—schools, communities, families and local agencies—rather than at the state or agency level, make early detection and intervention more efficient modes of practice.

Diagram for Change. Investing in school-linked services is compelling only if one believes that across time, changing how services are delivered will improve not only access to services, but the behavior, knowledge and attitudes of students. Embracing full-service schools is convincing if one believes in the progenitive connection between communities and their schools;

The agent of change regarding school reform is the local community, rather than the school in isolation. Students, teachers and professionals join and speak with, not for, those who have been dispossessed. This is a relational perspective which is "...attentive to developing a democratic public philosophy that respects the notion of difference as part of a common struggle to extend the quality of public life."³³

In the current dialogue of urban school reform, the language of pro-family, school-linked services must be articulated against the needs of the individual, the community and the broader social context. School-linked services are conceptualized within communitarian sociologist Amitai Etzioni's theoretical framework of 'community'³⁴ as contrasted to Durkheim's alienation of man and of society.³⁵ Linked services are most fully interpreted and realized through the Freirian notion of transformative empowerment.³⁶

Designing School-Linked Services. The current human services delivery system is divided into three categories: education, which is charged with providing instruction services to children in public and private schools; health, which includes such services as nutrition, medical, dental and mental health; and social services which support child welfare, day care, counseling, income maintenance, housing and training. In 2000 the federal government spent \$148 billion³⁷ and in 2007 \$354 billion on a combination of direct outlay, tax credits and exemptions on programs that benefit children.³⁸ Added to the 2009 federal budget was \$144 billion of the \$787

32. Joy Dryfoos, *Full-Service Schools: A Revolution in Health and social Services for Children, Youth and Families* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1994), 142.

33. Henry Giroux, *Border Crossings: Cultural Workers and the Politics of Education*. (New York: Routledge, 1993), 28.

34. Amitai Etzioni, *The Spirit of Community: The Reinvention of American Society* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1993).

35. Herve Varenne, "The Social Facting of Education: Durkheim's Legacy," *Journal of Curriculum Studies* 27, no. 4 (July-August, 1995): 373-389.

36. Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum Publishing, 1970).

37. United States Bureau of Statistics, "Congressional Record of Federal Spending on the Elderly and Children," United States Bureau of Statistics, <http://www.cbo.gov/doc.cfm> (accessed June 3, 2010).

38. Adam Carasso, C. Eugene Steuerle, Gillian Reynolds, Tracy Vericker and Jennifer Ehrle Macomber, "Kids' Share 2008: How Children Fare in the Federal Budget," The Urban Institute, <http://www.urban.org/url.cfm> (accessed June 3, 2010).

billion American Reinvestment and Recovery Act (ARRA).³⁹ Although these funds were designated for children's programs, yearly spending on child services, child poverty, abuse and neglect on many levels continue to increase. The high cost of delayed interventions and public dependency resulting from education, health or unmet social needs, is compelling.

Disparities in the current system point to professional insularity, fragmentation, specialization and complexity that are skewed towards remediation rather than prevention. Its greatest failure is in serving the student-family with multiple needs. School-linked services are designed on a prevention-early intervention model. Among their goals are the effective attendance to and management of students whose multiple needs cross professional and programmatic categories. Rather than having multiple agencies provide discrete services in a piecemeal fashion, school-linked and school-based services address interdependent social, emotional, economic and educational concerns of the student and of the family.

There are many configurations of school-linked and school-based services. The Clearinghouse on Urban Education reviewed fifty-five varied, collaborative programs and found the following common programs: parent and family programs (parent education and life skills); dropout prevention; substance abuse; programs for sexually active teens; and integrated services—health, vocational and academic education and social services coordinated into one comprehensive program.⁴⁰ All models share a critical element, vital to the effective design of school-linked services: a climate for change. While some sites call for a complete revamping of the service delivery system, one with a particular emphasis on common staff development, on an agreement of common outcomes and on a multiple agency in-take, others point to relational changes based on collaboration rather than categorization. All five national community school models (Beacon Schools, Children's Aid society, Communities in Schools, Schools of the 21st Century and University-Assisted Community School), share this same initiating imperative. Their philosophical missions vary.

Beacon Schools are school-based community centers, initially designed to form a coordinated anti-drug strategy for New York City. The model provides centers that serve as safe havens, symbols of hope for families made most vulnerable by violence, crime and substance abuse. Beacon Schools are also a strategy for transforming communities of support for urban youth and families, by using the ecological model of resiliency. They provide opportunities for families to become more active members of their communities. And they work closely with community-based youth organizations to strength young people's social and academic competencies, in order that they become economically self-sufficient.⁴¹

Children's Aid Society (CAS) community schools partner best instructional school practice with on-site health and social services to promote a child's physical, emotional and

39. First Focus, "Children's Budget 2009," First Focus <http://www.firstfocus.net> (accessed June 3, 2010).

40. Margaret Wang, Geneva Haertel and Herbert Walberg, "Educational Resilience in Inner Cities" in *Educational Resilience in Inner-City America: Challenges and prospects* eds. Margaret Wang and Edmund Gordon (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum, 1994): 45-72.

41. Coalition for Community Schools, "Community Schools Across the Nation," Coalition for Community Schools, <http://www.communityschools.org> (accessed June 23, 2009).

social well being. The model's primary goal is to ensure students' learning and development in order to equip them for productive adulthood. CAS schools focus on the following: increasing parental involvement in their child's education; offering additional learning opportunities after school; and providing consistent, convenient access to adult guidance, health, dental and mental health services.

Communities in Schools (CIS) broker services also based on a holistic, ecological view of the student-family: students are the solution rather than the problem. Effective education that includes digital and marketable skills is necessary preparation for life. The CIS model is predicated on student access to integrated community-based services that focus programmatic energy, resources and time on shared student and school goals.⁴²

Schools of the 21st Century (21C) are the forerunners of today's preschool. Sometimes called Family Resource Centers (FRC), they maintain everyone should have access to childcare that is educational. Unless families have the supports they need to be their first and best teachers, children will not be academically or socially successful. Because they believe learning begins at birth and occurs in a variety of settings, they turn the school site into a year-round multiple services site that provides affordable, easily accessible, high quality family services.⁴³

University-Assisted Community Schools (UACS) believe that, like higher education, public schools are well situated to serve as hubs or centers of the community. Through them, local partnerships can be generated which will change the neighborhood environment. Their belief in civic development and social justice for all students K-16 underpins their 'educate, engage and empower' theory and helps create sites for the university to engage in research, pre-service and in-service teaching and learning.⁴⁴

Designated Outcomes. In general, community schools should lead to an increased access and utilization of services which in turn reduce overall levels of vulnerability and risk, reduce the impact of such specific stressors as emotional fall-out, increase the resources available to provide such services and activate the protective process. Such outcomes are propelled through a range of services from referral to functioning as a critical part of a school's intervention strategy to assuring academic success for all students.

Although the models enjoy some common structural and basic theoretical properties, they are notably as varied and diverse in their intended outcomes as are the communities they serve. Such contextual factors as the mix of community assets with existing services, needs and strengths of the population served, administrative costs associated with coordination and collaboration, the capacity for change and the structure and responsiveness of school personnel cause each community to craft a continuously-generative program, one attendant to the changing, overlapping environments surrounding them.

42. Communities In Schools, "Communities in Schools and the Model of Integrated Student Services: A Proven Solution to America's Dropout Epidemic," Communities In Schools, <http://www.cisnet.org> (accessed October 17, 2009).

43. Coalition for Community Schools, "Community School Models" (paper presented at the National Conference of Community Schools, Kansas City, MO, April 19-23, 2000).

44. Community Schools, "Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date," Community Schools, <http://www.communityschools.org/> (accessed October 17, 2009).

Some researchers have criticized community schools for the lack of empirical evidence that would support the intended social transformations and academic achievements. They imply a breakdown between the “assumptions about the processes whereby socio-economic disadvantage arises, and is translated into educational disadvantage, and about how community-oriented schools can intervene in these processes.”⁴⁵ This paper would suggest that perhaps this is based in deficit-model thinking, for the data presented below offers a research-based translation of the praxis model, admittedly from the school’s perspective. At the same time, we take heed from Durkheim’s view that, “The better we understand society, the better we shall be able to account for all that happens in that social microcosm that the school is.”⁴⁶ It is not the intent of this paper to address or examine the intractable social phenomena which provoke the call to collaboration, e.g. how or why joblessness occurs and is concentrated in particular areas and how low teacher expectations effect differing social groups of students. The work of colleagues examining these and other contributing factors, informs the current study.

By national model, Table One would suggest when implemented with fidelity, community schools increase academic achievement, particularly in math and reading, given they are most frequently targeted.

45. Alan Dyson and Carlo Raffo, “Education and Disadvantage: The Role of community-Oriented Schools,” *Oxford Review of Education* 33, no. 3 (July, 2007): 300.

46. Emile Durkheim, *The Evolution of Educational Thought* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1977): 131.

Table 1. Academic and Social Outcomes by Model

	Beacon	Children’s Aid Society (CAS)	Communities In Schools (CIS)	School of the 21st Century (21C)	University-Assisted (UAC)
Academic and Social Outcomes	Academic improvement overall; more students at grade level; ⁴⁷ fewer suspensions, fewer absences ⁴⁸	Improved reading, math scores, overall academics; ⁴⁹ higher teacher attendance, parent involvement; ⁵⁰ decreased special education referrals	Increased graduation rates; higher percentage proficiency 4 th , 8 th grade reading, math ⁵¹	Higher reading if students attended 21C for 3 years; kindergarten higher readiness to learn if 3 years in 21C; ⁵² school suspensions lower; ⁵³ PTA higher attendance; parents missed fewer workdays ⁵⁴	State reading, math, attendance, promotion, parent involvement all improved; suspensions decreased; neighborhoods more positive; ⁵⁵ emphasis on service learning ⁵⁶

Further, nonacademic indicators such as attendance, overall climate of the school and neighborhood, also improved as absenteeism, student disruptions and dropout numbers declined.

Across models, community schools have the capacity to revitalize neighborhoods and strengthen the student-family as they recognize and realize the interagency of social assets. They build capacity for health in culturally responsive ways as they collaboratively construct transformative democratic spaces. With Beacon Schools the school is the lead agency. CIS and 21C models are school-based and school-linked. CAS schools are full-service while UAC schools are value-added to the local school district. The menu of programs provided across models ranges from before- and after-school, evening and weekend services in health, civic engagement, education and social services (Beacon, CAS, 21C, UAC), to more targeted

47. Constanca Warren, Michelle Feist, and Nancy Nevarez, *A Place to Grow: Evaluation of the New York City Beacons. Final Report* (New York: Academy for Educational Development, 2000).

48. Karen Walker and Amy Arbreton, *Working Together to Build Beacon Centers in San Francisco: Evaluation Findings from 1998-2000* (Philadelphia: Public/Private Ventures, 2001).

49. ActKnowledge, *Summary of the Children’s Aid Society Community Schools Results to Date* (New York: Fordham University, 2007).

50. ActKnowledge, *Summary of the Children’s Aid Society Community Schools Results to Date* (New York: Fordham University, 2007).

51. Communities in Schools, “Communities in Schools and the Model of Integrated Student Services: A Proven Solution to America’s Dropout Epidemic,” *Communities in Schools*, (<http://www.communityschools.org> (accessed October 17, 2009).

52. Chris Henrich, Misty Ginicola, and Matia Finn-Stevenson, *The School of the 21st Century Is Making A Difference: Findings from Two Research Studies* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2006).

53. Matia Finn-Stevenson, *Evaluation of the Arkansas School of the 21st Century Program 2006-2007* (New Haven: The Edward Zigler Center in Child Development and Social Policy, Yale University, 2007).

54. Joy Dryfoos, “Evaluation of Community Schools: An Early Look,” *Community Schools*, <http://www.communityschools.org/Resources/evalbrieffinal.html> (accessed October 17, 2009).

55. Community Schools, “Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date,” *Community Schools*, <http://www.communityschools.org> (accessed October 17, 2009).

56. Pat Williams-Boyd, “Models for Mitigating Non-Academic Barriers to Student Success: From Health Programs to Full-Service Schools,” *International Journal of Arts & Sciences* 3, no. 5(2009): 179.

programs such as Head Start, Hope Leadership Academy (CAS); drop-out prevention, tutoring, AmeriCorps, Bridges to Graduation, Out of School and School-to-Work (CIS); to varied facets of childcare (21C); to integrated service learning in solving real-world problems (UAC). Across models the family is an active stakeholder in their school and in their community. The data suggest those programs and models which reshaped school structure to become more student-focused demonstrated decreases in absenteeism, lower dropout rates and better academic performance. Programs which were rigorous in building in adequate training and follow-up for care providers as part of the desired outcome process tended to be more effective. And those initiatives which experienced little success regardless of their constructed outcomes, implemented only segments of a given model.⁵⁷

Distinctive Examples: Full-Service Schools. Full-service community schools provide students and families academic excellence and aggressive attendance to health, mental health and social services on the campus. The result is what Dryfoos, a pioneer in the full-service model, calls a ‘seamless’ institution.⁵⁸ New Boston Pilot Middle School, Massachusetts, and Hanshaw Middle and Robertson Road Elementary Schools in Modesto, California are built on this thinking.

Industrial towns like Boston have been referred to as “brick and mortar snapshots of a bygone era.”⁵⁹ Yet the state-of-the-art school building built in 2003, stands on a campus that would surprise any visitor to the neighborhood. The 2007 school presented the following:

Table 2. New Pilot population data

	New Boston Pilot Middle School	State Average
Free and reduced lunch	88.3%	31.4%
English Language Learners	43.4%	22.9%

Source: City data⁶⁰

The school is the community’s collective will for its values shape all aspects of the school, from the mission statement, which the principal notes hundreds of community people helped rewrite, to the use of the physical plant itself. She has blurred the boundaries between service agencies, school and neighborhood and between what parochial and communal interests of all ‘her constituents’ dictate:

57. Coalition for Community Schools, “Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools,” (Washington, D.C: 2003).

58. Joy Dryfoos, *Safe Passage: Making it Through Adolescence in a Risky Society* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998).

59. James.T. Patterson, *America’s Struggle Against Poverty in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2000), 199.

60. New Boston Pilot Middle School, <http://www.city-data.com/school-new-boston-pilot-middle-school-ma.html> (accessed June 7, 2010).

You would not believe what the community has done for our school. They're here every day, our community members, neighbors, our school members, volunteers, before school helping us with arrival, after school, in the lunch room, at the front desk. We are so lucky.⁶¹

The creation of New Boston, renamed Lila Frederick Middle School in 2006, is the work of the Columbia Road community, the Boston Public Schools, the City of Boston, the Center for Collaborative Education and other local organizations. In response to community wishes, the school has a dance studio, two art studios, a multi-purpose theater/gym and library, open to everyone. Neighborhood residents help staff the office, greet students who arrive on twenty-three buses, walk students part way or all the way home after school, read to students, and monitor the hallways to keep children safe and supported. The health suite looks like a hospital emergency room with its private beds and wheelchair shower. It offers services of an occupational therapist, a physical therapist and trained professionals who screen children for vision and hearing impediments. The school has a professional development room, the Teacher Resource Room, the Student Support Suite, state of the art classrooms, music facilities, conference rooms and a Family Resource Office. Counselors provide support to students and families. States the principal, "How can you provide academic services to a student whose mother has just been shot or is in jail, to a child who is hungry, or has a toothache or is a refugee to our country from a war-torn country?"⁶² Her only response is to care for the whole child, in mind, body and spirit as the mission statement attests. "When you haven't provided for their basic needs, I don't imagine we can provide for their academic needs." To Socia it is a formidable challenge to encourage a child to dream about her future when her eyes speak of the pain of dissolution and her words tell of the brutality of a gang-related attack on her older brother. So health and social services are added to a school that focuses on academic achievement. Using best-practice, developmentally appropriate middle grades programs and procedures, the school stresses the nurturing and support of all young adolescents.

How does the principal make this work?

It would have to be a group of folks behind me who live in the community and who say, 'We're going to take care of this person.' When someone does something unkind, they stand up and say, 'No, she belongs to us' and that is what makes it possible for me to take these risks.⁶³

The risks are translated into student accomplishments. In a neighborhood where 84.8% of the people are economically imperiled, the significance placed on eighth-grade students' requirement to demonstrate mastery of specific content knowledge and skills in order to

61. Deborah Socia (principal, New Boston Pilot Middle School) in discussion with author, February 11, 2004.

62. Ibid.

63. Deborah Socia (principal, New Boston Pilot Middle School) in discussion with author, February 12, 2004.

graduate, sets New Boston Pilot apart. Compared to Boston Public Schools (BPS), the Pilot schools scored higher on state math and language arts tests; they increased student performance by grade level. A higher percentage of Pilot School students (79%) attend higher education institutions as compare to BPS (67%). The middle school median attendance rate is higher (97%) compared to BPS (94%); the out-of-school suspension rate is lower (12%) compared to BPS 14% and there is a lower transfer rate.⁶⁴

270 Columbia Road was once a vacant lot scattered with trash, shattered glass and broken lives. It was a haven for gang activity, drugs and prostitution. Today New Boston Pilot Middle stands as a testament to the belief people had in themselves, in each other, in their children and in their shared work. The pathos of a community is its ability to engender a sense of genuine acceptance and belonging. Its ethos is the prevailing dynamic of connectedness couched in deep and abiding relationships that are observed, interpreted, re-experienced and tested. In Socia's words, 'It's all about relationships.'

Policy

For too long society has focused on the family to explain away its responsibility for poverty. Over time, with changing social values and mores, fluctuating economics and the experience of trying to intervene with families, causal analyses have become less moralistic and simplistic and more sensitive to contextual obstacles.

In the winter of 2009, the United States Senate's Consolidated Appropriations Conference Report became law. And although it increased funding for after-school activities through the 21st Century Community Learning Centers, to \$1.166 billion, only \$10 million was appropriated for Full-Service Community Schools. Directive funding such as Senate Bill 1655, the Full Service Community Schools Act of 2009, would provide more support and more flexibility for local initiatives. It could draw more attention to full-service programs which are now managed under the Fund for the Improvement of Education as authorized by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, Section 5411.

The Obama administration has drawn new federal attention to linked services. With its plan to reconstitute chronically low-performing schools, wraparound services, which characteristically include health and social services, pre-school and after-school activities, kindergarten and counseling, are part of the individual school plan. Though reminiscent of earlier times, this is new beginning for a new century. With federal legislation such as Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged Act (Keeping PACE), Working to Encourage Community Action and Responsibility in Education Act (WeCare), the 21st Century Community learning Centers Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act the Teaching Fellows for Expanded Learning and After-School Act of 2007 in addition to the Full-Service Community Schools Act of 2005, that offer opportunities for community schools, policymakers are beginning to recognize the necessity for and to see the benefits of community resource linkages. With

64. Center for Collaborative Education, "Progress and Promise: Results from the Boston Pilot Schools," Center for Collaborative Education, http://www.ccebbs.org/Progress_and_Promise.pdf (accessed June 7, 2010).

California's Healthy Start Act, Illinois' House Bill 684, Kentucky's Education Reform Act, Oregon's The Oregon Commission on Children and Families and Washington's Readiness to Learn Initiative, state legislators are leading the way in responding to a renewed commitment to community collaboration.

Further Research

Inherent in the study of the contexts which wrap people, institutions and cultures in the complexity of values, perceptions, understandings, meanings and interactions, is an interweaving of multi-disciplined epistemologies. Community schools unlayer provocatively interesting areas for study, some of which include:

- Institutional Constructs-the process of change in public schools; the ownership of the local school; schools as communities; schools as hubs of service; schools as catalytic points of contact for the student-family in need of resources
- Social Constructs-poverty and the culture of school; the clash of a white, middle-class teaching population against a predominantly lower socio-economic, ethnically and linguistically diverse student population that is growing; the effect a staff's cultural competence has on services and the development of collaborative strategies; spheres of power and their influence on family-community investment in public education; the precipitating factors that cause one community to be more vulnerable than another
- Relational Dynamics-the match between family expectations and school responsiveness; how qualities such as respect, caring, trust, belief and their varied definitions are negotiated into a shared meaning; beliefs about the place of family in the school; issues of enablement and empowerment
- Structural Dynamics-interagency discourse and the process of collaboration; the integration of social, education and human service disciplines-the process, barriers and community assets; the philosophical precepts provoke one community to linked services and another similar one to more traditional forms of education; why K-12 and higher education institutions are not more connected to communities; the barriers that prevent the dialogue of linked services; and the ways in which linked services may play a role in the health and vitality of resilience and community reclamation

For those who work in community schools, linked services present a schema for adaptation and regeneration based on a dialogical confrontation with power and the consequent interactions between faith, trust, belief and shared vision. It is a schema that presents contrast between the liberal and the communitarian view, between competition and collaboration, between charity and justice. It challenges comparative study regarding assimilation, enculturation and cultural celebration and their attendant social consequences. It is the democracy of discursive coupling and the initial reconciliation of social discrepancy.

Conclusion

Community schools are a critical realization of the praxis of liberatory education and its place in the life of a community, for these schools are concerned with breaking the bonds of the dispositional spheres of power and sharing and distributing that power with the self-determination and actualization of possibility. This moral struggle is played out in its ethical practice of social justice when full service community schools become agents of and for transformation in their communities. For in the back alleys of the nation's cities, and the struggling byways of our rural tapestry, those people who reside in the margins have no time for empty ideology. Community schools, like the people of New Boston Pilot, looked despair in the face and were willing to share in the work that would realize their hopes. This is more than a community of mind and of place. It is a community of spirit, a resurgence in each person's right to believe, to be responsible, to engage in conduct that nourishes health not disease. It is a community of affirmation, one that most simply recognizes each person's right to be.

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