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Making Sure Every Child Matters

Robert Rothman

In February 2000, an eight-year-old girl named Victoria Climbié died in London. A native of Ivory Coast, Victoria had come to the United Kingdom with her great-aunt, Marie-Therese Kouao, but an inquiry after her death revealed that Kouao and her boyfriend abused her and eventually killed her. They were convicted of Victoria's murder in 2001.

Victoria's case sparked outrage throughout England. In response, the Tony Blair government commissioned a report that found that Victoria's death might have been prevented. Police, social service agencies, and doctors had opportunities to protect her, but none did. "On twelve occasions, over ten months, chances to save Victoria's life were not taken," the report concludes.

The report recommended a complete overhaul of the way government agencies and organizations responsible for children, youth, and families operate, and the government adopted those recommendations in 2004 in a policy known as "Every Child Matters and 2005 Children's Act." Under the policy, local authorities were required to develop a Children and Young People's Plan for coordinating the multitude of organizations serving young people. This "integrated, front-line delivery" of services would be measured by a number of indicators around the five themes of the Every Child Matters agenda: Be Healthy, Stay Safe, Enjoy and Achieve, Make a Positive Contribution, and Achieve Economic Well-Being.

The Gordon Brown government reinforced this agenda at the national level by creating a new Department for Children, Schools, and Families. But

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responsibility for coordinating services rests at the local level. Each local authority appoints a Director of Children’s Services, who works with local agencies and community organizations to coordinate services and develop plans for improving outcomes for children and youths.

The Every Child Matters approach is a good example of what the Annenberg Institute for School Reform calls a “smart education system”: one that links a well-functioning school system with a comprehensive web of supports for children and families that fosters high levels of learning and development. Such a system places children and families at the center, involves cross-sector partnerships, aims at improving a broad set of outcomes for students and families, and involves shared accountability for improving those outcomes.

This issue of *Voices in Urban Education* examines the idea of a smart education system in practice by looking in depth at one local authority that has been remarkably successful across a range of health, social, educational, and economic indicators: the East London borough of Tower Hamlets. Located near the Tower of London that gives the borough its name, Tower Hamlets is now home to a large immigrant population, particularly Bangladeshi and Somali, and a large proportion of low-income families. Yet student achievement is above the national average, and the number of teenage pregnancies has dropped nearly in half since 2000.

- David Bell provides the national perspective by describing how the Every Child Matters strategy works at the national government level.
- Kevan Collins shows how Tower Hamlets uses data to monitor progress and plan for improvements.
- Helen Jenner describes the benefits and challenges of arranging partnerships across a broad range of sectors.
- Glenys Tolley provides the perspective of the “third sector” to show how community organizations can work with public agencies to support children and youths.



- Sir Alasdair Macdonald describes the experiences of a school that began to develop partnerships to support out-of-school learning for youths and parents before it was a national strategy.
- Janice Hirota, Robert Hughes, and Ronald Chaluisan consider a partnership strategy under way in New York City to suggest how such a system might work in this country.

Could such a system work in the United States?

The good news is that there is growing support for the idea. In June, a task force of leaders from the education, public health, civil rights, and faith communities released a statement that envisioned what they called a “broader, bolder approach to education.”¹ The statement emphasized that public policy should address a broad range of outcomes for children and youths, in addition to academic knowledge and skills, and that it should focus on linking schools with other agencies and organizations that support children and families to develop such outcomes. As the statement notes:

The new approach recognizes the centrality of formal schooling, but it also recognizes the importance of high-quality early childhood and pre-school programs, after-school and summer programs, and programs that develop parents’ capacity to support their children’s education. It seeks to build working relationships between schools and surrounding community institutions.

Bringing such an approach into place will not be easy. To some critics, the idea of addressing factors outside of school threatens to weaken accountability for academic achievement. And as Sir Alasdair Macdonald notes, he continually faces an uphill struggle convincing policy-makers that student out-of-school experiences are integral to their learning, not an extra.

Yet as reformers in the United States pursue efforts to develop a broader, bolder approach to education, they would do well to look across the Atlantic to see how our British colleagues have done it.

¹ For more information about the task force, see <www.boldapproach.org>.

A National Strategy for Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth

David Bell

A national strategy in England is aimed at linking schools and community services and supports so that all young people learn and develop well.

Soon after taking office as Prime Minister of Great Britain in 2007, Gordon Brown reorganized the education functions of the government by creating a new department, the Department for Children, Schools, and Families (DCSF). One of the goals of the new department, according to its Web site, is to “lead work across Government to improve outcomes for children, including work on children’s health and child poverty.”

The Permanent Secretary of DCSF – the civil servant in charge of running the day-to-day operations of the department – is David Bell. A former teacher and head teacher, Bell also served as Her Majesty’s Chief Inspector, in charge of the government department that oversees the United Kingdom’s well-regarded system of school inspections. He was appointed Permanent Secretary of the former Department for Education and Skills in 2006.

Bell spoke to *Voices in Urban Education* editor Robert Rothman about linking schools and children’s services and about the federal government’s role in improving outcomes for children and youth.

This issue focuses on the idea of combining services for children. I wanted to find out from your perspective what that looks like from Westminster. Why did you choose this approach, to link schools with social services and community organizations?

The decision to restructure the government departments was made by the new Prime Minister when he came into Downing Street in June 2007. I think the underpinning rationale for the Prime Minister was the need to, at the same time as focusing on school attainment, link other services that would

make a difference in what children achieved at school – link those services together. So I think that was the underpinning rationale.

To develop that a bit further, we know that what happens in school is terribly important for children’s attainment. For many youngsters, it’s the influence of out-of-school factors that will determine how well you succeed in school. Therefore, we felt that at the national government level we should try to link services together, in the same sort of way we’re seeing increasingly in local areas.

David Bell is Permanent Secretary of the Department for Children, Schools, and Families of Great Britain.



We believe that this is the right way forward. We believe very strongly that every child has the right to succeed. For some children and young people it's harder, because of family or other circumstances. Therefore, we need to ensure that all services that can make a difference to a child or young person or a family are aligned, so you don't have a situation where you get one kind of service for a child and then you have to search for another kind of service. We're trying to align the services around the child, around the young person, and around the family.

I understand from your plan that you have very ambitious goals to improve children's outcomes.

Absolutely. We have what are called public service agreements, which are essentially the government's ambitions across all our states of policy. There are five that are particularly pertinent

in our area, which we as a department are responsible nationally for, and those are: improving the health and well-being of young people; improving children's and young people's safety; raising the educational attainment of all children and young people; narrowing the gap in educational attainment between children from low-income and disadvantaged backgrounds and their peers; and then, finally, increasing the number of young people on the path to success.

These are high-level ambitions that we have, and underneath those are a whole set of indicators and targets that tell us how well we're doing to achieve those ambitions.

Our Secretary of State – that's the member of the government responsible for children, schools, and families – said that his ambition is to make this the best country for children and young people to grow up. That's a big ambition. But we think that by laying out these public service agreements and indicating what needs to happen, that's our best chance of achieving this ambition.

One issue in this country is, if you have these linked services and various institutions and agencies responsible, how do you hold them all accountable?

We do that in a number of ways. At the level of the individual school or college, for example, our school inspection agency, Ofsted (Office for Standards in Education, Children's Services, and Skills), is responsible for holding schools to account for their

performance. Increasingly, we are not just looking at educational attainment, but we will look at the extent to which schools are enabling young people to be successful, to be happy, to be safe, and so on. So I think what you do when you are looking at separate institutions, you hold them to account for a wider range of outcomes.

We also look at services in a complete locality. We might look at the services in the city of Manchester or the city of Leeds and see: What's the role of the local government authority, working with other agencies, including schools, to achieve these outcomes in their area? We actually agree entirely that if you're going to have bite to this system, your accountability framework needs to be lined up behind [it]. There's no point in saying we believe in linking these services to achieve a wider range of outcomes if you only focus your accountability system on one set of outcomes.

As you mentioned, the local agencies form their own links. How, then, do you in Westminster ensure quality across the United Kingdom?

I think that's why these public service agreements I referred to are so important. Because these will highlight what our national expectations are. So it might be, in one locality, the way the schools work together with the health system or work together with social services is different from the way it operates in another locality. But those different localities will still be focused on achieving local and national goals.

So we have the national goals set, but people are free to decide how to organize themselves, and we also have the accountability system I described to ensure that we have a check on performance.

Can you give me some examples of where the system has worked well?

Yes. One of the things we've done through our reforms is create what are called children's centers, particularly focused on the under-fives. These are physical buildings, sometimes based in schools or health centers, and sometimes brand-new, where we will bring together a number of services. You'll have education, child care, health provision, mental health support for parents, advice on aspects of bringing your children up, and so on. We have the co-location of those services, and we certainly have found from the research evidence that we are now seeing improved outcomes on the part of the children who are taking part in or using the children's services.

The other interesting thing for us on the children's centers is that there's not just the focus on the children, but also the adults. Actually, these children's centers will also have advice on work, on benefits, on getting back in education

We have the national goals set, but people are free to decide how to organize themselves, and we also have the accountability system to ensure that we have a check on performance.

and learning, on training courses, and so on. So I think with the co-location of services in one place, you can benefit both children and their parents.

It's relatively new, but do you have some evidence of the results overall?

Too early to say based on the changes to the government structures at national level, but I think it's safe to say that over the last decade or so we've been moving much more in this direction. We know, for example, that more children are achieving better qualifications in school than has ever been the case before; more children are leaving primary school with the basics in English and math, better than ever before. We know that more children are leaving school and going into further education and higher education, and the percentage of those who are not doing that is dropping.

So we have a whole set of measures that we think demonstrate that these policies are paying off. What we don't have enough of is a new range of targets, so we'll never contend, because obviously, as you understand from the U.S. perspective, our young people, as

your young people, are growing up in a world where it's not just how they're doing against their local competitors in one part of the country or another, it's actually how they stack up against international competitors. Therefore, we make no apologies here for continuing to raise the bar for what we expect from schools and other services.

Are there aspects of the system that you would change if you could? Are there things that might not be working as well as you'd like?

I think we're moving some of the changes forward. For example, we are asking ourselves [about] the local health system: how do we get children's health services to be more tightly embedded in what we're trying to achieve? That's one that we can ask at the moment.

We're also asking ourselves, how do we ensure that school principals have the range of skills and talents that they need, obviously to be first and foremost concerned with children's education, but also to understand how they make good links with other professionals? That's important for us to change.

I also think [we need to examine] just the whole set of expectations around what schools and other services do. You don't just concern yourselves with children at your school or in your playgroup. Actually, in a local area, you need to be concerned with the interests of all children and young people. You have to be prepared to work with everyone in your locality to secure those best outcomes.

I think we understand what we have to do in these different areas. We haven't quite done it. I think we're on the right lines. We're actually tackling the right problems in the system.

How do we ensure that school principals have the range of skills and talents that they need to understand how they make good links with other professionals?

A Service Fit for Children

Kevan Collins

One local borough in London uses data on children and youth development effectively to monitor progress and plan for improvements.

We all know that maintaining even a tolerable level of fitness requires hard work. Continued improvement is the product of sustaining good habits, not one-off or occasional bursts of good intention. The same is true for organizations. Building a self-improving culture where we are never satisfied isn't the easy option. Being recently recognized as one of the very best Children's Services in England might be taken as a cue to pause and rest. In Tower Hamlets, we have responded with a determination to go further and achieve even more.

Our relentless and reliable ambition to improve is informed by a shared appreciation that our work matters. The moral purpose, the determination to serve the needs of children, is well established as an issue that has strong political consensus. In Tower Hamlets there is a deep and shared appreciation that the success of our children is vital to the long-term health, security, and wealth of our community.

Tower Hamlets, London

The children I need to be fit to serve live in the East End of London. We're a community with a proud and long history. The Tower of London, built in

1066, lies at our western border; the new financial capital of Europe, Canary Wharf, is at the eastern edge. To the north is the emerging Olympic Village for the 2012 games. We are home to approximately 220,000 people. Our rich history and fast-changing future is matched by unparalleled diversity. Tower Hamlets has long been the gateway to London. From the French Huguenots in the seventeenth century fleeing religious persecution to the Jews of Eastern Europe to the textile workers from Bangladesh to the more recent arrivals from war-torn Somalia, we have provided refuge and a home. In turn, these waves of immigration have fueled our economy and culture, as Tower Hamlets is recognized as one of the coolest and most vibrant areas in London.

Our rich diversity is matched with massive inequality. Too many of our residents don't yet share the wealth and opportunity that has been created, and we need to work much harder to make sure that our young people begin to take their place in the trading halls

Kevan Collins is corporate director of Children's Services, Tower Hamlets, London, United Kingdom.

of the international banks that dominate Canary Wharf, lead our public services, and build businesses of their own.

Our vision for Tower Hamlets is that all children will be part of a mainstream environment, and that this environment will promote and foster high achievement for all.

The unique Tower Hamlets social context could be used by many as an excuse for under-achievement and poor performance in the local education system. The most striking thing about Tower Hamlets' vision for its schools is that it does not. Deprivation is not an excuse for failure, but a spur to excellence. Despite the temptation to compare our performance with local benchmark authorities, we don't – our aspirations are to perform well against *national* standards and expectations. We judge our achievements against the framework of the national Every Child Matters agenda.

The local context does, nonetheless, have to be understood, in order to appreciate how far we have come in improving our schools over the last five years. Sixty-one percent of Tower Hamlets households have an annual income below £9,000 (around \$16,000) per year; 57 percent of pupils are entitled to free school meals, compared with the national average of 16 percent. Only 9 percent of the population is from social classes 1 (professionals) and 2 (managers), compared with 31 percent nationally and 18 percent in our "cluster" authorities. Only 11 percent of our adults have higher-education qualifications and our adult population has the lowest literacy rates in the country. Seventy percent of our pupils have English as an additional language. Bangladeshi pupils constitute 59 percent of the borough's school population and the proportion of White



United Kingdom–native pupils is only 24 percent. Three percent of our pupils have special educational needs.

Investing in our children is the surest way we can protect our future. Tower Hamlets, with the youngest population in London, is well paced to maximize its return. Standing at 24 percent of the population, the children and young people who are under nineteen is well above the London average of 18 percent.

A Plan to Integrate Services and Improve Outcomes

The 2005 Children’s Act challenged every Local Authority in England to bring all of their services for children together under the leadership of a director of Children’s Services. This bold and ambitious move for the first time corralled the plethora of agencies and agendas under a single point of leadership. The aims were simple and correct; five key domains of every child’s life were set out as key foundations to a thriving and successful childhood:

- Be Safe
- Be Healthy
- Enjoy and Achieve
- Make a Positive Contribution
- Achieve Economic Well-being

The scope and range of the five areas created a broad canvas for action. Under the banner of Every Child Matters and the five outcomes, it’s tempting to freeze and become paralyzed by the scale of the agenda. The test for every community was to understand their children, better appreciate their needs and dreams, and, critically, set priorities for action. The development of a Children’s Plan provided the

The test for every community was to understand their children, better appreciate their needs and dreams, and, critically, set priorities for action.

key. Working across a broad range of community groups, public agencies, the business sector, and, most important, with the engagement of children and their families, we developed a three-year Children’s Plan. The plan attempted to tell our story:

- who we are;
- what we’ve achieved;
- where we want to be;
- how we will work in partnership to achieve our shared goals;
- when we expect to achieve our outcomes.

With the plan in place we set about getting to work.

We learned very quickly that the success of the endeavor was going to rest on three critical features:

- trust and respect in relationships;
- relentless and reliable focus on systems and standards;
- constantly improving workforce and investment in resources for children.

As a starting point, focusing on systems and standards established a firm base and set the tone and personality of the organization. When we talk about standards, we are not restricted

by the narrow use of the word that has dominated recent debate in the education community. Here, standards represent the broad aspirations we have for our children and the full range and scope of our behaviors that make a difference. Using every available data source, we are constantly attempting to take the temperature of the organization and assess its impact and effectiveness.

Developing this approach has encouraged us to be clear about the different levels of data that need to inform our thinking and strategies to ensure key priorities reach to the individual in a continuous improvement cycle. This is an iterative process, but has four key elements:

1. Key priorities are identified and monitored. Our Tower Hamlets Index identifies key priorities, which are then monitored monthly and positive action taken to tackle blocks and risks. (Figure 1)
2. Our data is analyzed over time, and trends identified and investigated, including benchmarking against similar authorities and

learning from those who are performing more highly than we are in particular areas. (Figure 2)

3. We look for patterns and differences at the local level. Even in a small borough, there can be great geographical variation, as well as variation between schools. This enables us to target limited resources more creatively – examples include introducing additional dentist services into an area, providing specific training for a school with a particular area of weakness using expertise from neighboring schools, and developing shared use of youth facilities to extend provision beyond the school day. (Figure 3)
4. We look at individual-level data, with a particular focus on tracking individual children’s progress, but also listening to children and their parents. We ensure that practice is informed by qualitative as well as quantitative information. (Figure 4)

Success: Connecting Data on Individuals to Broad Strategy

Success comes quickly when we are able to identify a data trail that connects individuals to broad strategic priorities. As an example, we set a key priority to reduce the number of sixteen- to eighteen-year-old young people not in education, employment, or training (NEET). At the outset in 2005, 13 percent of our young people were in this category. We constantly measured and monitored the figures, established boards to focus on the priority, and reiterated our ambition to see all young people begin their life after compulsory secondary education in worthwhile and fulfilling placement. The breakthrough came when we

Standards represent the broad aspirations we have for our children. Using every available data source, we are constantly attempting to take the temperature of the organization and assess its impact and effectiveness.

Tower Hamlets Index – Children’s Services	06/07 PERFORMANCE	LATEST PERFORMANCE	TARGET 07/08
Number of under-18-year-olds accessing drugs treatment	711	677	531
Percentage of child protection cases which should have been reviewed that were.	100%	100%	100%
Percentage of children looked after with three or more placements during the year.	10.9%	11.5%	10%
Percentage of young people Not in Education, Employment, or Training.	10.8%	8.3%	8.2%
Primary attendance	93.3%	94.5%	95.5%
Primary unauthorized absence	1.1%	1.1%	1.3%
Secondary attendance	92.4%	92.7%	93%
Secondary unauthorized absence	2.2%	2.2%	2.1%

Figure 1. Key priorities

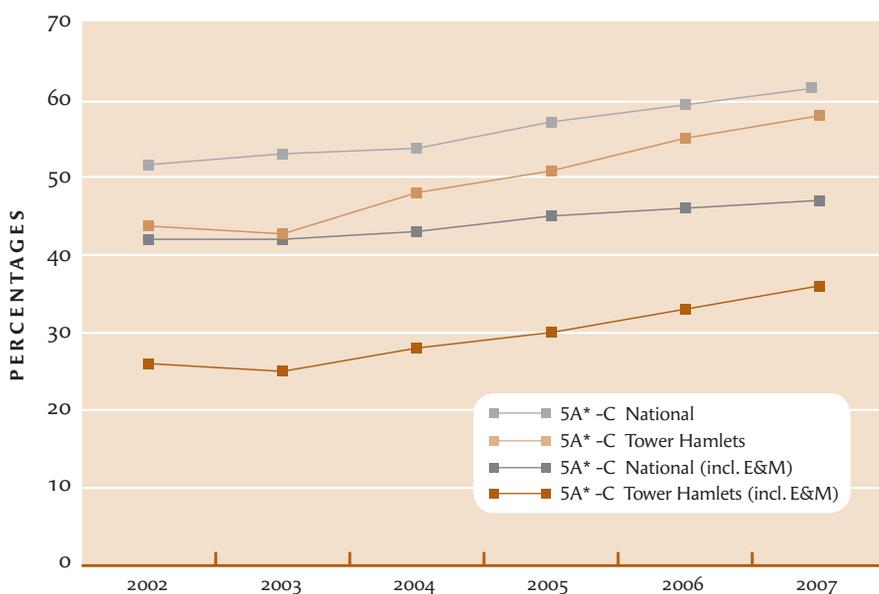


Figure 2. Example of tracking data trends

Multiyear comparison of 14- to 16-year-olds, nationally and in Tower Hamlets, who achieve good scores on five General Certificate of Secondary Education subjects and on five subjects including English and mathematics

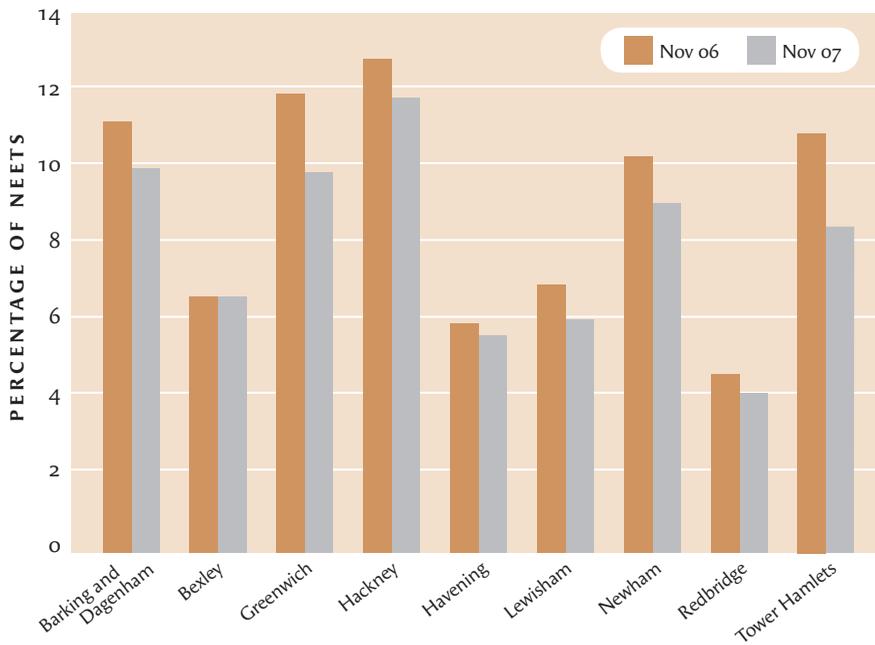


Figure 3. Example of identifying local differences and patterns

Two-year comparison of 16- to 18-year-olds in London boroughs who are Not currently engaged in Employment, Education, or Training (NEET)

Percentage of Five-Year-Olds with Tooth Decay in Tower Hamlets' Local Area Partnerships

LAP 7	51.6%
LAP 6	48.2%
LAP 1	47.5%
LAP 2	47.4%
LAP 3	45.1%
LAP 4	43.2%
LAP 5	43.1%
LAP 8	39.4%

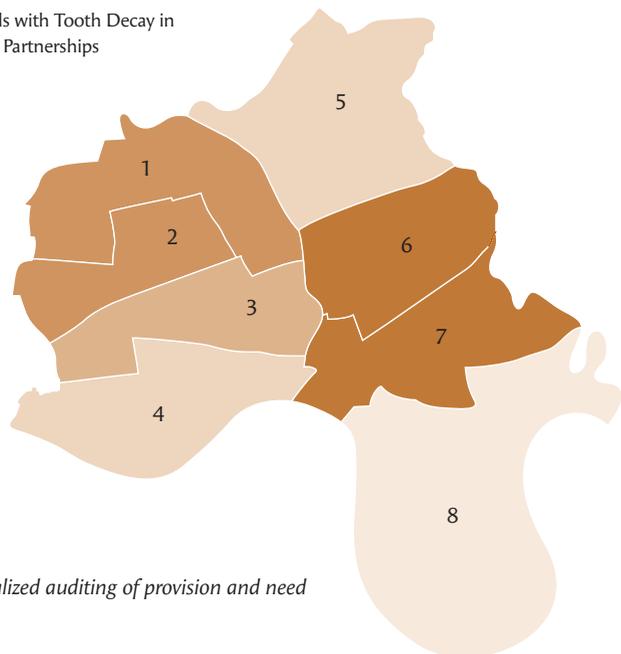


Figure 4. Example of localized auditing of provision and need

stopped focusing on the big picture and traveled down the line to work person by person and “personalized” the issue. Some of the key shifts included:

- shifting everything to real names and numbers;
- using teaching assistants to go and visit the homes of every NEET young person;
- inviting every individual into the Town Hall to a jobs and training fair;
- developing new (financial) incentives that rewarded the family as well as the individual;
- schools playing a much bigger part and joining a campaign of early identification;
- attaching personal advisers to work with young people at risk to offer support in the run-up to leaving school and, critically, in the first six months after the all-encompassing embrace of the education system.

Taking the individual as the starting point and focusing on the detail to drive improvement puts the organization under considerable pressure and is counter-intuitive to much of the data-driven culture that has emerged from reform of public service. However, using ever-more-sophisticated tools to measure performance and track the progress of individuals is precisely how we will connect organizational improvement and an ambition to personalize our services.

Delivering through Partnerships

Helen Jenner

Partnerships across a broad range of sectors make it possible to improve services for children and youth, but maintaining effective partnerships poses challenges.

It would be impossible to deliver our ambitious outcomes agenda for Tower Hamlets' children without effective partnerships. We cannot focus on improvements for the individual without working together. Strategic managers planning developments based on number crunching from remote offices do not deliver outcomes.

Work on partnership has developed over many years, enabling us to develop strategies that can be successfully implemented because they are built on knowledge from all the stakeholders. These partnerships exist at all service levels – from strategic partnerships that drive forward our ambitious agenda to partnerships around the individual child that reduce vulnerability.

Strategic Partnerships

Our partnership work is exemplified by our highly effective Local Strategic Partnership, which has school improvement at its heart. Our Children's Services director (Kevan Collins) was appointed in September 2005 with the key task of producing the Children and Young People's Plan (CYPP) and bringing together education and children's

social care services to enable us to make a further step change in the quality of services. The new directorate was expected to deliver services for children in the context of the strong Local Area Partnerships, or LAPs (eight regional areas, each covering approximately 2,500 children 0–18), as well as the Community Planning Action Groups, or CPAGs (service provider groups from across all agencies working in Tower Hamlets), both of which include representatives from all stakeholders in our borough.

From its inception, we have been aware that the CYPP can only be achieved through effective partnership structures that link directly to our key aims. This work is all brought together through the Children and Young People Strategic Partnership Group. Our structures include three major components.

- *Eight LAPs* provide the formal framework through which residents are involved. LAPs provide local people with the chance to influence the delivery of services locally and to scrutinize the performance of the council, health, police, and other mainstream services. Issues around service delivery within social services and education with regard to children at risk may be

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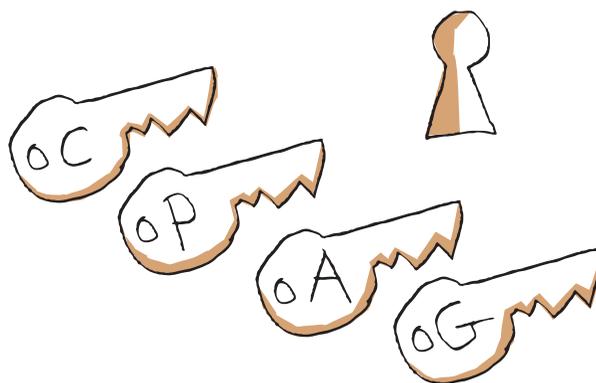
discussed in this forum, and the mechanisms are in place in the form of the CPAGs to ensure that concerns are fed back to the directorates and acted upon.

- Five CPAGs bring together key service providers under each of the five themes of the Community Plan to identify ways of improving local services. Each CPAG oversees the development and implementation of a joined-up plan for its specific Community Plan theme.

The five CPAGs are:

- Living Safely
 - Living Well
 - Creating and Sharing Prosperity
 - Learning, Achievement, and Leisure
 - Excellent Public Services
- A *Partnership Management Group (PMG)* involves residents from the four main areas of the borough and representatives from the CPAGs, together with local councilors and representatives from the major service providers, businesses, faith communities, and voluntary and community sectors. The Children and Young People's Strategic Group is part of the PMG and has responsibility for developing the Community Plan and Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy and ensuring that all elements related to children are delivered efficiently and effectively and that targets are achieved.

The key strategic vehicle for driving our agenda forward is the CYPP, overseen by our Children and Young People Strategic Partnership. The ambitious vision of this plan is reflected in the goals of the borough's Community



Plan and the council's Strategic Plan, and other individual service plans across the Partnership.¹

The CYPP addresses the five outcomes of the national plan Every Child Matters² through theme groups, with the additional theme of providing excellent children's services.

- *Be Healthy.* We want our children to grow up healthy, in body and mind.
- *Stay Safe.* We want our children and young people to grow up free from harm, fear, and prejudice.
- *Enjoy and Achieve.* We want our children and young people to grow up enjoying life and feeling proud of where they live and what they have achieved.
- *Make a Positive Contribution.* We want our children to grow up understanding differences, confident and courageous about the future, and able and willing

¹ These documents can be found on the borough's Web site at <www.towerhamlets.gov.uk>.

² See "A National Strategy for Improving Outcomes for Children and Youth" by David Bell in this issue for a description of the national plan.

Schools are encouraged to develop a range of partnerships to meet different needs – including, for example, federations between schools to support achievement, a secondary school partnership to address behavior and exclusions, clustering of schools for professional development, and planning for extended services.

to make a positive contribution to a strong cohesive community in Tower Hamlets.

- *Achieve Economic Well-being.* We want our children and young people to develop for themselves, their families, and their communities the skills to achieve their ambitions.

The current plan aims to ensure that by 2010, Tower Hamlets will be a place where most children are achieving at least as well as, or better than, the national average in school; where education is valued; and where all children and young people feel safe and can flourish. Improving our schools' performance is central to achieving this; work to set up our plan from 2009 to 2012 is already under way.

Partnership with Schools

We have close relationships with our schools and a thriving Headteachers' Consultative process. Schools are encouraged to develop a range of partnerships to meet different needs – including, for example, federations between schools to support achievement, a secondary school partnership to address behavior and exclusions, clustering of schools for professional development, and planning for

extended services across groups of schools. We have a 14–19 partnership (the Hub) in the borough, whose membership includes all secondary and special school headteachers, as well as representatives from the Learning Skills Council London East, Connexions (a governmental career-counseling agency), work-based learning providers, and local universities, as well as the Local Authority.

This partnership enables us to offer a very strong post-16 curriculum to our young people, which has contributed to our recent improvements in educational attainment at 18/19. We have worked closely with schools to develop our future schools vision, including programs to improve our school stock – the Building Schools for the Future Programme for secondary schools and the Primary Strategy for Change for our primary schools. We look at the performance of schools when prioritizing, and we consider the particular needs of their pupils, which are at the heart of our decision making.

Community needs will also be prioritized. We ensure that our community stakeholders are involved in the oversight of the program, with regular reports to Cabinet and, through the Tower Hamlets Strategic Partnership structure, to LAPs and CPAGs.

Partnership with Employers

Involvement of employers has been essential to enhance our 14–19 curriculum. We have promoted this through our vocational network, the local Learning and Skills Council, and the Education Business Partnership (EBP). Through the EBP we are able to make strong links with prospective employers and ensure that local young people are able to access the new opportunities provided by the shift of London’s banking “heart” from the City to Canary Wharf (in the middle of our borough). Higher-education partners, such as the University of East London and Queen Mary University (part of the University of London), are part of the education regeneration of the borough, with teacher training courses provided from University of Cumbria through our Professional Development Centre.

Partnership with the Third Sector

Third Sector (nonprofit) organizations are closely involved in our partnership arrangements and are essential to our strategic planning and service delivery. The sector is represented on all key partnership bodies and is a crucial strategic partner, often bringing a community perspective that could be missed through statutory-only strategic leadership.

There are challenges, though, because many community organizations continually struggle for funding and cannot serve all the functions we would like them to perform. For example,

the Tower Hamlets Council funded a position to support service delivery and communication. Unfortunately the host organization for this post, an umbrella organization, has recently closed due to financial pressures. A Community Empowerment Network, which is attached to our Local Strategic Partnership, is very effective in bringing some parts of the third sector on board, but its role across the sector is still developing.

Children’s Services work very closely with third-sector organizations to deliver services and have a large number of Service Level Agreements (SLAs) with organizations delivering particular provision – ranging from work with parents to youth service provision to Children’s Centre management to work with very vulnerable and disabled children and young people. We know that voluntary and community organizations can be more people friendly than our larger bureaucracies and have particular expertise in reaching families that are anxious about statutory services.





Partnership with Parents

The council and its partner agencies recognize the key role played by parents and are committed to working in partnership with them. We have established a partnership Parental Engagement and Family Support Strategy, which evaluates work with parents to support all of the Every Child Matters outcomes. This partnership enables us to audit the “whole” offer to parents from across our agencies so that we can identify and address gaps in service provision. For example, we realized that there was insufficient encouragement for fathers to be engaged in parenting courses, so we now run Dad-specific courses. Also, we have recently become aware of the gaps in our provision for young people who are taking on a carer’s role and are building cross-agency strategy to address this.

Specific examples of our partnership work with parents include:

- the involvement of parents in the Children’s Centre partnerships and school governing bodies across the borough;
- the Skills for Families initiative and the development of family learn-

ing opportunities, which aim to improve the literacy and numeracy skills of parents and children;

- recognizing parents’ skills and experience through the Passport to Learning initiative, which supports parents’ return to learning and employment and signposts progression routes and which has high participation rates among minority ethnic parents;
- the establishment of a diverse range of parenting initiatives, including Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities and Ocean Maths (funded through the national government’s New Deal for Communities program).

Partnership with Children and Young People

This important strand of work has helped us develop our Children and Young People’s Plan and was established through our Youth Participation Strategy and a young people’s Web site (AMP: The voice of young people in Tower Hamlets). Young people are key members of the Local Strategic Partnership: more than 1,000 nineteen- to twenty-five-year-olds attended LAP events last year, and voting by eighteen- to twenty-four-year-olds in the general election was higher than the national average. Over 4,000 young people voted to elect a young mayor for Tower Hamlets.

At an operational level, children and young people are actively involved in a range of developments; for example, young adults who were in public care mentoring their younger peers, eleven-year-olds acting as “playground buddies” to younger children, and

young people volunteering as health ambassadors. This year we were the first council to have a team of young inspectors involved in the inspection of our services (at our suggestion). They were challenging and effective judges of our services and have really helped us think through what we view as effective and why.

Partnership to Support the Individual

For vulnerable young people, the importance of our working as a “Team Around the Child” cannot be overestimated. We know from consultation with children and young people and, sadly, from serious case reviews, that communication between agencies to support children at risk is absolutely key. In 2007, a single cross-agency assessment for vulnerable children was introduced throughout the UK – the Common Assessment Framework (CAF), shown in Figure 1. The assessment is completed in partnership across agencies and with the parent and young person.

The assessment leads to a plan for support, and this includes identifying a lead professional to pull the work together and the members of the Team Around the Child who will contribute to the plan.

Jakirul, a vulnerable young person, recently moved from his primary school to a much larger secondary school. His story illustrates the effects of improved partnership working. For Jakirul, who did not speak until he was seven, the move to secondary school was a big challenge. Working together, teams were able to support him to ensure this was a successful move.

One key issue for Jakirul was getting to school on his own. He explained that he did not want to look “babyish”



Figure 1. The Common Assessment Framework

by having to be escorted to school, but both he and his mother were very anxious about the thought of him traveling independently. His lead professional and transition-support worker, Nicola, worked closely with his mother, his primary school teachers, and the council's Independent Travel Training Teams (we're one of the few authorities in the country that have such services) to develop the necessary skills and confidence for him to travel safely on his own, and they made certain his secondary school teachers were aware what a huge achievement this was.

Stephen's story illustrates how the team approach can help us to support children by working with parents as well as children. Stephen's primary school headteacher had concerns about his disruptive behavior but found that his mother was defensive whenever she raised the issues with her. The headteacher persuaded the parent to enroll in a Strengthening Families, Strengthening Communities program. During the program, the mother acknowledged that she had anger-

management problems and also found it hard to control her son's anger. During the program, the child started to receive specialist help from our Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services (CAMHS). The mother made great efforts to change her approach by trying the different parenting strategies suggested in the program, including the adoption of the anger-management techniques. She found that praise and attention were particularly effective in dealing with her child and she is learning not to lose her temper. The mother's efforts to change and the help from CAMHS have led to a significant improvement of Stephen's behavior and his own anger management.

Embedding this very effective model of partnership work is an essential part of our program to improve outcomes for children. Each aspect of the CAF is graded and reviewed every six months, so that parents, the child, and agencies can review which interventions have been helpful and which have not. This evaluation also is used to inform strategic direction and training for lead professionals and team members.

As these partnerships become more effective, defensive reactions are gradually being eroded, and the reserved nature of many formal British meetings is diminishing, so that people are more able to contribute to healthy, informed debate. This helps bring a wide range of perspectives to solving problems.

Why Do Our Partnerships Work?

Key to success in partnership is the recognition that each participant has equal value to contribute to our thinking and development. Initially, partnership meetings could be quite daunting for people – the agendas seemed huge and people only had expertise in particular areas, so many felt that perhaps they had nothing to contribute. Over time, we have refined our ways of working. Typically each meeting will have a particular focus item as well as the broader agenda. Focus items are chosen based on progress against the priorities identified in our CYPP. Our last Children and Young People Strategic Group looked at four areas where progress had stalled from the Enjoy and Achieve strand of the plan. The Chair of the Enjoy and Achieve subgroup presented a brief overview of the issues, two young people presented the work they had done consulting with young people on their views surrounding the issues, a headteacher presented the Headteachers' Consultative perspective, and a school governor the view of governors. The whole group then divided into groups to discuss one of the four areas in depth. Each group had a mixture of service deliverers from across agencies and stakeholders. Heated debate on how to “unblock” the lack of progress followed and new approaches to old problems emerged.

As these partnerships become more effective against the barriers caused by “silo” mentality, defensive reactions are gradually being eroded, and the reserved nature of many formal British meetings is diminishing, so that people are more able to contribute to healthy, informed debate. This helps bring a wide range of perspectives to solving problems.



What Are Our Challenges?

Although there is good participation in the wide variety of partnership meetings, it is not easy to ensure every group feels represented and consulted. Communicating why decisions are reached across the whole borough is not easy – and being a partnership, these decisions are not always easily reached! There is still a feeling from some groups that the Local Authority, as the partnership organizer, has greater influence in groups than may be appropriate. We have tried to reduce the number of local authority officers who are chairs to reduce this perception.

Effective partnership meetings take time to develop and to agree on priorities and solutions to challenges. There are capacity issues in finding the time required to work in partnership – deciding directions on your own is

quicker, but, we believe, much less effective in the long run. For some groups, particularly voluntary-sector and community colleagues in small organizations, there is only limited time to be spent in meetings. Timing of meetings presents further challenges. During the day, students and many people who are working are not able to attend; evening meetings tend to reduce the likelihood of mothers attending; weekends are not popular with officers – arriving at agreement on meeting times and places can seem a challenge on its own!

As we develop our skills in working as a team around the child, we recognize how challenging communication can be. For some of our children with particularly complex needs there may be as many as twenty different agencies involved; we are reviewing how the lead professional role in coordinating support can be shared and responsibility taken on by members of the team. We know that if a lead professional leaves we do not yet have completely reliable transfer systems in place – the effective individual working is not yet systemic. For new staff joining, simply getting to know the child, parent, and all the agencies involved can be a daunting task. It is crucial that effective support for the child and his or her family continues during this period.

Our children and young people review for this year sums up our progress on using partners to inform our work:

We have made considerable progress over the last year in developing deeper partnership working, integrated working, and better engagement with community and users. These core principles remain at the foundation of our approach to making a step change in outcomes for children by transforming the way services are delivered.

As with all our work, the commitment to practices at the strategic level being reflected in work at the individual level is crucial. To make a real difference for all our children, transforming our front line working with individual children and their families so that cross-agency work is increasingly effective remains an exciting challenge. Much has been achieved. But there is still plenty to do!

The Voluntary Sector Experience in Tower Hamlets: A Case Study

Glenys Tolley

The role of the “third sector” – nonprofit community organizations – is vitally important in improving services for children and youth.

In 2001, a small group of individuals with a passion for play and a recognition of the need to increase play opportunities in Tower Hamlets got together to establish a voluntary-sector Play Association. Local enthusiasm and support from the council, together with the expertise of a London-wide support agency, led to the set-up of Play Association Tower Hamlets (PATH). Initial funding was secured through the Children’s Fund – a government initiative set up to tackle disadvantage among children and young people. The Children’s Fund helped provide a responsive approach to developing services that addresses the difficulties faced by some children and their families, encouraging voluntary organizations and community and faith groups to work in partnership with local statutory agencies, children, young people, and their families to deliver high-quality preventative services to meet the needs of communities.

PATH has developed quickly as a successful and dynamic umbrella organization, thanks to a strong management committee made up of six volunteers and a dedicated, highly

skilled staff team of play professionals with experience of community development and capacity building in the voluntary sector.

Coordinating Work on Play

As a voluntary-sector organization, PATH has been able to attract additional funding for play from a range of sources, including charitable donations and regeneration funds. PATH campaigns for more and better opportunities and resources locally and has a key role in lobbying local political representatives. As a voluntary-sector organization, we are part of a London-wide network of Play Associations (PAN London) whose wider remit is to campaign for play at regional and national levels.

PATH has the expertise needed to support both new and existing play providers and to enhance play provision through information dissemination, training, and resources.

Voluntary-sector organizations are often favored over the council at a local level for their hands-on, grassroots approach to the delivery of services to local communities. PATH has managed to maintain this proven approach and, at the same time, strengthen

Glenys Tolley is director of the Play Association Tower Hamlets, London, United Kingdom.

partnerships and raise the profile and importance of play at a strategic level with the council and, in particular, Children’s Services.

Strategic Impact

PATH’s presence as a representative of the voluntary sector on the Children and Young People’s Strategic Group (CYPSG) in Tower Hamlets shows a recognition for play at a strategic level that many of our sister Play Associations across London struggle to achieve. The partnership group itself is relatively new and has been better coordinated and contributed to in recent months. Consultation with the wider voluntary sector and other agencies has resulted in a change in meeting format and in papers being circulated in advance of meetings. Voluntary-sector representatives continue to feel the need for a more proactive role but have restricted capacity and limited time to devote to these issues.

Voluntary-sector representatives not only represent the views of their organization or specialist field, but also that of the voluntary sector as a whole. Representatives are responsible for

feeding key issues raised at the CYPSG to the wider voluntary-sector network through the Voluntary Sector Children and Youth Forum. This is a mechanism that needs better coordination and support. Being a representative on strategic partnerships has been invaluable to PATH, but for every meeting attended we sacrifice essential time needed in maintaining and sustaining both our own organization and those smaller organizations we support.

There is a general lack of knowledge or understanding of the voluntary sector within the statutory, health, and private sectors that must be addressed.

For those departments within the council that work closely with voluntary organizations this is less apparent, but there often remains a view that as the “third sector” we are less professional, organized, or effective. Are we volunteers? Do we receive pay? These questions are often asked.

It remains a challenge for the sector, but having the opportunity to sit on strategic partnerships and to get involved in local decision making can only work in our favor, raising our profile and giving support to the valid contributions that we make.

Delivery Impact

PATH has built strong, personal, working relationships with the play providers we have set up and supported over a number of years. We have a reputation for responding to general queries, training needs, and the more complex needs of the play sector across the borough. Much of our success is due to the expertise of the staff team and the shared aim of ensuring that all children in Tower Hamlets have access to a wide range of high-quality play opportunities and spaces. As a result of setting up the

Having the opportunity to sit on strategic partnerships and to get involved in local decision making can only work in our favor, raising our profile and giving support to the valid contributions that we make.

Play Association, we have made serious progress towards this aim and continue to raise the profile of play borough-wide. PATH has a collective voice for play, giving the strength, confidence, and skills to play providers working at a very local level, within their communities, to remain sustainable and to thrive.

As an example of our strategic impact, PATH was commissioned by the council to lead on the development of a Play Strategy for the borough. This process brought together key agencies, many of whom had no previous involvement in play, to consider play at a strategic level. This raised the profile of play and PATH and was instrumental in attracting substantial funding through the National Lottery program for play.

With the introduction of a national ten-year Children's Plan and subsequent draft national Play Strategy, Tower Hamlets council was invited to bid to become a Play Pathfinder. This bid, in partnership with PATH, has secured £2.5 million for play in Tower Hamlets and is a testament to a positive working partnership between sectors.

Issues for Voluntary-Sector Partnerships

Key to the capacity for the voluntary and community sector to be active partners in Tower Hamlets is capacity to sustain involvement. Funding issues are often at the heart of any problems:

- Funding is often short-term (year to year), which leaves small organizations vulnerable and creates difficulties for securing and keeping staff.
- Charitable trusts and the corporate and business sector tend to favor direct work with children, as opposed to funding for an umbrella agency such as PATH, but without our training and



PATH has a collective voice for play, giving the strength, confidence, and skills to play providers working at a very local level.

support the quality and capacity of play providers locally would not be at its current high standard.

- Recent government funding is heavily weighted towards capital, as opposed to revenue.
- Excellent projects funded through charitable trusts, such as BBC Children in Need, are rarely given continuation funding – which often means work that has proved successful and that should be rolled out to new projects is cut short.
- Key staff posts such as the director, information worker, and capacity-building manager form the core services and infrastructure of PATH – these remain some of the most difficult posts to attract funding for.

These issues are experienced by statutory services as well, but they have greater capacity to manage shifts in resourcing. Partnership work around commissioning, engaging all stakeholders, and long-term contracts with voluntary-sector providers is being developed to help introduce more reliable core funding in the sector.

The Future

These are exciting times in Tower Hamlets. We are seeing improvements in our key target areas and the work we are doing is positively evaluated, as in our last inspection where we were judged to be outstanding. But there is a passion to do more and there is still a long way to go to ensure success for all our children and young people. The role of the voluntary sector is increasingly recognized and valued. The commitment to working together to challenge and inspire across organizations and the community will be at the heart of achieving our ambition to ensure excellent services and give all children the best possible start in life.

“Out of Hours”: Making the “Extra” Part of the Core Business of Schooling

Sir Alasdair Macdonald

A secondary school in London has achieved dramatic improvements by addressing the “out of hours” learning needs of students, as well as the needs of their parents.

Like many urban schools, Morpeth School, a school for students aged eleven to sixteen, located in the Tower Hamlets borough of London, faces substantial challenges. It is overcrowded; it includes large numbers of students, many of them Bangladeshi, who come from impoverished backgrounds and whose first language is not English; and it has a higher-than-average number of students with learning disabilities.

Yet Morpeth has achieved remarkable success. The proportion of students who scored at the top levels on national tests has increased from 11 percent in 1994 to 76 percent in 2007. The school has gone from being one of the least popular in the area to one of the most popular, with three applicants for every place. As the 2007 national inspection report concluded, “Morpeth is an outstanding school, providing an orderly and purposeful environment within which pupils thrive.”

Leading the school is its headteacher, Sir Alasdair Macdonald, whom the inspection report called “outstanding.” Macdonald spoke to *Voices in Urban Education* editor Robert Rothman about the way the school’s efforts to support students’ out-of-school learning and engage parents have contributed to its success.

Sir Alasdair Macdonald is headteacher of Morpeth School, Tower Hamlets, London, United Kingdom.

Tell me about your school.

My school is for pupils aged eleven to sixteen. It’s got 1,200 pupils. It’s mixed in terms of gender. It’s also mixed ethnically, as with most inner-city schools. About half the pupils are of Bangladeshi origin. About 30 percent are [from] White working-class backgrounds, and the remaining 15 to 20 percent are a mixture of African, Caribbean, Turkish, Chinese, and Vietnamese. For just over 60 percent of pupils, English is not their first language. About the same percentage are of Muslim background, and 70 percent

are what we say in Britain “entitled to free school meals.” What that means is that they are from families that are below the poverty line. The national rate is about 16 percent, so at 70 percent we’re one of the highest in the country.

I understand that achievement levels have risen quite rapidly.

Yes. Our government is obsessed with measurement and attainment, and I think some of it is spurious. In any case, using their measures, then we have

What middle-class families provide for their children is a whole wealth of enrichment opportunities. Our young people tend not to have similar opportunities.

made significant progress. That's over a period of time. It's been an improvement that has had its ups and downs along the way. The overall trend has been markedly upward, but it's not been, by any means, a straight line. There have been years in which the results have gone down before they went up again.

What our government measures is the number of pupils who get five good passes, and we've gone from about 11 percent getting that in 1994 to 76 percent last year. I think percentages are a better way of looking at things, but I sometimes think that raw numbers are also important. So in 1994 or 1995, there were seventeen pupils in the school who got the standard measure you're supposed to get – the nearest equivalent would be graduation, I suppose, in an American context – there were seventeen then, and last year it was 167. That's the kind of change that has taken place.

Partnerships for an Enriched Learning Environment

We're looking at the ways that schools link with partners in the community to improve student outcomes. How has your school engaged partners to support students?

Our city schools are a very mixed, very heterogeneous environment. We've got all sorts of different types of schools: we've got single-sex schools, faith schools, and all sorts of stuff. We're unusual in that we're a straightforward community school. And the four junior schools where most of our pupils come from are also the same. So we've got a very strong local community of schools, which you might expect to be the norm – but in fact, it's anything but the norm.

Most of our partnership work over the past ten or fifteen years has been focused very much on creating continuity of education from three-year-olds through the sixteen-year-olds. We've worked in very close partnership with the four local junior schools – primary schools – and that has focused both on the young people themselves and also on their parents and families.

You'll find other schools that have had a greater emphasis on social aspects, on health aspects, and so on. We have focused very heavily on education itself. One of the strongest drivers of what we're trying to do is trying to create an enriched curriculum. The basic curriculum is the same as in any country – English, math, science, and so on. What middle-class families provide for their children is a whole wealth of enrichment opportunities, from holidays to visits to museums to reading to discussions, whatever. Our young people tend not to have similar opportunities. They are just not there for them in the same way. Not because they don't want [the opportunities]; they just

don't have the wherewithal to do that. So we have a very strong tradition of trying to work with our primary schools in trying to grab any opportunity that we can, whether it's a residential experience, whether it's working with local businesses, whether it's taking kids to theaters, to art galleries, to whatever.

And we have a very, very strong what we call out-of-hours learning program. A significant number of students will come into the school early in the morning for supplementary classes, will come in on Saturday mornings, will come in holidays, and so on, and a lot of it is focused on classes that are about to take public examinations. So on a Saturday morning in March or April, we'll have 150 kids in school doing additional math or science or whatever it is they are doing that particular morning.

So we have a program around two things: one is supplementary learning – trying to give our kids additional support they need there – but also supplementary enrichment activities, which we think have a double value. They have a value in their own right – take the kids to see a play or whatever it is, on a visit somewhere abroad, or whatever. But the second advantage is that the kids, then, if you excuse the expression, can buy into our core business, because school's interesting, school's fun, interesting things happen. So as well as experiencing something of value in its own right, it also helps to engage them with school.

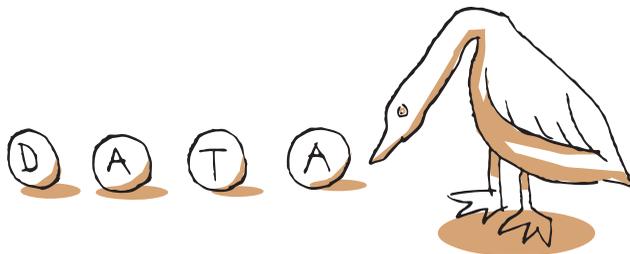
The Importance of Including Families

Have you done things with families as well?

What happened was, we started off doing these enrichment programs with the primary schools and with our pupils and a lot of things that cut across age ranges, and over a period of time we gradually realized that we had to engage with the parents as well wherever we could. It's quite difficult to do that in a community where the majority of parents have very limited English.

We had a government-funded project at our school site, which is called an education action zone, and through that we started to develop an adult/parent education program. We started that out somewhat – arrogant is too strong a word – but somewhat, we thought we knew what the parents would want. And we offered them courses, and the take-up wasn't very good. So then we engaged with a group of parents to find out what it was they really wanted. And we started, then, to develop programs and educational opportunities that met their needs. And it's been very successful.

Interestingly, it's overwhelmingly with women. It's very difficult to engage the men. They're either working or reluctant to come forward. But in an



average week we would have, probably, 150 adults or parents attending a class of some kind in the school.

What kinds of classes do you offer?

They are the things you would expect, like English as an additional language or ICT [information and communications technology]. We also teach them a straightforward math course, because a lot of them want to improve their own qualifications. We do some kind of in-preparation-for-employment courses, so that people might get jobs in the public sector.

We've also had very successful textile classes. Many of the mothers are actually very accomplished at needlework. And we discovered we got it slightly wrong: we provided a

involved – because many of them, for the first time in their lives, are making a financial contribution to their family. One woman I spoke to not long ago had been in the country for fourteen years, and she'd only taken home £250 [around \$450] as a result of this exercise but she was really so proud of herself, because in the fourteen years she had been in England she never made any financial contribution to her family. So in terms of self-esteem and so on, those kinds of things can be very important.

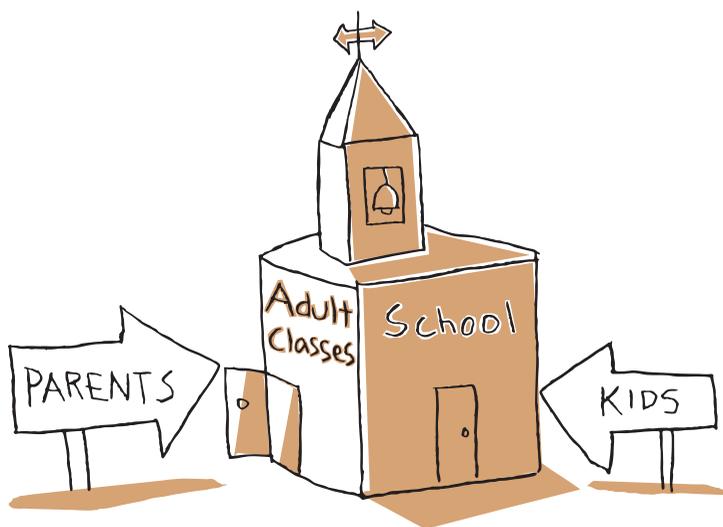
For us, again, we're quite unashamedly focusing on education and attainment. We want our young people to get basic qualifications that will enable them to go on. Even the work that we're doing with parents, the hidden agenda is, we want them to value education. If they are learning themselves, then that's a very positive message for children. So in a sense, we're trying to get at the children through the parents. It's a double thing – a value in itself for them, but also it's helping us with our core task, which is to get the kids to achieve more highly.

Have you seen that effect?

Absolutely. As you know, measuring anything in education is incredibly hard, because you never know what's made the difference. It's very hard to disaggregate what's made the difference. But here is a good example. We have a small but not insignificant population of young people from Somalia. When we offered classes to the parents, the Somali mothers said, actually, we don't want classes for ourselves, what we want is supplementary classes for

Even the work that we're doing with parents, the hidden agenda is, we want them to value education. If they are learning themselves, then that's a very positive message for children.

teacher, but of course what turned out was that the women were already very skilled. And what we developed out of that was a small enterprise whereby we have a group of mothers who come in two or three times a week, and they actually now make garments, which we now take once every two or three months to the big offices in the City of London and set up a stall at lunchtime, and the staff there buy them. It's not making huge amounts of money, but what's very interesting is, it's proved to be very important for the women



our children. So we started classes on Sunday morning, whereby we provided teachers, and an average of forty young people come in, and they come with their mothers. And that takes place, and it's learning, but it's also social. Out of that, most of the mothers who came to that have now started to come to our adult classes as well. And we have seen a distinct shift in terms of the attitude of our Somali pupils toward school and toward attainment. As I said, we can't prove it, but we are very confident that there's been a significant impact from this engagement with the whole family as well as with the child.

Challenges

What have some of the challenges been in developing these supplemental programs?

The obvious one always is money. Statutory education for all young people up to the age of sixteen in England is funded by government, so that's never a problem. To fund other things, you're always looking for sources of revenues, so that's a given. We have to put quite a lot of effort into that. That's one issue.

There's a big issue around how you actually make contact with families, and how you engage with them, and how you overcome their fear and suspicion about coming into school. Interestingly, one of the things we've done – all of our adult education classes take place at the back of the school, where there's a separate entrance. It sounds as if it's not important, but actually it is quite important. The parents don't have to come in at the same entrance as the children. They can quietly come in; the children don't have to see them coming in, and the children don't have to be embarrassed that their parents are coming in to go to extra classes.

There's a whole issue around how you actually reach out to the community, and you've got to be quite flexible. Our community has got different [ethnic groups] in it. I described earlier how we reached out to the Somali community; it would be very different with West African or Caribbean par-



ents, or Bengali or Turkish or whatever. You've got to have some sensitivity and understanding of the different communities and how you might engage with them.

And, I suppose it's the same with any organization, you're always dependent to a certain extent on the quality of the individuals you are leaning on in something like this. We're very fortunate in having people in this part of our program who are very skilled, very talented, and very committed. That's obviously a huge part of the success of what we've done.

In the enrichment activities, have you had challenges in working with the museums and the theaters you take the children to?

Not really. Occasionally we do. But in the main I would say that's not an issue. The biggest issue we face, funnily enough, in this area now is, we've been very successful in finding a whole range of opportunities, and some of our staff now feel that pupils do so much out-of-school activity, have so much extra-curricular activity, it's starting to impact their basic learning in class. Because we've just become very good at grabbing opportunities that are there, whatever they are, whether it be in outdoor education, or whether it be in visits of any kind. Being here in central London,

there are all sorts of opportunities in music and in drama and so on that come our way. We have very good links with people like the Holocaust Trust, and we've taken kids to visit some of the concentration camps in Poland.

It's an incredibly broad range of activities that we provide, and we've almost gone too far with it, to the point where it's starting to have an effect on our core business.

But we haven't encountered problems [with our partners]. When our pupils go out, they love it, and they almost invariably present themselves incredibly well wherever they go.

Has the national Every Child Matters strategy helped you in developing some of these programs?

I don't think significantly. It may be indirect; there may be funding that's available to us that we've come on because of that. But at the school level, I couldn't honestly say that there's

been a change as a result of that. I suppose you could argue that we were already doing quite a lot of the things about that agenda before it became the national agenda. And therefore, perhaps, there was less of a shift that took place.

Engaging Children in Learning: Part of Our Core Business

What additional kind of support might you need to maintain and continue these efforts?

Obviously, resources. The argument that I would have – and *do* have, whenever I get the chance, with government officials – is around the notion that they see this – and I’m guilty of it as well – as supplementary. Everything is talked about as “extended schools,” “supplementary education,” and so on. The big shift in mindset we need is the one that says, actually, this is part of our core business, not part of our additionality. Because I think that, particularly for pupils from disadvantaged backgrounds, it feels like it should be part of an entitlement they have. My view would be that if we could move a bit in that direction, then we would see just as significant an improvement in attainment as we would get by putting the same amount of money into more textbooks, more computers, more teachers. I would be prepared to argue, you might even get more.

I can’t prove it, but I suspect that if you wanted to drive up attainments in schools like the one I work in, you can drive them up, little by little, through better assessment, better teaching, better resourcing, more computers. I think you can argue that you can get just as much improvement, if not more, by changing the ethos of the institution

such that the young people want to come to school, enjoy being in school, and therefore engage with learning. And therefore, the job of the teacher is that much easier, because they’re not having to fight against disaffection and lack of engagement.

Using our school as an example, the biggest increases that we got have not been from actually what the teachers did in the classroom, but, actually, because the pupils they are teaching want to be there and want to engage with the learning, and therefore the same teaching effort produces much higher levels of attainment. Teachers are supported in their efforts.

Somewhere, it’s about convincing people – the policy-makers – that this is not an extra. It’s not extended; it’s actually part of the core business of what we should be doing.

You can get improvement by changing the ethos of the institution such that the young people want to come to school, enjoy being in school, and therefore engage with learning.

Partnering for Success: The Creation of Urban Schools That Work Better

Janice M. Hirota, Robert L. Hughes,
and Ronald Chaluian

A partnership strategy under way in New York City suggests how links between schools and community organizations can enhance education.

A nascent effort to move toward the creation of a smart school system can be found in the work of the New Century High School (NCHS) initiative, an experiment that now includes eighty-eight New York City public schools and that will ultimately affect nearly 40,000 students.¹ Launched in 2001 to create new small schools to replace large failing high schools, New Visions for Public Schools has worked with organized stakeholders in the public educational system, such as the New York City Department of Education (NYCDOE), United Federation of Teachers, Council of Supervisors and Administrators, Carnegie Corporation of New York, Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, and Open Society, to rethink how public high schools can be internally restructured.

One notable feature of the initiative is the integration of an array of community and civic resources into the fiber and operation of schools through the creation of partnerships that bring

together school staff – principal, teachers, guidance counselor, and others – and personnel from “lead organizational partners.”² The goal is to support the social and developmental well-being of students while promoting their intellectual growth and academic achievement.

The partnership strategy – both the concept and actual working partnerships – bridges the efforts of the New Century initiative in New York City with those of the 2005 Children’s Act in Tower Hamlets, London, United Kingdom. Despite notable differences between the two initiatives in scale and range, there are coincidences of analysis and aims, including the urgency to improve outcomes for children and youth and the perceived need for radical change at both systemic and individual levels. In both instances, partnering has become a means for breaking through professional and institutional walls; bringing new ideas to the solution of long-term social issues; and fostering a sense of shared responsibility for children’s development and achieve-

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¹ Eighty-eight New Century schools have opened as of September 2008; the final two will open in September 2009, for a total of ninety New Century schools.

² “Lead organizational partner” or “lead partner” refers to the organization that joins in partnership with school-based NYCDOE staff to create and sustain a New Century school.



ment, and – critically – providing a vehicle for taking on that responsibility. In addition, the presence of an external actor – New Visions in New York City and national and local governmental offices in the United Kingdom – plays a decisive role in setting the venue and impetus for partnerships.

This article is based on a long-term study of New Century’s hallmark strategy of school-based partnerships. It draws in part on case studies of five robust and successful partnerships in schools with strong student achievement and reflects on some of the accomplishments – as well as challenges – of implementing effective cross-institutional partnerships. The article also suggests some practical problems inherent in establishing a smart educational system within an American context.

The New Century Initiative

New Century schools are committed to graduate at least 80 percent of their students with a New York State high school diploma. To this end, they aim to unite rigorous academics and personalized supports as critical features of effective education – especially for students who are disengaged from and unprepared for high school–level work. New Visions believes that schools cannot – and should not – be solely

responsible for meeting student needs. Instead, schools must draw on community, social service, and other civic resources in order to be effective.

The first New Century schools opened in 2002. Each school began with a ninth-grade class, adding a class in each of the following three years.³ The oldest schools had their first graduating classes in June 2006; the youngest are en route to becoming full high schools. The schools have been challenged by the high poverty of their students, substandard facilities in the form of large school buildings divided into multiple small schools, and extreme overcrowding. Yet even as the initiative continues to evolve, research points to promising early outcomes:⁴

- The 78 percent average graduation rate for the New Century class of 2006 exceeded the citywide average graduation rate by 20 percentage points.

³ Some New Century schools include middle grades as well, opening with a sixth or seventh and ninth grades and growing two grades each subsequent year until reaching full size.

⁴ See the discussion of the NCHS initiative on the New Visions Web site, especially the *Policy Studies Associates Final Evaluation Report*, October 2007, available at <www.newvisions.org/schools/nchs/evidence.asp>.

- Only 3 percent of New Century students dropped out over four years, compared with 15 percent of high school students citywide.
- Average daily attendance of New Century students was 84 percent, compared with 81 percent for students citywide, with the median New Century attendance rate reaching 91 percent.

Preliminary Conceptions of New Century Partnerships

Each New Century school is expected to embody a working partnership between school-based staff and organizational personnel who, together, conceptualize, implement, and sustain their school. The New Century partnership strategy is akin to but different from previous working relationships between schools and organizations. As in earlier configurations, organizations are sources of expertise, practice, and resources that can complement school offerings. The strategy, however, eschews the traditional limits that restrict organizations to peripheral engagement in, for example: after-school and other out-of-school programs; service provision, including social supports and remedial learning; or “extracurricular programs,” often viewed as non-academic, such as literary or performing arts. These roles and services might complement but generally do not affect the teaching and learning at the center of the school.

Instead, the New Century strategy aims squarely for a relationship in which partners – school and organizational staffs – actively share responsibility for student learning and achievement, developing schools that increase student supports and broaden approaches to teaching and learning. Such partnerships also enable organizations to play effective, integrated roles in strengthening education in the city.⁵ The following tenets, in place from the initiative’s start, demonstrate the mandate’s openness to many variations within the partnership framework:

- *Lead organizational partners can be from any institutional sector, including higher education, social services, cultural and civic centers, youth development, and so forth, thereby ensuring the infusion of a broad array of interests, skills, and approaches to help engage and support students.*
- *Organizational partners can play a variety of roles in schools, such as provider of “direct services to students and [their] families,” supporter of the school’s curriculum and pedagogy, and supplier of necessary “political will... [to] stretch the realm of [educational] possibility.”⁶*

⁵ In addition to the lead organizational partner, New Century schools work with a range of organizations that play more focused roles in such areas as professional development, out-of-school programs, content-area supports, school culture, and so forth. Michele Cahill (1996) provides valuable analysis of ways schools and communities have worked together. New Century partnerships push the boundaries of previous models in uniting collaborative work across multiple arenas including school leadership, academic endeavor, and youth development.

⁶ November 8, 2001, agenda for “Open Discussion for Interested Community-Based Organizations, Cultural Institutions, Colleges, and Businesses,” hosted by the South Bronx Churches for the Bronx New Century High School Initiative, p. 2.

- *School-based partnerships can be structured in many different ways, for example: acting as co-leaders; developing multiple other partnerships, in addition to the lead partner, each with a specific focus; ensuring lead partner participation in both the academic and leadership spheres of the school; or creating distinct areas in which each partner works.*

In addition, the initiative designated the organizational partner as fiscal agent for the initiative funds, which have been \$400,000 over the initial four years of the school; these monies are to support the school, including the work of the organization. Here, New Visions meant to create leverage for the lead partner as it worked to establish its voice in meaningful work and decision making within the school.

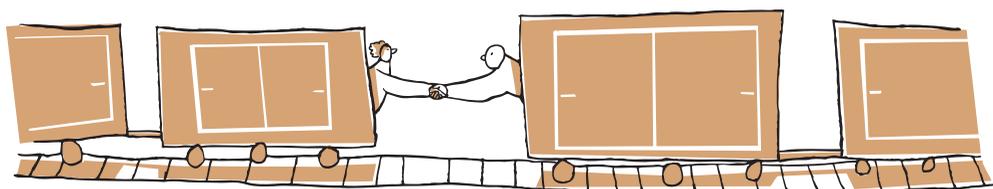
Early Challenges to New Century Partnering

Discovering ways to make two institutional entities into a viable, sustainable working partnership – especially within the highly traditional arena of public education – has demanded a redefining of roles and responsibilities on both

sides as the actors, together, reframe, negotiate, and create the means – the strategies, structures, procedures, roles, and tasks – for their collaborative effort. Successful New Century partners have had to resolve some major issues in their work together.

Working against Established Roles and Expectations

Culturally, the school is an established institution that “over long periods of time...ha[s] remained basically similar in [its] core operation, so much so that these regularities have imprinted themselves on students, educators, and the public as the essential features of a ‘real’ school” (Tyack & Cuban 1995, p. 7). NYCDOE staff members move with authority in their schools – with a legitimacy and knowledge born of professional training and experience, assigned responsibility, convention, and institutional expectations and support. Within traditional and commonsense perspectives, principals, teachers, and other NYCDOE staff *belong* in a school; they are, in fact, often seen *as* the school. Outside organizations, on the



other hand, conventionally hold *peripheral relationships* to schools as vendors, service providers, coaches, and consultants – and in the past, the involvement of outside organizations has been at the discretion of school personnel.

Partnering in Central Arenas of the School

To glean the most from a New Century partnership, organizations must link their work to the school's central mission of teaching and learning and supporting student achievement and to the school's leadership in shaping how its aims, priorities, and values are actually put into practice. Despite their role in designing schools, many partnering organizations faced difficulties entering into the life of the school, especially given their lack of traditional roles, legitimacy, authority, or responsibilities.

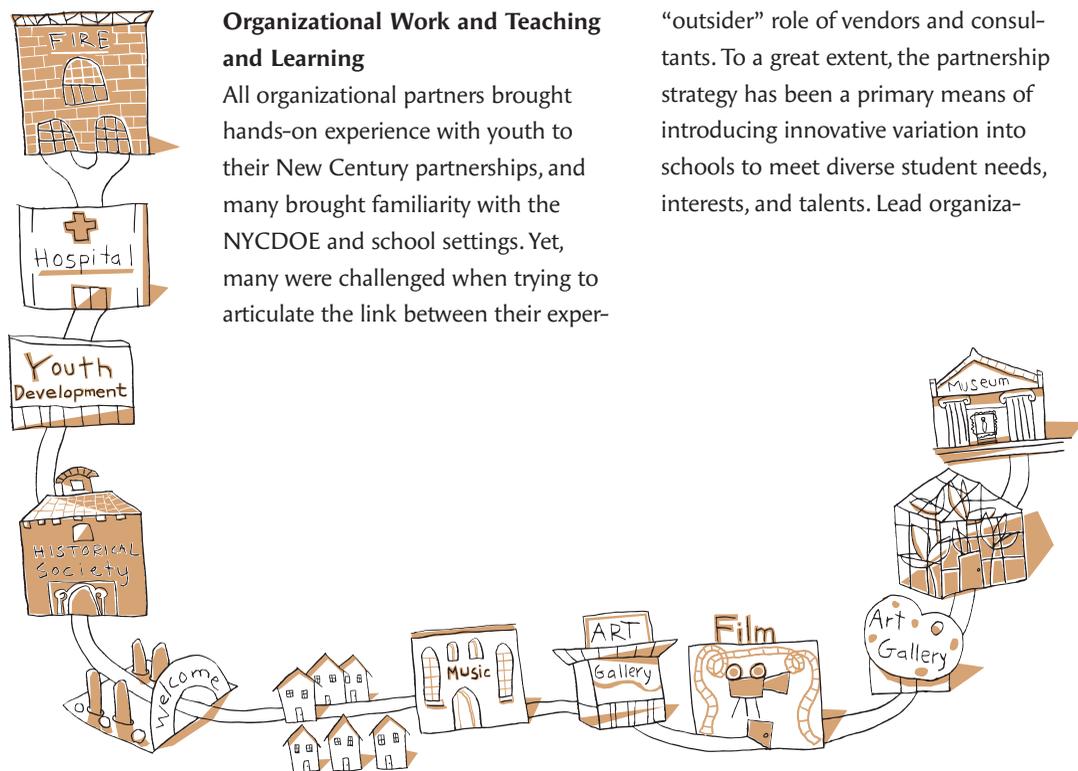
Clarifying the Link between Organizational Work and Teaching and Learning

All organizational partners brought hands-on experience with youth to their New Century partnerships, and many brought familiarity with the NYCDOE and school settings. Yet, many were challenged when trying to articulate the link between their exper-

tise and school-day teaching and learning. At other times, it was the inability of principals and teachers to recognize the potential of organizational links that obstructed the practice of deep partnering. Early on, New Visions devised ways such as asset mapping to help organizational partners spell out what they brought to the educational process.

What Successful Partnering Offers

Architects of the New Century initiative envisioned lead partners with a broad array of foci, expertise, approaches, and reasons for enlisting in school reform, thereby enhancing schools' ability to engage and support students with different interests and skill levels. And, indeed, a range of organizations seized the opportunity to become partners, moving beyond the more typical "outsider" role of vendors and consultants. To a great extent, the partnership strategy has been a primary means of introducing innovative variation into schools to meet diverse student needs, interests, and talents. Lead organiza-



tional partners include: arts organizations, such as museums, theater and film groups, art galleries, and college music departments; community-based service providers, including settlement houses with community-building perspectives; institutions of higher education; social and cultural groups such as botanical gardens, public parks, and historical societies; youth-development organizations; and city institutions such as hospitals and the fire department.

Figure 1 on page 42 uses the five case study schools with successful partnerships to illustrate the range of organizations and ways they participate in their schools.

Successful partnerships can bring a range of aims to their youth development and educational efforts. Global Kids and Epic Theatre Ensemble are committed to developing community leaders, engaged local and global citizens, and critical thinkers about social and political issues. East Side House Settlement and Mosholu Montefiore Community Center stress college preparation courses, educational counseling, and career readiness. Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Prospect Park Alliance integrate their field studies methodology, especially in science, into an overall approach to teaching and learning and extend this hand-on emphasis into the development of out-of-school internships and mentorships for students.

Unlike schools, organizational partners do not have built-in audiences for their programs. Instead, they have to market their efforts, developing activities that engage youth in their learning. At the same time, organizations are less constrained by the daily round of classes and have the time and ability to create lecture series for students, institute college tours, organize and manage schoolwide student confer-

Unlike schools, organizational partners do not have built-in audiences for their programs. Instead, they have to market their efforts, developing activities that engage youth in their learning.

ences, staff “college rooms,” oversee the production of the senior class yearbook, engage professionals as mentors, and link students to academically related summer programs such as a National Audubon camp or the Peace Boat international experience.

Successful partnering organizations actively support students’ social and emotional growth in myriad ways. For example, when co-teaching classes, Epic Theatre, Global Kids, and East Side House Settlement staffs employ interactive exercises that help students strengthen their presentational, leadership, and collaborative skills, at the same time building productive classroom cultures. Brooklyn Botanic Garden and Global Kids staffs oversee ambassador programs, teaching upper-level students to mentor incoming freshmen. Mosholu Montefiore Community

Organizational Partner School and Year Opened	Primary Scope	Major Focus	Organization's Main Work in School
East Side House Settlement Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School 2002	Community-based (affiliated with citywide United Neighborhood Houses)	Direct service/community building with major emphasis on education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College readiness/ awareness, including developing curricula and co-teaching classes • Foster college-going expectations • Youth development • Manage after-school classes and schoolwide activities • Participate in leadership of school
Brooklyn Botanic Garden Prospect Park Alliance* Brooklyn Academy of Science and Environment 2003	Citywide (committed to the local community; also known nationally and internationally)	Social/cultural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Field studies approach, especially in science • Develop curricula and co-teach classes • Develop internships • Environmental awareness • Participate in leadership of school
Epic Theatre Ensemble High School for Writing and Communication Arts 2004	Citywide	Arts and civic engagement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Theater as entry/support for building literacy skills • Develop curricula and co-teach classes • Foster citizenship skills and leadership capacity • College awareness • Participate in leadership of school
Global Kids, Inc. High School for Global Citizenship 2004	Citywide	Education and youth development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop hands-on curricula to engage and build student skills • Co-teach classes • Advisory classes • Create schoolwide, student-run conferences and other events • Foster citizenship/leadership skills and global and local community perspectives • Participate in leadership of school
Mosholu Montefiore Community Center Marie Curie School for Medicine, Nursing, and the Health Professions 2004: first ninth grade 2005: first seventh grade	Community-based (affiliated with the citywide United Neighborhood Houses)	Direct services/ community building	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • College and career awareness/readiness • Build school culture • Support advisory • Help develop and oversee medical internships that are core to the school's curriculum • Youth development • Participate in leadership of school

Figure 1: Lead organizational partners in five case study schools

*Note: This is a unique partnership in which two organizations act together as lead partner to the school.

Center staff help students employ methods of self-reflection and goal setting as part of building leadership skills and internalizing high expectations.

The partnering organizations are also involved in preparing students for college, including: providing information on college options; administering career aptitude/interest surveys; overseeing college trips; assisting with SAT preparation, personal essays, and college and financial aid applications; running an organizational scholarship program; and assuring and reassuring students that they can succeed in college.

Successful organizational partners bring their real-world know-how to dealing with typical issues in school-system bureaucracies. They utilize their insiders' knowledge when listening to and commenting on school quandaries and apply their outsiders' perspectives to open schools up to new approaches and understandings.

At the same time, organizational partners, it is true, are not held to the same measures of accountability for student achievement as schools and their faculties. In New York City, schools are graded according to the improvement in student achievement, and repeated failure can mean that schools are closed and principals' tenure is subject to revocation and termination. Organizational staffs recognize that such possibilities are far less likely for them and their organizations. But successful partnering depends in part on the organizations' own sense of responsibility for student outcomes and their commitment to their schools, as demonstrated in organizations' willingness to stake their reputations, spend political capital, assure their

boards of directors, request funding from foundations, and invest their staffs' time and energy. Over and over, these administrators and staff members talk about their schools as part of their organizations; in that sense, their accountability is, in the end, to their own organizational values and mission.

Student Outcomes

The question always arises: Does partnering affect student achievement? Although not necessarily causal, some achievements in the five case study schools are of interest. Student-performance metrics drawn from the NYCDOE's 2007 Progress Reports on areas with strong organizational partner involvement are shown in Figure 2 on page 44.⁷

7 The NYCDOE annually rates each public school on a number of metrics and gives the school an overall grade for the year's performance, available publicly in the school's Progress Report, regarding school environment, performance, progress, and special populations. Figure 2 draws on the performance section of the 2006-2007 progress reports (the most recent available), which includes several graduation-related metrics. Each metric is applied for each school in the context of the *city as a whole* and of the forty schools, or *peer group*, with the most similar student population, as defined by eighth-grade scores on English language arts and math examinations (twenty schools with scores above the target school and twenty below). The NYCDOE establishes a *city horizon* and a *peer horizon*, which represent the historical distribution of scores within the city and within a school's peer group, and a school's score is compared with these horizons. If a school scores 1.07 on the math examination, its students performed slightly better than expected based on their eighth-grade scores. Historically, its peer schools may have scored anywhere from a .57 to a 1.57 on this metric (excluding the top and bottom 2.5 percent to account for outliers). The school would therefore receive a 50 percent as its peer horizon score because it falls at the midpoint between the top and bottom of the scale. A city horizon or peer horizon score near 100 percent means that the school is performing at the top of the historical range. If a school exceeds this range, it can score above 100 percent. (Source: Brad Gunton, senior program officer, New Visions Data Team)

School Organizational Partner	Organizational Focus	Selected School Performance Based on NYCDOE 2007 School Progress Reports
Bronx High School for Writing and Communication Arts Epic Theatre Ensemble	Theater as entry/support for building literacy skills	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores 87.4 percent, near the upper extreme of performance on the English Regents examination, compared with schools whose students enter high school with similar skill levels (its peer horizon). • Compared with all city schools, including some whose students enter high school much better prepared in math and literacy, the school – with a city horizon score of 78.2 percent – places higher than most schools.
Brooklyn Academy of Science and the Environment Brooklyn Botanic Garden Prospect Park Alliance	Field studies approach to academic studies, especially in science	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Scores 93.4 percent, at the upper extreme of performance on the science Regents examination, compared with schools whose students enter high school with similar skill levels (its peer horizon). • Compared with all city schools, including some whose students enter high school much better prepared in math and literacy, BASE – with an 83.9 percent score – still outperforms how schools have historically performed. • Forty-three percent of the class of 2009 have passed a second advanced science Regents examination, one that is not required for graduation.
Mott Haven Village Preparatory High School East Side House Settlement	College and career awareness/readiness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Graduated 74.2 percent of its class of 2007, a rate above the midpoint of both the city and peer horizons, earning the school an A on its Progress Report. • Of the 61 graduating seniors in 2007, 55 enrolled in college and, according to ESH administrators, continue to do well a year later.

Figure 2: School performance based on NYCDOE 2007 school progress reports

How Strong Partnerships Operate

It must be said that, to date, successful New Century partnerships are the exceptions, not the rule. Most partnerships do not provide the high degree of quality, integrated effort, imagination, and steadfast dedication reflected above. But clearly partnering *can work*, and work well. What, then, makes for effective school-based partnerships? Partnerships that successfully engage students in learning, raise students' expectations of themselves and of each other, open new worlds of experience and learning,

strengthen school-community bonds, and improve student achievement share a number of structural elements in common. These structural elements are described in this section.

Stability and Evolution of the Partnership Relationship

Partnership stability characterizes the five study schools. In each case, particular organizational staff and the principal were central to the planning and establishment of the school. Joint work from the earliest days of school conceptualization through the challenges and rewards of implementation has allowed these partners – school-based NYCDOE staff and organizational staff – to develop structures and processes

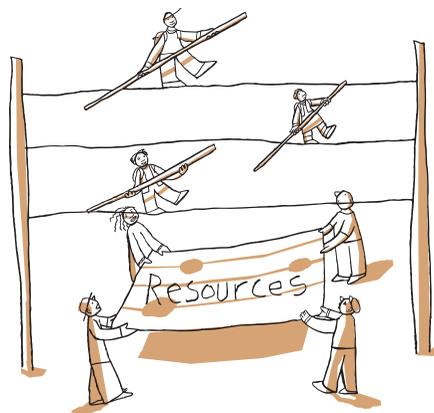
of collaboration, experience each other's commitment to the school and its students, and create cross-institutional relationships of trust and high expectations.⁸ Such early partnering, it is true, may not be an option for all partnerships, but it is useful to note that trust built over time is critical for developing joint aims, approaches, and work.

At the same time, the ability of these partners to adapt and change is critical to the health of the relationship. In one school, some teachers grew concerned when the partner organization played a highly visible role, leading faculty meetings when the principal was away. In response, the principal, at the suggestion of organizational staff, created a school committee including teachers, thereby allowing teachers to play stronger leadership roles. The partnership remains solid. In another school, the schedule that had organizational staff working intensively with all students was not feasible as the school expanded from just the ninth-grade to a full-sized high school. Several schools now structure their curricula to ensure that all ninth-grade students are fully involved with the partnering organization, allowing maximum exposure to organizational offerings at the earliest stage of students' high school careers. Then, as students move to higher grades, they have the option to continue participating in organizational programs and classes.

Partnering as a Balancing Act

In strong New Century partnerships, principals welcome organizations' expertise and support organizational

participation both in schools' central task of teaching and learning and in school leadership. Such support does not depend on personal endorsement; instead, principals have implemented structures and processes that institutionalize organizational partners' roles, ensuring and sustaining their participation. Four organizations in three schools co-teach content-area classes; one co-teaches mandatory, graded, credit-bearing college-preparation courses, and the sixth is intimately linked to the health careers internships central to the school's course of study. Organizational staffs also attend faculty meetings, sit on school leadership committees, participate in hiring new faculty, take on administrative tasks, and/or assist principals in thinking through curricular, faculty, scheduling, and other issues. At the same time, these organizations recognize and support the principal as the leader of the school.



⁸ In July 2008, two of the principals left their schools, one to retire and the other to do other education reform work. The founding organizational partners remain in all five schools.

Partnering provides organizations with an arena for learning, a place to test and refine programmatic models and to implement aspects of their organizational missions, including strengthening their communities and building a skilled and engaged citizenry. At the same time, partnerships allow schools to enhance students' experience.

Partnering as a Mutual Benefit

In successful partnerships, participants derive specific, tangible, and meaningful benefits from the arrangement. Thus, all of these partnering organizations view the school as a way to develop or extend services that they are already offering and deepening their involvement with young people. Partnering provides organizations with an arena for learning, a place to test and refine programmatic models and to implement aspects of their organizational missions, including strengthening their communities and building a skilled and engaged citizenry.

At the same time, partnerships allow schools to enhance students' experience. Beyond the presence of additional caring and committed adults to support students, organizational capacity – in terms of skills, knowledge, staff, and time – allows attention to work that school staff may not be able to cover, such as concentrated focus on college readiness or building leadership skills. Across the five schools, the six organizations, supported and instituted by structures that the principal has put into place, take on administrative, school culture, or youth development tasks, such as organizing and managing

all after-school programming, bringing in teaching artists, organizing all school trips, securing a grant to support a photography workshop and exhibition, or developing a lecture series. Organizations also help support teachers, bringing curricular ideas and tools, demonstrating classroom teaching techniques, consulting about particular students, and, at times, providing individualized professional development. And because organizational partners know their schools, they can integrate all these pieces into the framework and fabric of the school.

Partnering Integrates Organizations into Their Schools

In a successful partnership, the principal establishes structures and processes that integrate the organizational partner into the schools and allow the organization to participate fully in multiple arenas, especially in both the teaching and learning at the core of the school's work and the leadership of the school. Although their focus may be a particular program or subject area, organiza-

tions also intentionally interact with students and school staff in other ways, at times picking up projects that need staff sponsorship, such as the senior prom; fundraising for laptops and other needed equipment; and hosting events in prime organizational facilities, such as the welcome for new students and their families or celebration of school faculty.

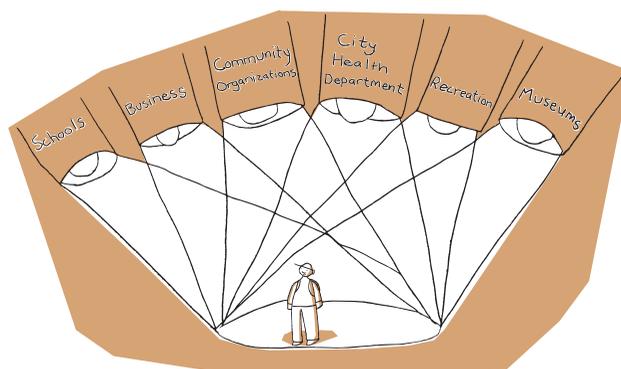
Partnering Increases Resources for Schools

Partnering organizations consider their schools to be part of their organizational structure, and they see the success of the school and individual students as their responsibility.⁹ Organizations advocate for their schools, provide development and communications services, and, when necessary, expend local and citywide political capital to get things done. They also extend organizational contacts and networks to their schools, allowing them to benefit from and utilize additional organizations. For example, Mosholu Montefiore Community Center worked with the Bronx facility of Jewish Home and Hospital (JHH) on other projects. When JHH instituted an intensive geriatrics job training program, the community center worked to ensure that its Marie Curie students comprised over a third of the students accepted into the program.

As part of the New Century initiative, each partner organization managed \$400,000 in grant funds over the first four years to support the school, including the work of the organization. But in partnerships that make a differ-

ence, organizations often commit far more. They dedicate full-time staff to the initiative, open other organizational programs and facilities to students, provide benefits for students' families and school staff, and lend the use of staff time in other ways, including fundraising, advocating, and supporting development campaigns.

Partnering also creates another kind of resource, one that is perhaps less tangible than additional funds or less visible than organizational presence at borough halls, but one that nonetheless is critically valuable on a daily



basis for students. Partnering brings additional adults into schools on a regular basis – adults who get to know the students, care deeply about them, and interact with them in a variety of ways, multiplying, diversifying, and enriching students' experiences of the world beyond their school and their neighborhood.

Going to Scale

Partnering is hard work for both school and organizational staffs. It demands a redefinition of the educational process at both individual and institutional levels and the grit to move to imple-

⁹ Brooklyn Botanic Gardens, East Side House Settlement, Epic Theatre Ensemble, Global Kids, Inc., and Prospect Park Alliance all list their partner school on their organizations' Web sites as one of their offered programs.

mentation. Not all partnerships succeed, and most do not operate at the high standards of the cases presented here. Some New Century partnerships have failed to develop, and many others are more akin to good vendor relationships than they are to these successful examples.

The question of whether New Century school-based partnering can “scale up” – defined as going into effect in more and more schools – has not been resolved by the experience to date of New Century schools. But if the definition of scale includes issues of depth, sustainability, spread, and shift in reform ownership, as discussed by Cynthia Coburn (2003), then one might argue that the New Century partnership strategy has begun achieving scale in these five schools. Partnering in all five schools has moved beyond the relationship between principal and organizational personnel to teachers, guidance counselors, and students, altering beliefs about the nature of classroom teaching and learning – about *who* can teach *what* to *whom* successfully during the school day. Two of the five schools have moved well past the four-year period when grant funds helped support the school and partnership; in the 2007–2008 school year, some of the organizational partners spent as much as \$500,000 to support their school and partnering efforts – well beyond the grant-allocated \$400,000 over the initial four years of the school – an indication of the shift in reform ownership and commitment to the school as part of the organization.

Moreover, the partnering effort is spreading in deep ways. Mosholu Montefiore Community Center, a case study organization, is on its second ongoing school-based partnering effort,

and at least two of the other organizations have considered starting and partnering with other schools. In other instances, the work is moving beyond the immediate school – its staff, students, and parents – and, in a ripple effect, opening possibilities for other organizations and school staffs to broaden the reach of their resources, create new strategies for working with urban teens, and build new constituencies.

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With support from Carnegie Corporation of New York, the study of New Century partnerships began in early 2003 and continued into mid-2008. To date, the research has resulted in two papers published together in one volume (see Hirota 2005). Throughout, the study has primarily utilized fieldwork methodology, especially interviews and observations, as well as review of material from New Visions, the NYCDOE, New Century schools, and partnering organizations. The authors appreciate the support of staff from New Visions, NYCDOE, and partnering organizations who allowed a first-hand exploration of the workings of partnerships, and of Nancy Benignus, Brad Gunton, Holly Laws, and Jennie Soler-McIntosh, who made many contributions to the research.



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