CHAPTER 7:

BEYOND STANDARDIZED-TEST SCORES:

USING CASE STUDIES TO EVALUATE A REFORM STRATEGY

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The South Florida Annenberg Challenge

T HE SCHOOL DISTRICTS of Miami–Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties make up the South Florida Annenberg Challenge, which received a $33.4-million, two-for-one matching grant from the Annenberg Foundation in late 1996. The goal of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge (SFAC) was to increase students' academic achievement through principal leadership, teacher empowerment, and parent involvement in the tricounty region.

Between January 1997 and December 2002, the SFAC provided matching funding to "partnerships for public education," groups of three or more schools, a local business, and a parent or community organization. Each partnership was encouraged to develop innovative approaches to education issues, such as school readiness, technology, teacher training, and parent involvement.

SFAC made grants to eighty-nine partnerships that involved 378 schools, over 265,000 students, and some 5,000 teachers in the three districts. While most of the partnerships were in a single school district, several were regional partnerships across all three counties. All the partnerships focused on children who were potentially at risk for low academic achievement or school failure and who lived in some of the poorest neighborhoods of Miami–Dade, Broward, and Palm Beach counties. Many of these students were eligible to receive free or reduced lunch, were students of color, and/or had limited English proficiency. Thus, the SFAC projects were intended to benefit students most in need of educational opportunities.

The partnerships encompassed a wide range of goals, activities, and outcomes. Some focused on specific instructional strategies; others focused on curricular reform, on equal access to technology, on parent involvement, or on systemic change of education system. While the partnerships represented diverse interests, they pursued the common SFAC goals of improving student achievement and fostering systemic impact by promoting empowered principals, quality teachers, and parent involvement. Some projects were being newly implemented; others were in various stages of being expanded or replicated.

The SFAC program evaluation was designed to examine the effectiveness of the partnerships and to gain insights about community-based reform efforts. The evaluation focused on four aspects:

- examining the effectiveness of all partnerships,

- conducting in-depth case studies of selected partnerships,

- drawing lessons from effective partnerships, and

- providing recommendations to the SFAC board.

This chapter describes how case study research was used as the basis for the SFAC program evaluation. After providing a rationale for using case studies in the evaluation of school reform efforts, it continues with an overview of the evaluation design and framework guiding the evaluation. It then describes the case study methodology used from 1999 to 2001 and provides highlights of case study findings from the fourteen partnerships reviewed during that time. Finally, the chapter concludes with key lessons learned from the case studies and lays out future directions for the SFAC program evaluation.

RATIONALE FOR USING CASE STUDIES TO EXAMINE CIVIC-MINDED APPROACHES TO SCHOOL REFORM

Under increasing national attention, education reform has taken two distinctly different approaches: policy-minded and civic-minded (McDonald 1999). The policy-minded approach involves education policies and regulations mandated at the federal, state, and district levels. Currently, two strategies dominate the policy-minded approach: the *accountability* strategy, based on content standards and assessments in subject areas; and the *market commodity* strategy, designed to create better schools through

supply and demand, with schools competing for students (e.g., charter schools, school vouchers).

An alternative to policy-minded reform is the civic-minded approach, based on locally developed public-private partnerships (Fitz & Gorard 2000, Bracey 1999). Like the policy-minded approach, the civic-minded approach may also employ accountability-based or market-based strategies. However, while the policy-minded approach depends on control from government and policy-makers, the civic-minded approach is based on close and inviting collaboration between public and private sectors in the community via an "inquiry-minded" process (Rallis & MacMullen 2000).

Although the civic-minded approach provides an alternative to policy-based school reform, its process and impact have not been adequately examined. In addition, research conclusions that rest too heavily on statistically analyzed standardized-test results may miss much of the formative details of the "process" of reform (Hoyle & Slater 2001).

Evaluation through Case Studies: A Good Fit for SFAC

Case study methodology was particularly suited to evaluation of SFAC (a prime example of the civic-minded approach to school reform) for three reasons:

To address the wide variety of approaches to school reform in SFAC. The range and diversity of SFAC initiatives made the design and implementation of survey and program-monitoring instruments particularly challenging. Case studies enabled the program evaluators to develop insights about the varied approaches to school reform encompassed in SFAC and to design instruments that would elicit meaningful data from key stakeholders. The instruments and results from case studies would then be applied to develop systemic evaluation procedures with all partnerships using surveys and monitoring reports.

To go beyond standardized-test results. At the outset of the evaluation effort, case studies were included as part of a multimethod evaluation to shed light on critical issues that arise when intermediary organizations, as agents of change, foster creative public-private partnerships and civic mobilization. The SFAC used statewide assessments of student performance in reading, writing, and mathematics as the key out-

come variable because there were no other consistent achievement measures across the range and diversity of SFAC partnerships. These high-stakes assessments are used to hold schools accountable, and the community at large is well aware of the impact of the assessments.

The case studies of partnerships were designed to look beyond standardized-test results as the sole measure of school reform by highlighting perceptions of key stakeholders about project implementation and outcomes. In addition, perceptions of key stakeholders from the case study partnerships provided insights to explain student-achievement outcomes.

To provide timely feedback about reforming partnerships' efforts. School reform takes time, and student-level data reflecting the impact of partnership initiatives on academic achievement would not be available until the completion of the three-year life of an SFAC partnership. Fullan (2000) found that it takes three to five years of reform in elementary schools to show improvement in student performance on state assessments and up to six years in high schools. In the absence of meaningful student-achievement data in the partnerships' formative years, case study data enabled researchers to examine the degree to which the goals of each case study partnership were accomplished. The results, then, would be used to examine the outcomes of all partnerships and the impact of the SFAC project overall.

The Role of Case Studies in the SFAC Evaluation

Using case studies as the cornerstone of the SFAC evaluation served several major purposes for the evaluation. The case study procedures were used to develop the instruments for surveys and monitoring reports. The mostly qualitative results of case studies were used to help categorize and process the massive amounts of data from multiple sources and establish consistencies so that meaningful data from all partnerships could be found or generated and analyzed statistically. The case study results were also used to

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form a pathway for tracking early indicators of success until achievement data were available, as well as to provide explanatory mechanisms to evaluate the level of success of partnerships.

EVALUATION DESIGN AND FRAMEWORK FOR EVALUATION

The ultimate goal of the SFAC evaluation was threefold: to determine the degree to which each partnership (and schools within the partnership) were successful in achieving positive student-achievement outcomes, to determine the return on investment through cost-effectiveness analysis, and to draw lessons about effective partnerships and offer recommendations for sustainability and replicability of a civic-minded approach to education reform.

Evaluation Design

To evaluate the SFAC overall and selected partnerships in depth, a mixed-method research design was developed using parallel or simultaneous methodologies (Tashakkori & Teddlie 1998). This design was used because it provides in-depth evaluations of selected partnerships, addressing concerns about validity and reliability and, thus, the transferability of the findings to other partnerships. The use of parallel quantitative and qualitative methodologies also triangulated the data and strengthened the evaluation findings (Breen et al. 1998).

The qualitative methodology provided the basis for the case study investigations (Yin 1994) and

formed the framework that was used to examine the effectiveness of individual partnerships, the SFAC in general, and the impact of community-based reform efforts. Data were gathered from key stakeholders in all aspects of project participation, adding depth and breadth to the analysis. These findings provided evidence, validation, and the opportunity to learn about unexpected findings (Seale 1999). The qualitative methods, including individual and focus group interviews and observations of case study partnerships and monitoring reports of all partnerships, served as critical data sources for obtaining participants' perceptions. Documenting and analyzing these perceptions in a systematic way provided a better understanding of the "how" and "why" behind project implementation and outcomes (Morgan & Krueger 1993; Posner 1995; Rubin & Rubin 1995).

The quantitative methodology provided the primary data for assessing outcomes related to student achievement and for measuring the perceptions and satisfactions of key stakeholders (using surveys with all partnerships). This methodology used descriptive research to provide insights into the current status of each project and schools within each project and to gather baseline data for future research (Gay & Airasian 2000). In addition, this design was selected because it would allow for analysis of student-achievement outcomes and cost-effectiveness in relation to comparable schools, each school district, and the state.

Framework for Evaluation

The framework guiding the case study investigation was developed from an extensive review of the literature pertaining to school reform, business/school partnerships, public policy, and success indicators (which were also gleaned from cross-case analysis of earlier case studies). Information from these sources

A Partnership of Program and Evaluation

Ambassador Annenberg framed his Challenge with a belief in the potential of the public education system. Rigorous evaluation would be a necessary component of each "living" initiative as it evolved. Local evaluations of Challenge efforts needed to be purposeful as well as reflective, to balance accountability with flexibility in stimulating innovative and responsive local programs – no easy task.

Right from the start, business and philanthropic supporters of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge insisted on a dependable and authoritative evaluation of the initiative. They demanded an evaluation that would raise education standards in the community and institutionalize professional evaluation as an integral companion to instructional programs and delivery. This was not the first time the business community had partnered with these school districts. They were not uncommitted, just unconvinced. They refused – and they said this loud and clear to the education community – to blindly invest time, energy, and commitment in the status quo or to become swamped in any bureaucratic quagmire.

Critically important to the success of the evaluation endeavor was the stakeholders' attitude toward the Challenge project. Clearly, the target was to increase student achievement, but they took for granted that there would be hits and misses, midcourse corrections, and redefining of goals. After all, this was an education experiment. If student achievement rose during the process, the strategies could be captured and replicated in other schools. If not, they could be ruled out. What was learned about what works and what doesn't would inform future decisions and action.

Even as SFAC became operational in 1997, Executive Director Elaine Lifton realized that it was time to start taking stock. The initial evaluation process was approved by the SFAC Board in November 1997. The first evaluation team was directed by Jeff Gorrell of Auburn University, with support from a "home" connection at the University of Miami that would conduct on-site visits. Team members were co-investigator Jomills Braddock along with Okhee Lee and Edith Miller from the University of Miami, and Nancy Ares and David Shannon from Auburn.

The first-year evaluation report was issued in December 1998. The team had amassed considerable baseline data about student achievement, school demographics, and school environment. The descriptive data provided a pre-partnership picture of schools within each funded business/school/community partnership, a perspective for interpretation of data collected over the course of the partnerships.

That first report also took note of a shift from the original assumptions in the pro-

was used to shape the interview protocols, following Strauss and Corbin's (1990) technique of developing a theory grounded in the data obtained during the study. The interview protocols were open to change over time, which turned out to be an important response to the evolution of the SFAC visions and plans over the years.

Major topics of project implementation were used as the contextual framework to explore the progress of each partnership and the overarching concept of success. Respondents were interviewed about the following topics: project history on the partnership level; project goals; partnership formation and development; project implementation; systemic impact and sustainability; strengths and limitations; and evaluation of the project as it related to administrators, teachers, students, parents, and statewide assessment. Structuring the interviews in this way ensured that most relevant partnership phases were covered,

while permitting the respondents a great deal of flexibility in interpreting their experiences.

Interview protocols and case study research were also used to develop survey questionnaires and monitor reports. To this end, a matrix was developed to make certain that all areas under investigation would be probed using multiple data sources. A detailed list of all possible topics, areas for investigation, success indicators, and concepts and issues was created. Common themes were collapsed into larger categories until all questions and probes were classified. When questions or probes were missing from specific instruments or protocols, they were added as necessary. The evaluation team reviewed all the interview questions and probes for relevance, clarity, brevity, and appropriateness (Slavin 1984). We will provide further details about surveys and data monitoring below, in the section Future Directions for Program Evaluation.

posal submitted to the Annenberg Foundation to five focus areas articulated by the board (see text). Part of this evolution was ascribed to the organization's response to the unfolding experiment, but a large part was due to the leadership of the new chair of the SFAC board, Leonard Miller.

Over the next year, the evaluation strategy shifted along with the SFAC vision, and the evaluation team itself also underwent changes. In late 1999, Gorrell left Auburn University, and the SFAC board considered further localizing the evaluation. The Auburn University team members withdrew, and in January 2000 the Board contracted with the University of Miami team (now comprising Ann Bessell, Jeanne Shay

Schumm, and Okhee Lee) as the sole evaluators.

The evaluation work now shifted to a greater emphasis on case studies, responding to the board's desire to invest in the most promising partnerships, find out what made them tick, and thus see what to scale up. Recognizing that the partnership initiatives were likely to be a major contribution of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge, they wanted to be sure they understood when it happened well, how it happened, and what could be learned. Being local, the team was able to spend time at the schools and became more involved in identifying and screening promising case study sites. As the case studies yielded timely information about the partnerships, SFAC was able

to respond, regroup, and focus funding and effort where it would have the most impact.

The South Florida Annenberg Challenge has generated annual evaluations since 1998 and biannual monitoring reports since 2000. The most recent report, issued in December 2001, not only tracks progress but backs it up with significant evidence that can only be captured over time, including trend lines and longitudinal data for up to three years. The final phase of the evaluation, which will be undertaken in 2003, addresses operational effectiveness of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge effort.

Recalling the journey from fledgling organization to full-fledged, statewide operation,

the SFAC board's late chairman, Leonard Miller, wrote:

The evaluation process and our insistence on data-driven assessment is a hallmark of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge. As information emerged, we were able to focus our programs around these validated lessons and our…mission. The lessons learned – and we stand by them because our evaluation process is solid – will be our legacy.

CASE STUDY METHODOLOGY

Case studies were designed to provide an in-depth look at selected SFAC partnerships. The case studies describe project implementation, analyze outcomes, and examine the degree to which the project goals were accomplished. Each case study involved individual and focus group interviews with participants at the partnership, school, family, and student levels, as well as observations of school activities and partnership events. The case studies highlighted perceptions of key stakeholders about project implementation and outcomes. Case study results indicated major factors for effective partnerships, lessons learned from this reform initiative, and recommendations for future research and evaluation. The case studies contained a rich array of data offering insights into ways in which the SFAC had an impact on the tricounty community and the state.

Case study approaches were modified over the years. Initially, case studies were designed to represent five SFAC vision statements espoused by the Executive Board; these statements addressed technology, smaller and more focused schools, rewards and incentives, parent involvement, and systemic change. Later on, case studies were selected with the following criteria; they were representative of one of the three districts and a regional partnership; they were representative of the SFAC vision statements; they had made substantial progress in achieving stated objectives as indicated in monitoring

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reports; and they had shown promising student-achievement outcomes as demonstrated by statewide achievement-test scores.

Using the five vision statements as the framework, case study research was guided by seven sets of questions: goals of the project (in relation to SFAC vision statements); partnership among business, community, and education; measures of student achievement; systemic impact in terms of sustainability and replicability; budget (in relation to SFAC vision statements); barriers and facilitators; and indicators of success.

In 2000, the SFAC Executive Board changed its five vision statements to four themes leading to student-achievement outcomes: principal leadership, teacher quality, parental involvement, and regional collaboration. Case studies were selected to represent these four themes. Case study research was guided by questions related to stakeholders' understanding of project goals, formation and implementation of partnerships, systemic impact in terms of sustainability and replicability, and barriers and facilitators. In addition, stakeholders' perceptions of principal leadership, teacher quality, and parental involvement were examined.

As the SFAC was implemented over the years, partnerships were at different levels of implementation at any given time. To examine the life span of successful partnerships, case studies were selected at two levels: exploratory investigations of partnerships showing initial evidence of improved student-achievement outcomes and comprehensive investigations of those partnerships that demonstrated improved student-achievement outcomes. Eventually, partnerships with proven records of student achievement will be able to apply for achievement grants, designed to identify and develop strategies to sustain and replicate successful partnerships beyond the span of the SFAC funding.

A total of fourteen case studies were done. The initial four began during 1999; four more began in 2000; and six more began in 2001. This chapter includes the results from thirteen case studies: four from Miami–Dade County, two from Broward County, four from Palm Beach County, and three regional partnerships. (Note: One case study was not continued when the project was terminated due to its lack of progress.)

Demographics

Students' demographic characteristics included the following data for participating schools (reported in percentages): minorities, free/reduced lunch, limited English proficiency (English-language learners), and exceptionalities. SFAC schools' demographic characteristics during the 2000–2001 academic school year were examined in comparison with each school district characteristics (see Table 1).

- In each of the three districts, SFAC schools had higher overall percentages of minority students than the district averages. In individual SFAC schools, the percentage of minority students ranged from 12.5 percent to 100 percent, with an average of 76 percent.

- In each of the three districts, SFAC schools had higher overall percentages of students who were eligible for free and/or reduced lunch than the district averages. In individual SFAC schools, the percentage of eligible students ranged from 5.6 to 99.4 percent, with an average of 61.8 percent.

- In Broward and Palm Beach counties, SFAC schools had higher overall percentages of students who were English-language learners (ELL) than the district averages; in Miami–Dade County, the overall percentage of ELL students in SFAC schools was only 0.3 percent lower than the district average. In individual SFAC schools, the percentage of students who were English-language learners ranged from 0 to 73.7 percent, with an average of 14.8 percent.

- SFAC schools in Miami–Dade and Broward counties had higher overall percentages of students in exceptionalities programs than the district averages; in Palm Beach County, SFAC schools were only 0.7 percent lower than the district average. In individual SFAC schools, the percentage of students who were in exceptionalities programs ranged from 1.4 to 42 percent, with an average of 13.6 percent.

As indicated by the demographic data, the SFAC partnerships benefited student populations that, because of their low socio-economic status and diverse needs, are in greatest need of additional educational support.

		% English-language learners	% Free/Reduced Lunch	% Minorities	% Exceptionalities
Miami-Dade	Overall	18.9	69.0	88.9	10.4
	SFAC	18.6	76.7	91.1	15.4
Broward	Overall	10.1	31.5	61.5	10.9
	SFAC	12.1	51.5	62.5	11.6
Palm Beach	Overall	10.3	32.9	52.9	13.3
	SFAC	11.2	58.1	64.5	12.6

Source: Schumm, Lee & Bessell 2002, p. 3.

Table 1. SFAC schools' demographic characteristics during 2000–2001

Participants

Participants were representative of stakeholders at the partnership and school levels. The exact composition of participants varied among the projects depending on the nature of each partnership. From January 1999 to December 2001, the University of Miami team collected data from 176 individual interviews and sixty-seven focus group interviews. Approximately 580 key stakeholders in the tricounty area participated over a three-year period.

Data Sources and Collection

Data collection efforts were based on the premise that no single data source was likely to be bias-free or to be a completely accurate representation of reality. Researchers used multiple opportunities to explore participants' perspectives among different groups of stakeholders – business partners, community partners, project directors/coordinators, principals, teachers, and parents – and across two levels of investigation. In addition to monitoring reports and grant documents, Level 1 (exploratory) case studies included individual phone interviews with business

and community partners and principals, and focus group interviews with project directors, coordinators, and staff. Level 2 (comprehensive) case studies added focus-group interviews with teachers, parents, and students, and site visits when feasible.

Individual Telephone Interviews

Telephone interviews were conducted with a sample of 176 individuals. Each interview lasted approximately thirty minutes and was audiotaped and transcribed. Researchers' notes were incorporated into the transcribed interviews to ensure a complete and accurate data set. The interview protocol included questions and probes to examine stakeholders' understanding of project goals, formation and implementation of partnerships, systematic impact in terms of sustainability and replicability, and barriers and facilitators. In addition, stakeholders' perceptions of principal empowerment, teacher quality, and parental involvement were examined.

On-Site Focus Group Interviews

There were sixty-seven on-site focus group interviews. Each focus group interview lasted about one and a half hours and followed the same guidelines used for phone interviews. One researcher served as facilitator and a second member of the evaluation team served as note-taker. During many of these visits the principal would provide a tour of the school, focusing on students and teachers who were participating in the project. These on-site visits provided an opportunity to gain additional insight and enhanced the validity and reliability of the subsequent analyses.

As key findings emerged, there was also a continuous search for examples that would contradict the key findings.

Demographics, Achievement-Test Scores, and School Grades

Demographic data included ethnicity, socio-economic status (as reflected by free and/or reduced lunch), school enrollment, average class size, average years of teacher experience, percent of students absent over twenty-one days, stability rate, percent of students qualifying for exceptional student education, percent of students who are English-language learners, incidents of crime and violence, percent of students involved with in-school suspensions, and percent of students in out-of-school suspensions.

Student-achievement data consisted of scores on the Florida Comprehensive Assessment Test (FCAT) for reading, writing, and mathematics. School grades were based on the Governor's A+ Plan for Education developed by the Florida Department of Education. School grades are determined by several criteria established by the department including FCAT achievement, absenteeism, and drop-out rates. School grades were used to identify high- and low-performing schools, stimulate academic improvement, and summarize information about school achievement. Students' FCAT results and school grades are beyond the scope of this chapter and are not reported here. The results are available in the 2001 SFAC evaluation report (Schumm, Lee & Bessell 2002).

Data Analysis

Each case study was assigned a team of two researchers to ensure consistency in data collection methods, opportunities for ongoing exchange of emerging ideas, and inter-rater reliability. In addition, reliability of the qualitative portion of this evaluation was addressed using standard procedures in the field, such as defining and reporting methods, using a framework to guide the evaluation, and using multiple evaluators (Seale 1999).

All transcripts from individual phone interviews and focus group interviews were coded and analyzed using the qualitative analysis software ATLAS/ti. A coding system was developed and themes were identified under each of the five major categories, including collective participation, principal leadership, teacher quality, flexible and innovative curriculum and finance, and parental involvement.

A two-step process was used for data analysis. First, for each category, a theme was identified and specific evidence was noted (e.g., quotes and location in transcript). Then, overall patterns were identified across interviews and participants. After the analysis of each case study was completed, the results of the case studies were examined for commonalities and differences among the projects. As key findings emerged, there was also a continuous search for examples that would contradict the key findings (Yin 1994). To increase reliability, external checks were conducted using a second researcher who independently practiced coding the same transcripts using an analysis framework. When an inconsistency arose, the researchers discussed and negotiated until they reached consensus. When reliability between coders reached 90 percent, the coders continued analysis independently.

Based on cross-case analysis, important factors leading to a successful project were identified. These factors were framed in terms of a "profile" rather than a "definition," since there were great variations in project goals, objectives, and level of implementation. It is to be noted that these results were based largely on the perceptions of participants who were representative of business, community, and education partners.

HIGHLIGHTS OF
CASE STUDY RESULTS

With few exceptions, individual partnerships made great strides in building school/business/community collaboration. In many cases, partnerships represented first-time efforts in collaboration among these sectors. Although key stakeholders worked largely in uncharted waters, they managed to discover how best to communicate with one another, launch their projects, and keep their projects afloat. Stakeholders in leadership positions recognized the pivotal role of the SFAC in forming these partnerships.

The evidence from case studies indicated key themes about successful partnerships that fell into the five major analysis categories. Key characteristics of each category are described here, and a partnership to illustrate these characteristics is presented.

Although key stakeholders worked largely in uncharted waters, they managed to discover how best to communicate with one another, launch their projects, and keep their projects afloat.

Collective Participation

The SFAC was a catalyst in forming business, community, and education partnerships. Case studies reflected a high level of satisfaction with SFAC projects among key stakeholders. The majority agreed that their project was a good example of collective participation and should be continued in their school and replicated in other schools as well. The following characteristics of collective participation provided an atmosphere for success.

- Participants shared clear, common goals, which led to focused vision for the school's reform efforts.

- Common language developed, facilitating mutual respect, communication, and constructive feedback among participants. This challenge often included dropping the use of acronyms common in either academic environments or business interactions.

- The partnership was actively involved and visible in the school and community. This not only provided community awareness but also added to a positive environment, mutual buy-in, and commitment to the project.

- Participants were willing to relinquish individual autonomy and to collaborate and use diversity of talents among participants. It was important to leave egos at the door and focus on what would be best for the students.

Partnerships with consistent leadership of the same principals exhibited increased productivity and participant buy-in.

- Participants, particularly principals and teachers, felt ownership of the project and felt empowered to facilitate implementation.

- Partners displayed sensitivity and realistic understanding of time commitments. Principals and teachers often had multiple responsibilities requiring time, paperwork, and accountability.

- Strong leadership at each level of the state, district, partnership (i.e., project director), and school (i.e., principals and lead teachers).

Central EXPRESS

This partnership attempted to improve student achievement in a systemic way. The focus was to provide comprehensive and consistent teacher professional development and to develop a "seamless" educational experience for children from elementary school through high school within a single feeder pattern. Teachers began their collaboration across schools in the area of writing and saw marked improvements in standardized-writing-test scores in all participating schools. Plans to work on reading achievement using similar models of teacher professional development and communication with key stakeholders are in progress. Leadership in Central EXPRESS was successful in garnering resources from local and national businesses as well as local institutions of higher education.

Principal Leadership

Principals played key roles in successful projects. Partnerships with consistent leadership of the same principals exhibited increased productivity and participant buy-in. This was enhanced when the principals actively participated in training, were available and committed to resolve barriers as they arose, and maintained visibility for both staff and students during project implementation. Effective principals displayed the following characteristics:

- stability (low turnover): Multiple leaders over the life of a project can lead to fragmented leadership and lack of commitment or buy-in

- focus on academic and instructional goals to improve student achievement

- active involvement and visibility of principles at the school and in the community

- attention to local norms and concerns

- promoting collaboration for mutual benefit with/among teachers

- shared decision making with teachers

- support for buy-in of teachers

Partnership to Advance School Success (PASS)

PASS's success was founded on a strong school/community/business partnership and total commitment of key stakeholders that emphasized principal leadership. A principal, an educational coach, and a corporate CEO formed a team for each school and worked as partners to create and implement individual reform initiatives tailored to meet the school's unique needs for improvement with the goal of ultimately raising the school grade to an "A" status. Schools focused on such areas as specific student-achievement goals, streamlined planning, and budget structuring. The consistent support and assistance of the principal-coach-CEO triads were integral to the progress of the schools toward meeting their established goals.

PASS schools showed a trend of steady increases in student achievement. From 1998 to 2001, the four pilot schools showed consistent improvement in standardized-test scores across all three subject areas of reading, writing, and mathematics. The

PASS partnerships provided a valuable platform for school and business professionals to share innovative ideas, alter perceptions of public education, and facilitate school reform. Even before the project was extended outside of the four pilot schools, key stakeholders expressed a strong desire to continue the project and expand it to include more grade levels, other subject areas, and additional schools. Eventually there will be as many as thirty schools throughout the state participating in PASS partnerships.

Teacher Quality

Professional development activities were critically important to promote teacher quality. Effective professional development activities provided opportunities for teachers to implement creative and innovative curriculum materials and instructional strategies, which eventually led to increased student achievement as measured by standardized tests. Effective professional development activities were indicated by the following characteristics:

- focused and relevant to student outcomes, particularly those areas tested on standardized tests

- opportunities for teachers' self-reflection

- opportunities for collaboration and sharing among teachers

- flexibility and support for innovations and creative approaches to teaching

Broward Academy for Teacher Excellence (BATE)
The teacher shortage is a nationwide challenge. BATE represented a broad attempt to combat this shortage on two fronts: by retaining teachers in the profession and by attracting more teachers to the profession. BATE accomplished this by according greater respect to the career through professional development activities. BATE offered an opportunity for schools to serve as professional development demonstration classrooms using action research to improve student achievement. Students in BATE schools benefited from improved and creative instruction. In fact, all four of the schools in the initial phase of the project had standardized-test scores that were higher than the district mean in reading and math.

Flexible and Innovative Curriculum and Finance

The SFAC promoted innovative and creative curriculum materials and instructional approaches to enhance student learning. The SFAC also promoted flexibility in finance and the education system, such as funding opportunities for teacher professional development, offering incentives and rewards for excellence, providing alternative ways to overcome bureaucratic barriers in the education system, and encouraging the establishment of new policies in the district and the school. Flexible, innovative, and unique characteristics of SFAC included

- innovative and creative curriculum and instruction

- flexible funding and management

- support for new ways of thinking "outside the box"

- strategies for coping with bureaucracy and regulations in the education system that sometimes hinder education innovations

- prestige of the Annenberg reputation

Math Is Not Difficult (MIND)
Project MIND provided consistent resources for administrators and teachers to revise mathematics instruction and to develop innovative and creative math-based activities. Students were encouraged to develop original work, such as math songs, poems, art, stories, games, puzzles, and brainteasers, related to math concepts. There was so much excitement about the project that non-participating community members heard about

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Project MIND and wanted to get involved with the strategies. Professional development for teachers and parent involvement were critical components of the program. Other partnerships learned from this innovative initiative that benefited in terms of school/business partnerships, curricular change, and home/school relationships.

Urban Institute for Environmental Studies.
This partnership provided an innovative design for learning to meet student and community needs. The program immersed nonmagnet students in grades K–12 in a learning community that emphasized personalization, intellectual focus, and work-based career learning, resulting in significant improvement in student achievement. Standardized-test scores in reading, math, and writing showed steady improvement over three years. Students attended school more often and had fewer discipline referrals than before the project began, and the high school drop-out rate was reduced. The benefits of specially designed curricula and work-based career learning for low-performing students are additional elements of this highly successful, innovative approach to reaching at-risk students.

Parental Involvement

Compared to other stakeholders, parents were generally less actively involved in SFAC projects. Even in successful projects, parents often indicated that they were not aware of business and community partners or specific project activities. Most projects needed to provide opportunities for parents' participation and

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awareness. Parental involvement increased in the following situations:

- involvement in children's schoolwork at home

- involvement to promote student outcomes academically and socially

- frequent communication and opportunities to be involved in project/school activities

- user-friendly approaches to meet parents' needs (e.g., evening events, child care)

Family Tech
This partnership represented an ambitious effort to provide equitable access to technology for the most needy children and parental involvement in their children's education. All students in each targeted classroom received computers to take home along with training for students, their families, and their teachers, so that everyone could learn technological skills. Opportunities for computer technology were also incorporated across the curriculum. This project represented an effort to provide professional development for teachers in the critical area of educational technology and to enhance parental involvement by providing parents with opportunities to improve or acquire computer skills while working with their children on school tasks.

KEY LESSONS LEARNED

Case studies implemented in the formative years of the SFAC helped to shed light on key aspects of this tricounty school reform initiative. The case studies also paved the way for subsequent program evaluation activities. This section provides key recommendations from the initial case studies and concludes with an overview of ongoing and future evaluation effort.

Recommendations for Business/Community/Education Partnerships

The initial case studies indicated that stakeholders viewed the SFAC as a catalyst in forming business, community, and education partnerships. Establishment of this collective participation was an accomplishment in and of itself. Certain characteristics of the SFAC also made it unique in its contribution to school

reform: support for innovative education programs, incentives and rewards for excellence, flexibility with the SFAC funding, and the prestige of the Annenberg reputation. Key stakeholders agreed that their projects would not have been possible without the support of SFAC. This was particularly true in schools with large numbers of minority students and children of poverty that had limited resources for new initiatives.

Thus, the SFAC made unique contributions for business, community, and education sectors to come together and form partnerships for school reform. Stakeholders, including principals, teachers, parents, and students, expressed a high level of satisfaction with their partnerships. The majority agreed that their project was a good example of collective participation and should be continued in their school and replicated in other schools as well. However, most participants did not have specific plans or funding sources to sustain their projects. Strategies to sustain and replicate effective partnerships require consideration.

Principals were essential for program implementation and success. Principals served two major roles: to translate the vision and goals of the partnership into practice and to be a primary communication link among various groups of participants. Principal buy-in was one of the most important factors for program success. If the principal did not buy into the project, the project floundered at that school, which led to wide variations among schools within the same partnership. In addition, the project director had a tremendous hurdle to cross without the principal's support.

Teacher buy-in was critical for successful implementation of project activities at the classroom level. Shared decision-making practices empowered teachers and increased their feelings of ownership and investment in the project. In addition, effective professional development activities provided opportunities for teachers to implement creative and innovative curriculum materials and instructional strategies. Initial findings indicated that traditional workshops and

Principal buy-in was one of the most important factors for program success.

limited professional development activities did not provide teachers with the tools they needed to teach students in urban settings. Effective approaches for teacher professional development for more intensive instruction in urban settings are needed.

A key characteristic of the SFAC was its support for innovative, creative, and flexible education programs. The SFAC also promoted flexibility in finance, such as funding opportunities for teacher professional development and incentives and rewards for excellence. In addition, the SFAC was a catalyst for partnerships to develop strategies for overcoming bureaucracy and regulations in the education system that sometimes hindered education innovations. Unfortunately, procedures for deregulation at the state and district levels were not consistent, making successful program implementation difficult. The education system and some educators seemed to resist changes in the system.

Parents were key partners in public education. This support was especially important in inner-city schools serving minority students from low socio-economic backgrounds. Successful partnerships promoted parental involvement in academically oriented activities. Compared to other stakeholders, however, parents were generally less actively involved in SFAC projects. Even in successful projects where parental involvement was considered a priority, parents often indicated that they were not aware of business and community partners or specific project activities.

The results indicate that to launch a complex partnership, leadership of key personnel is critical. At the partnership level, the participation of the project director was important. At the school level, principal support was necessary. Commitment of key selected participants, such as lead teachers, project

It was necessary to give up individual autonomy and be willing to collaborate and use the diversity of talents among participants.

coordinators, or technology facilitators, was necessary, particularly at initial stages of program implementation. In addition, a sense of ownership and empowerment of participants, particularly principals and teachers, was critically important. The various groups of people needed to work together toward achieving a clear set of common goals. As mentioned above, it was necessary to give up individual autonomy and be willing to collaborate and use the diversity of talents among participants. It was also important to be sensitive and realistic about time commitments.

Future Directions for Program Evaluation

The initial case studies contain a rich array of data offering insights into the ways in which the SFAC had an impact on the community. Current SFAC case study research comprehensively involves multiple qualitative and quantitative data sources. Individual and focus-group interviews continue to serve as the core of case studies. Recently, the evaluation team developed a rating rubric to summarize the interview data in a quantitative manner. In addition, survey results with larger numbers of stakeholders, monitoring reports, more refined student-achievement-test analyses, and cost-effectiveness analyses are included as part of the case study reports.

Rating Rubric

To further refine the analysis of individual and focus-group interviews, a rating rubric was developed. Key indicators of success, gleaned from relevant literature and our previous case studies, were combined with survey results, monitoring reports, and lessons learned to create the units of analysis for a rating rubric. The rubric included salient components for the following seven constructs: collective participation, principal leadership, professional development/skilled teachers, parent involvement, student outcomes, SFAC project staff, and school environment. These constructs were further defined in subcategories. As a result, each transcript could be rated on a four-point scale, using the rating rubric, to determine a score for each construct. Mean scores for each category could be determined, allowing comparisons across all partnerships and across schools within each partnership of the seven constructs separately and collectively.

Surveys

As case study research continued, it became necessary to examine whether the case study results with selected partnerships were replicable with all partnerships. Surveys were conducted with key stakeholders from all partnerships in spring 2001 and 2002. Construction of survey questionnaires was based on two primary data sources: indicators of success developed from the cross-case analysis of case studies, and indicators of success gleaned from an extensive review of the literature. The evaluation team conducted an extensive review of literature on key indicators of principal leadership, teacher quality, and parental involvement that lead to student achievement. Key indicators of success from the literature were combined with key indicators of success from the ongoing case studies of partnerships.

The results from these two sources were generally consistent, although the case study results provided additional insights into business/community/school partnerships in urban school settings. Survey subscales were created for the same seven constructs of success used to evaluate interview transcripts, enabling us to look at overall means from both surveys and case study partnership interviews and, in addition, providing a way to determine which constructs contribute most to success at both the school and partnership levels.

Eventually, interview protocols for case studies of selected partnerships and survey questionnaires for all partnerships were developed using the same sets of key indicators about collective partnership, principal leadership, teacher quality, and parental involvement. These indicators of success were also used for the biannual monitoring reports described in the next section.

Monitoring Reports

Monitoring reports were designed to provide biannual updates to the SFAC regarding project activities and progress toward achieving goals and objectives, as well as issues or obstacles encountered during project implementation. The reports, usually completed by the project directors, provided a different perspective on the implementation and outcomes of SFAC partnerships.

Each monitoring report included a demographics section, in which partnerships described the schools and partners involved, the number and grade levels of the students, and the project focus (e.g., mathematics, reading, writing, professional development, FCAT, technology, parental involvement, and principal leadership). Next, a free-response section asked the partnerships to respond to questions about key accomplishments, challenges, modifications of project activities, progress in reaching objectives, and determination of the number of key success indicators met. Finally, a short survey section was included to obtain information about the project directors' perceptions of the presence or absence of key indicators of success within the partnership.

Monitoring reports provided an opportunity for each project to communicate successes and lessons learned and provide unique insights into the dynamics of the school, business, and community partnerships. In addition, these reports served as important links between each project and the SFAC office. The review and analysis of the biannual monitoring reports allowed the SFAC staff to become aware of areas in which each project might need assistance or input and ensured that each partnership was making the expected progress.

Student Achievement

Student-achievement data (FCAT scores in reading, mathematics, and writing) were analyzed for all SFAC schools and were included in case study reports. Comparison schools (in terms of demographics and initial FCAT scores at baseline) for all SFAC schools have been identified. The FCAT scores for SFAC partnerships and schools within each partnership were analyzed and compared to those of the comparison schools, the respective school district, and the state overall.

Cost-Effectiveness Analysis

To assist the SFAC in identifying partnerships that not only appear to be effective in improving student outcomes, but that also provide a reasonable return on investment, a cost-effectiveness analysis plan is in development. This initial attempt is a systematic "broad-stroke" approach. The results will provide practical guidance for identifying partnerships that are both academically successful and financially efficient.

Levin and McEwan (2001) expressed concern about the quantity and quality of cost-effectiveness studies. It is often difficult to determine accurate costs and to develop good measures of cost-effectiveness. A set of assumptions needs to be made when determining cost per student and calculating cost-effectiveness, since it is not feasible to conduct an on-site audit at each school. The resulting cost-effectiveness ratio can be expressed in two ways: to

Monitoring reports were designed to provide biannual updates to the SFAC regarding project activities and progress toward achieving goals and objectives, as well as issues or obstacles encountered during project implementation.

determine which projects spent the least amount of money per student (cost) for a given level of effectiveness (gain in standardized-test scores) and to examine the highest level of effectiveness for a given cost per student (Levin & McEwan 2002).

A FINAL WORD

The SFAC took the approach of encouraging grassroots reform initiatives to scatter seeds and see what grows, rather than targeting a specific goal (e.g., smaller class size) as the driving theme. Such an approach may be appropriate in school districts that have a longer history of school reform efforts or philanthropic funding for private-public partnerships; school reform, particularly at a multidistrict level, is new to South Florida. Further research is needed to assess the pros and cons of this approach and to document lessons learned in order to guide other large-scale school reform initiatives.

The findings from the case studies suggested that factors associated with principal leadership, teacher empowerment, and parental involvement in private-public partnerships can lead to increased student achievement. The results also indicated barriers to success. The study of the South Florida Annenberg Challenge offers important insights and valuable lessons to the public, as well as educators, about the civic-minded approach to school reform. Others interested in forming similar partnerships or achieving similar goals may be able to learn from difficulties that participants in these partnerships faced and the solutions that they discovered.

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