

# *Doing What Matters*

THE BRIDGES TO SUCCESS STRATEGY FOR  
BUILDING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The **DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund**, in its partnership with United Way of America, has been a leading supporter of school-community collaborations across the nation, including Bridges To Success. Through its support, the Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund has made this handbook possible.

## WE RECOGNIZE THE FOLLOWING INDIVIDUALS FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTIONS TO THIS HANDBOOK:

**Jamyce Banks**, John Marshall Middle School; **Josepha Bethea**, United Way of Greater Greensboro; **Marty Blank**, Coalition for Community Schools; **Stacey Blymiller**, United Way of America; **LaTonya Bonner**, Washington Irving Elementary School 14; **Robert Burgbacher**, Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center; **Eileen Champagne**, George Washington Community School; **Emily DeMaria**, United Way of America; **Kimberly Erwin**, Vandalia Elementary School; **Will Fay**, Annie E. Casey Foundation; **Chris Glancy**, United Way of Central Indiana; **Ann Hanlon**, Washington Irving Elementary School 14; **Jeanne Jehl**, Annie E. Casey Foundation; **Cecelia Johnson**, United Way of Central Indiana; **Michelle Jones**, Indianapolis Public Schools; **Irv Katz**, National Collaboration for Youth; **Diana Kelly**, United Way of Genesee County, Michigan; **Mary Kinney**, United Way of Central Indiana; **Nancy Lobdell**, Indianapolis Public Schools; **Sheila Murphy**, Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund; **Elizabeth Odle**, Washington Irving Elementary School 14; **Ron Peck**, Indianapolis Public Schools; **Dr. Duncan "Pat" Pritchett**, Indianapolis Public Schools; **Doug Richards**, Perna Design; **Claudia Taylor**, Indianapolis Public Schools; **D'Andre Waldron**, United Way of Central Indiana; **Stacey Williamson**, Indianapolis Public Schools; and **Debbie Zipes**, United Way of Central Indiana.

## COPIES OF HANDBOOK

Copies of this handbook may be requested from Bridges To Success in Indianapolis.

Copyright© January 2004 by Bridges To Success, United Way of Central Indiana. Parts of this document may be reproduced for non-commercial purposes without the express written consent of the publisher as long as proper citation and attribution is made.

## AUTHOR

Atelia Melaville

## CONTRIBUTORS

James Grim and Eric Williams



DeWitt Wallace Reader's Digest

# Contents

---

FOREWORD <i>Marty Blank, Coalition for Community Schools</i> . . . . .	1
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	3
PART I: BUILDING BRIDGES . . . . .	5
<b>A Reason for Change</b> . . . . .	6
Enter United Way . . . . .	6
<b>Community Schools: Creating Conditions for Learning</b> . . . . .	8
The Community School Vision . . . . .	9
What a Community School Looks Like . . . . .	10
The Community School Advantage . . . . .	10
The Impact of Community Schools . . . . .	11
Getting Started . . . . .	11
<b>The BTS Model: A Community School Strategy</b> . . . . .	12
Community-wide Governing Council . . . . .	12
School-based Site Teams . . . . .	14
<b>The Process In Action</b> . . . . .	15
Example #1: Creating a Delivery System for School-based Health Care . . . . .	15
Example #2: Afterschool Programs . . . . .	16
<b>Expanding The Initiative</b> . . . . .	17
<b>BTS School Profile: Washington Irving Elementary School #14</b> . . . . .	19
PART II: ADAPTING BRIDGES . . . . .	21
<b>Community-wide Governance: A Vision for Change</b> . . . . .	22
Gathering Key Stakeholders . . . . .	22
Learning about Community Schools . . . . .	23
Conducting a Community Assessment . . . . .	24
Developing Collaborative Decision-making Skills . . . . .	24
Agreeing on a Vision . . . . .	26
Guiding Principles . . . . .	26
Selecting Target Sites . . . . .	27
Staffing the Initiative . . . . .	28
Staffing Site Teams . . . . .	28
Evaluating Progress . . . . .	29
Selecting Results and Indicators . . . . .	30
Designing Evaluations . . . . .	31

<b>Site Teams: The Heart of BTS.</b> . . . . .	32
Site Team Membership. . . . .	32
Site Team Leadership . . . . .	33
<b>Assessing Needs and Resources</b> . . . . .	35
Developing a Work Plan. . . . .	36
Staffing Strategies . . . . .	37
School-Community Plan. . . . .	37
Evaluating Initiative Performance . . . . .	38
Evaluating Impact . . . . .	38
<b>BTS School Profile: George Washington Community School</b> . . . . .	41
<b>PART III: SUSTAINING THE VISION</b> . . . . .	43
<b>Planning for System-wide Expansion</b> . . . . .	44
<b>Selecting Expansion Sites</b> . . . . .	45
<b>Deepening Collaborative Leadership</b> . . . . .	46
<b>Developing Staff</b> . . . . .	47
<b>Developing Financing Strategies</b> . . . . .	49
<b>Some Final Questions</b> . . . . .	50
<b>BTS School Profile: Vandalia Elementary School</b> . . . . .	51
<b>APPENDIX</b> . . . . .	53
<b>A. Site Team as Coordinating Body</b> . . . . .	53
<b>B. School Readiness Assessment</b> . . . . .	53
<b>C. Theory of Bridges To Success</b> . . . . .	55
<b>D. Four Phases of Site Team Development.</b> . . . . .	56
<b>E. Outcomes from Success at School in Greensboro, NC.</b> . . . . .	57
<b>F. Community Readiness Assessment</b> . . . . .	58
<b>G. Needs and Resources Assessment Process</b> . . . . .	59
<b>H. Key Questions of the Assessment Process</b> . . . . .	59
<b>I. Creating Academic Alignment</b> . . . . .	60
<b>J. Managing Existing Programs</b> . . . . .	61
<b>K. Academic Outcomes Assessment for Site Teams</b> . . . . .	63
<b>COMMUNITY SCHOOL RESOURCES</b> . . . . .	64



I have had the privilege of watching the Bridges To Success (BTS) community school initiative unfold in Indianapolis, Indiana, for nearly 10 years. At a time when community schools are growing significantly as an approach to helping young people learn and succeed and to strengthen families and communities, BTS is one of the nation's leading community school models. It is among the most systematic community school efforts in the country, developing strong roots in schools and neighborhoods, and a web of relationships among important community institutions. These roots and relationships not only give BTS the capacity to sustain its existing work but also the potential to expand and to continuously enhance the quality and scope of the supports and opportunities it offers to students, their families, and neighborhoods.

Community school initiatives like BTS are particularly important in the context of the No Child Left Behind Act (NCLB). At the Coalition for Community Schools, we believe that the focus on high standards and academic achievement in NCLB is necessary, but not sufficient, to ensure that all young people succeed. Mobilizing the assets of families and communities, and developing the social, emotional and physical competencies of young people, is also essential. BTS has organized an entire community in support of young people, from the grassroots (parents, families, residents, neighborhood organizations, child, youth and family serving agencies), to the treetops (United Way, school superintendents, the mayor's office, and leaders of other public and private institutions). Everyone is assuming their share of the responsibility.

Of particular significance with BTS has been the role of United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI). From the time BTS began under the leadership of Dan McDonald and Irv Katz to the present guidance of Ellen Annala, UWCI's commitment to BTS has been unwavering. UWCI has made BTS a crucial element of its community impact strategy. It has committed its

planning and capacity-building resources, and provided incentives and encouragement for its member agencies to become involved with BTS at individual school sites. UWCI is a model for other United Ways seeking to strengthen their relationships with school districts.

This text illustrates several factors that the Coalition for Community Schools has seen as critical to the success of such initiatives: a clear and compelling vision of what the community hopes to accomplish; leadership with the commitment, capacity and influence to make that vision a reality; resources – financial and organizational – sufficient to initiate a venture and sustain it through challenging times; and a commitment to strong planning and decision-making mechanisms at the school and neighborhood level, that ensures that what happens in a BTS school is responsive to the school and the community.

BTS also demonstrates how local communities are integrating aspects of different national community school models into designs that work for them. BTS has drawn on the comprehensive community school model of the Children’s Aid Society, the services brokering and capacity-building expertise of Communities in Schools, and the community-based curriculum approach of the West Philadelphia Improvement Corporation and University-Assisted Community Schools.

BTS was among the first local community school initiatives associated with the Coalition for Community Schools. United Way of America was a founding partner in the Coalition. Their collaboration in the preparation of this manual is another milestone in the efforts of the entire United Way system to promote deeper school and community collaboration. The Coalition for Community Schools will be proud to widely disseminate this important publication and to continue to work with the entire United Way system to achieve these results.

*Martin J. Blank, Staff Director  
Coalition for Community Schools  
Institute for Educational Leadership*



In 1991, a United Way executive and a school superintendent looked at the problems facing children, families and schools in their city, and they decided it was time for a change. The city was Indianapolis. The change they envisioned was called Bridges To Success (BTS), a strategy for creating community schools. A collaboration between United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI) and the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS), with hundreds of community partners, was born.

This wasn't the first time school and community partners in Indianapolis decided to work together to help students. Schools in the core city had high rates of poverty and were juggling dozens of well-meant community efforts. But disconnected efforts often overlooked the interrelatedness of young people's needs. They did little to prioritize problems or focus attention where it was most needed. Nor were the family and community members who were closest to young people involved in thinking about what would really help. Single solutions weren't working. And scattershot programming was wasting scarce resources.

Indianapolis needed a more comprehensive approach to improve education and services in low-income communities. Instead of another program, BTS offered a process for assessing local needs, marshalling resources, and directing them toward achieving specific improvements in the lives of children, families, and schools.

In 1993, six schools began the BTS process. Today, students and families in 44 IPS schools benefit from afterschool programs, health, mental health, vision and dental services, mentoring, tutoring, recreation and cultural activities provided by more than 300 partners and valued at more than \$9 million annually.

None of this would have happened without a United Way who saw its role not only as a fundraiser but also as a community problem solver. Local United Ways have always played an important role in helping communities

meet education, health, and human service needs, usually by supporting individual agencies through workplace giving campaigns.

In recent years however, one of the United Way's major strategic priorities has been to find more comprehensive ways to add value to their communities. Because United Ways are familiar with local issues, non-partisan in their approach, and respected in their communities, they have the capacity to leverage substantial political and financial support for community-wide goals. Many local United Ways are now responding more directly to the needs of children and families by convening education and human service agencies and encouraging collaborative responses to problems that are beyond the ability of any single institution to solve.

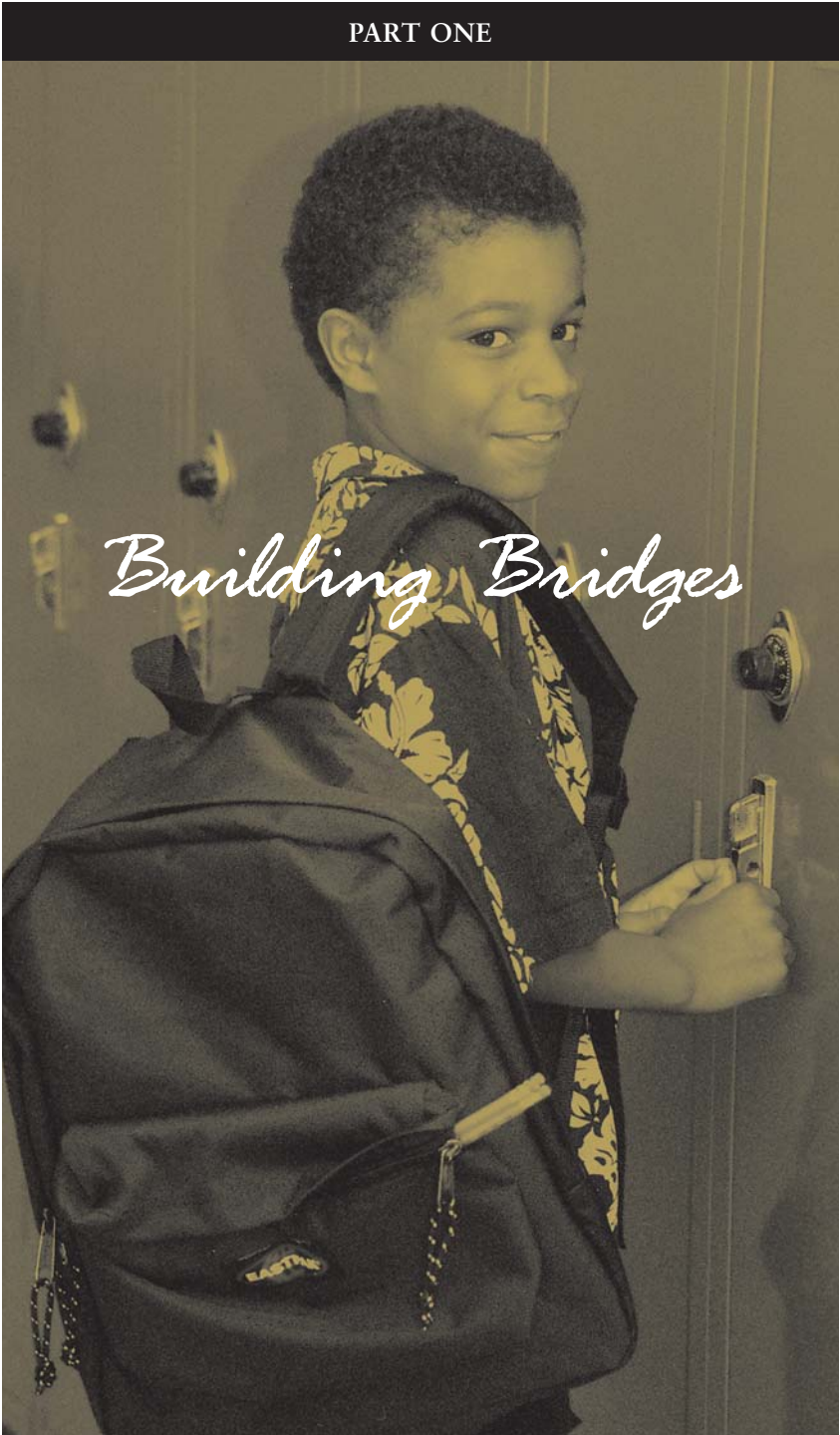
The BTS process started as one such collaborative effort. Its success led the United Way of America (UWA) to make BTS the model for its school-linked community-building efforts. With funding from the DeWitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Fund, UWA has helped replicate the BTS model in eight states.

This text is designed to help United Way communities understand how the BTS process works and think about how such a community-wide approach might benefit their children, families, and schools. Its intent is not to serve as an implementation guide per se but rather to give United Way professionals and their partners a broad understanding of how they might proceed and mark their progress.

Part I describes the community school philosophy, the circumstances that led to the birth of BTS, the community school strategy it espouses, and the core features of the BTS model as it developed and expanded in its early years. Part II looks more closely at governance and planning capacities needed to support a BTS approach and the process entailed in developing them. Part III considers sustainability and expansion issues. The Appendix includes a variety of tools developed by the Indianapolis BTS.

PART ONE

*Building Bridges*





The Bridges To Success story started in 1991 with a school system pushed to its limits and a local United Way that volunteered to help. When the geographical boundaries of Indianapolis were greatly expanded in 1970, the new city encompassed several school districts. Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS) was left to serve the city's original core neighborhoods and to struggle with problems typical of many urban school districts.

Seventy percent of all IPS students qualified for free or reduced price lunch. Property tax revenues in the inner city were a fraction of what was available to the city's more affluent school districts, and the demand for health and social services was far greater. Sixty percent of children who began the year at one school would move before the school year ended. Neighborhoods offered few opportunities for safe recreation, health and needed social services. School attendance and achievement scores were on a downward spiral.

Various programs to address individual problems were introduced into the schools. But as one school official put it, "We seldom knew what these programs were doing or what they added up to."

At the same time, schools were increasingly expected to incorporate non-academic subjects such as family life education or drug abuse prevention into the school day. But they were expected to do so without the benefit of additional resources, teacher time, or personnel with the expertise to teach and manage these courses.

IPS, the school system with the highest proportion of low-income students in the metro area, had only one social worker for every 1,000 students. School staff were frustrated. Parents were seldom involved, and neighborhood revitalization efforts were nearly non-existent.

### **Enter United Way**

United Way of Central Indiana (UWCI) was well aware of the problems facing IPS schools and neighborhoods. As a major funder, it had helped

support many well-intended programs with limited results. United Way realized it had the capacity to pull together many sectors of the community: civic, government and corporate leaders, service providers, educators, and residents in a neutral setting to set a common agenda. As a community fundraiser and funder it also had the ability to solicit financial, voluntary and in-kind resources to advance that agenda.

BTS grew, not as a stopgap measure, but out of a vision of what a successful Indianapolis could look like in the future. Irv Katz, then vice-president for planning at the United Way of Central Indiana, and Shirl Gilbert II, then IPS superintendent, proposed a broad vision and a first step toward achieving it: Bridges To Success. They sketched an initiative in which public schools and community service agencies would join forces to provide recreation, health and social services for students and residents in two neighborhoods. The intent would be to keep students in school learning and to establish the school as a focal point of community life.

The community school plan was consistent with United Way's interest in finding more creative ways to tackle pressing community problems, and it spoke directly to IPS' needs. The boards of both UWCI and IPS endorsed a collaborative strategy to revitalize both a school system and a community. Starting small, they would eventually move system-wide, transforming traditional schools into community schools.

## PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE: BUILDING CONNECTIONS BETWEEN PARTNERS

*Shalom Healthcare Centers, Inc., a community partner on the west side of Indianapolis, has helped bring health clinic services to several BTS schools. This activity gave an important boost to their application for approval as a Federally Qualified Healthcare Center and has benefited Shalom in other ways. When they were looking for a suitable building to house a community-based clinic, another partner, Life Transitions, Inc., actively joined the search. By providing an opportunity for them to work together, the site team helped these partners advance the best interests of their respective organizations and their community.*



The idea of community schools did not begin with Bridges To Success. BTS planners have had the advantage of building on an approach with a rich history and years of experience. In turn, BTS has helped shape the modern community school movement.

Efforts to bring community resources into the schools have been part of the educational landscape for more than a century. The settlement house movement in the late 19th century, John Dewey's call for schools to be social centers in the early 1900s, and later the growth of community education were major landmarks. They all brought cultural, recreational, educational and social services into the schools and encouraged young people to participate in community life.

A new wave of interest in community schools began in the late 1980s. State, local and philanthropic efforts to improve outcomes for children and families and build communities helped create a number of community school models. Beacons Schools and Children's Aid Society in New York, Missouri's Caring Communities, West Philadelphia's Improvement Corps, a university-assisted community school model; California's Healthy Start initiative; and national models like Communities In Schools and Schools of the 21st Century, among others, developed during this period. Bridges To Success was an important part of this renaissance and quickly emerged as a model worthy of replication. In recent years, individual components of the community school movement have continued to grow. In 1998, the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers initiative that provides substantial funding to promote afterschool programs was passed.

Public schools are well aware of the importance of the federal No Child Left Behind Act passed in 2002 and the difficulty of meeting the sweeping new academic standards it requires. Although given far less attention, the same legislation advocates many of the essential

components of community schools: parent involvement, afterschool programs, community-based service and learning, and better integration of existing public and private resources.

### The Community School Vision

Clearly it is no longer enough for children to have access to schooling. The schools they attend must provide them with the conditions they need to learn. This is what community schools are uniquely able to do.

Community school models differ substantially in the way they are organized, staffed and funded, but they are united by a broad perspective and a number of key features. Working with the Coalition for Community Schools (the Coalition), an umbrella organization of more than 160 national, state and local organizations, they have spelled out a common vision and definition for community schools.<sup>1</sup> The experience of Bridges to Success has helped shape this vision – a vision that continues to guide its expansion in Indianapolis and in communities across the country.

In the coalition’s view, a community school is both a set of partnerships and a place where services, supports and opportunities lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Using a public school as the starting point, partnerships among government, education, youth agencies, business, health care providers, and social service agencies create an environment in which every child can meet his or her potential.

Through community-level involvement and school-based decision-making, community schools develop services and supports in education, youth development, family support and engagement, and community development. These efforts are intentionally designed to achieve the conditions for learning that research shows are essential for all children to succeed. The conditions that a community school vision promotes includes:<sup>2</sup>

- a core education program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high expectations for students;
- motivated students engaged in learning in both school and community settings;
- well-met physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families;
- mutual respect and effective collaboration at school among adults and students; and,
- a safe and supportive school climate that connects students to both learning and service in the community.

---

<sup>1</sup> This section draws on a variety of Coalition for Community materials.  
See: [www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org).

<sup>2</sup> Martin Blank, Atelia Melaville and Bela Shah. Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community schools, 2003.

## What a Community School Looks Like

A wide range of models and approaches can fit into a basic community school framework. Although every school is unique, the Coalition describes a well-developed community school looks something like the following descriptions.

A community school, operating in a public school building, is open to students, families and the community before, during and after school, seven days a week, all year. The initiative is operated jointly through a partnership between the school system and one or more community agencies. At the school, a site team composed of parents, teachers, principals, neighborhood residents and service providers marshal resources and implement activities that promote high educational achievement and use the community as a resource for learning. A full-time coordinator helps the local school team work effectively, ensures the alignment of activities to school standards, and oversees the day-to-day management of the initiative.

The whole school is oriented toward the community and encourages learning through service and community involvement. Before and after-school learning programs help students build on classroom experiences, expand their cultural and athletic horizons, and have fun. A family support center helps families with child rearing, employment, housing and other services. Medical, dental and mental health services are readily accessible.

A diverse group of volunteers, artists, dancers, college faculty and students, lawyers, neighbors and family members become regular members of the school community. Their presence opens up new channels for student learning and self-expression. Students discover unknown talents and strengths. They start coming to school more, and staying late because they want to.

## The Community School Advantage

Unlike traditional public schools, community schools link school and community resources and align them with student learning as an integral part of their design and operation. School, family and community partners identify and prioritize student and family needs, agree on what they want to accomplish and work together to find the resources needed to get the job done. This shared focus allows community schools to do more of what's needed to help young people succeed.

With families and community members, community schools provide a powerful and supportive learning environment with an impact far greater than the sum of its parts. In contrast to traditional schools, community schools have far greater capacity to:

- garner additional resources and increase time for teaching and learning;
- provide learning opportunities that develop essential academic and non-academic competencies; and,
- build social capital: connections, information and relationships that benefit both young people and their schools.

## The Impact of Community Schools

A growing body of evaluation research shows that community school activities that promote one or more of the conditions for learning reap benefits for students, families, schools and communities. In a review of current research on community-school initiatives, including national models, state funded approaches and local initiatives, results were organized by their impacts on young people, schools, families and communities.

Although not all of these initiatives explicitly termed themselves community schools, their purposes, strategies and activities promote most, if not all, of the conditions for learning. Each evaluation asked different questions and varied in the extent to which they looked at the effects on each group. The findings suggest that when all the conditions for learning are integrated in a single environment, the benefits are multiplied. In the 20 evaluations reviewed, including Bridges To Success, findings showed the following improvements in:

- **Student Learning:** Community school students show significant and widely evident gains in academic achievement and in essential areas of non-academic development.
- **Family Engagement:** Families of community school students show increased stability and are more able to meet basic needs. They communicate more with teachers and are more involved in their children's school.
- **School Effectiveness:** Community schools enjoy improved parent-teacher relationships and increased teacher satisfaction. School environments are more positive and community support increases.
- **Community Vitality:** Community schools promote better use of school buildings, and their neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community value and better rapport among students and residents.

## Getting Started

Although every community school reflects its own special needs and resources and no two community schools will look exactly alike, many communities speed up implementation efforts by adapting elements of successful initiatives like Bridges to Success.

As the BTS experience shows, the involvement of a strong intermediary organization, like United Way, makes it easier for developing initiatives to get started. Local United Ways can help attract key stakeholders and the diversified funding necessary to develop and sustain community school initiatives. They also have much of the in-house expertise necessary to staff and lead beginning efforts.



BTS was intended to provide an alternative to the conflicting demands and inefficiencies of multiple programs and to improve neighborhood-wide access to school-linked education, health and human services. In order to do both these things, BTS operates at two levels: community-wide and neighborhood/school. With United Way and IPS as major stakeholders, BTS collaborates with many partners to create system-wide initiatives and local site teams.

A community-wide governing council and school-based site teams, supported and linked by staff coordinators, are the central structures of BTS. Together they create a process designed to identify school and community needs, mobilize resources, and use them to create an environment for learning. The BTS story that follows highlights some of the key features of the BTS model. It describes its initial implementation, highlights some policy accomplishments, and notes the flexibility required to expand.

### **Community-wide Council**

At the community level, the BTS process relies on a council composed of major policy-making bodies with the authority and resources necessary to advance the BTS agenda. The council brings together key stakeholders to create system-wide initiatives and reposition resources for schools. The council not only mobilizes resources, it works to identify and resolve policy barriers preventing the effective use of those resources.

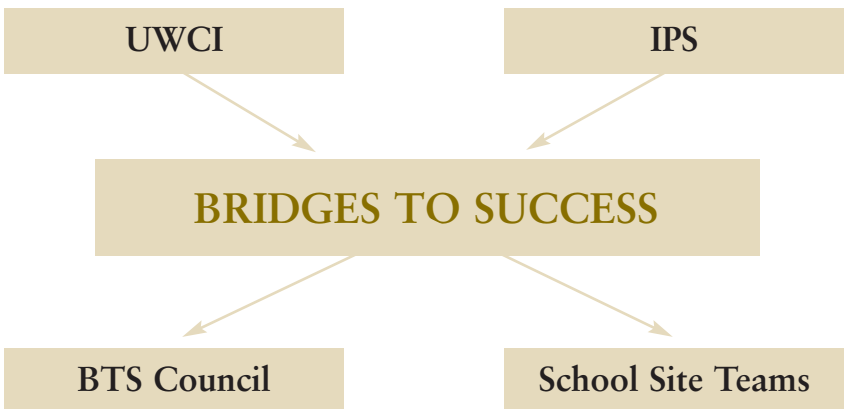
Initially, UWCI and IPS leadership brought the community schools idea to key decision makers. Together, they developed a practical vision for creating schools as hubs of the community, open beyond the school day, and offering an array of services and supports to students and families. Moving strategically toward implementation, they identified needs and assets in the community. Then they gathered best practice ideas and sought out technical assistance from Cities In Schools, a national community schools initiative

now called Communities In Schools (CIS). The council developed both a structure to ensure continuing support and oversight for the BTS initiative and an adaptive process for convening key players and addressing community issues. The initiative focused on creating *sustainable* impact by working with systems *already in place* and changing *how and where* services were delivered.

With a clear vision and a strategic plan in hand, partners were able to decide how they would contribute financially. IPS and UWCI volunteered to underwrite staffing and administrative costs for the initiative, each committing about \$250,000 annually. UWCI funds supported a full-time director for the initiative and provided overall program administration. IPS staffs the initiative with five area school coordinators. Other partners, who in the past often competed with each other for limited funds, agreed to reposition staff and resources to school sites.

As the need arose, the council developed various subcommittees to look at specific issues in detail. A **family engagement** subcommittee was established to coordinate the work of existing parent groups. A **health** subcommittee was formed to identify and overcome obstacles to school-based services. An **afterschool** subcommittee established guidelines and leveraged funding for high quality youth development opportunities. And very early on, an **evaluation** subcommittee came together to ensure that the initiative learned as much as possible from ongoing implementation and used that information to make improvements.

### BTS ORGANIZATIONAL CHART



## School-based Site Teams

A school site team is the planning and implementation body for the Bridges to Success process at each BTS school. Composed of school staff, families, and all sectors of the community, site teams set priorities and take action consistent with the BTS vision and based on the specific needs of their students, school, and neighborhood.

Six schools began the BTS process in the fall of 1993. IPS repositioned five staff members to serve as community coordinators in five schools. A sixth position funded by a grant was eliminated when the grant was terminated.

BTS coordinators and principals at each school brought together parents, neighbors, businesses, churches, and service providers to develop strategies for identifying needs and resources and linking them in ways designed to make an impact on student learning. Each team was co-chaired by a community leader and the school principal. See the diagram entitled **Site Team as Coordinating Body** in **Appendix A** for a visual representation of the site team's role.

BTS coordinators supported site team efforts and helped bring in additional partners. Along with the BTS director, they worked to keep the lines of communication open between the site teams and the policy-making council and ensured that site teams had the help they needed to implement their plans.

Site teams at each school developed a package of opportunities, supports, and services to meet identified local needs, provided by partners, at no cost to children and families. To spark new partnerships and interest in BTS, UWCI provided additional incentives including new funding opportunities to meet targeted community needs.

### PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE: PROVIDING INCENTIVES FOR LEARNING

*“You’ve got to really let children know they can learn,” says Principal Doris Thompson. Teachers at IPS School #27 took up that challenge. With help from BTS, they have encouraged students to excel. Every nine weeks, honor roll students with perfect attendance and exceptional citizenship are invited to an event coordinated and supported by the site team. The number of honorees started out small and has grown to more than 60. Between 1999 and 2001, the percentage of third graders passing the state standardized tests climbed from 37 to 69 percent. In 2003, School #27 was named one of 214 Blue Ribbon Schools by the U.S. Department of Education.*



The BTS council and site teams work together to improve student outcomes, not by providing services directly but by influencing how systems work and use resources. The BTS process at both the council and site level identifies needs, resources and barriers to implementation. It fosters collaborative solutions and holds partners accountable for achieving results. When site teams cannot mobilize the resources needed to address local needs, the council uses its influence to identify policy barriers and to change existing systems.

### **Example #1: Creating a Delivery System for School-based Health Care**

In the early 1990s, every teacher and parent at an IPS school knew that a lack of accessible health and mental health services led kids with asthma, toothaches, or other health issues to miss school and under-perform in class. Only the major institutions responsible for funding and providing health care services could help fill these gaps. It took the BTS process to help these institutions see the problem and focus their efforts on a solution.

Site team assessments made it clear that improving school-based and school-linked health services was a top priority. In 1994, the Health Foundation and United Way of Central Indiana applied for a \$400,000 three-year grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation (RWJF). This grant was matched dollar for dollar by four local funders, including the Health Foundation, United Way of Central Indiana, the Indianapolis Foundation, and a business group organized to support schools. Clinics were established in three schools and other partners joined forces to bring medical services to all six BTS sites.

Looking for ways to continue these efforts, the Health Foundation and UWCI convened the area's major health care institutions. With a grant from the Health Foundation to UWCI, the School Wellness Collaborative was born in 2000 as a partnership among several local hospitals. Its goal was

to provide school-based health services throughout the IPS system within five years.

The Health Foundation, a member of the BTS Council, agreed to provide \$1 million annually for up to five years to start and sustain the project. UWCI staff coordinated the work and HealthNet, another council member, served as fiscal agent. Partner hospitals agreed to provide medical staff and supplies. Medicaid and eventually CHIP (Children's Health Insurance Program) funds were used to underwrite services.

The School Wellness Collaborative helped establish 37 school-based clinics throughout Marion County, some of which serve neighborhood residents as well as school students. In 2003, it incorporated as Learning Well, Inc., an independent, private, nonprofit organization. As a result of BTS' leadership, thousands of students in four Marion County districts visit school clinics staffed by nurse practitioners while many more have school access to basic health services and health education.

Mental health care has also expanded significantly with the support of the BTS process. IntaCare, a partnership of the four largest mental health providers in Indianapolis, now provides school-based mental health services in 80 percent of IPS schools. Other partnerships offer school based and mobile dental clinic services to students and district-wide initiatives with local business partners provide eye exams and glasses.

### **Example #2: Afterschool Services**

The BTS community school vision called for school sites to offer a variety of activities before and after regular school hours, on evenings and weekends. In the early years of BTS, local agencies initiated afterschool programs and coordinated Family Nights, drawing students and adults by the dozens into school gyms and cafeterias. These events were planned to help make the schools a friendly place for families and a focal point of neighborhood activity.

Creating community schools with a wide range of consistently high quality services, however, required a system-wide approach. UWCI and the mayor's office joined forces with the major afterschool providers and three Indianapolis school districts to create the Afterschool Coalition of Indianapolis (ACI). Its goals are to increase the quality and expand the number of afterschool programs available to children and youth. Partners identify resources, share training opportunities, and provide a Web site to track programming. They have also developed best practice standards and evaluations based on a strength-based, youth development framework. As a result of their work, the coalition has helped expand the number of full-time, school-based afterschool programs in IPS by 71 percent and has helped leverage more than \$6 million for afterschool programs throughout the city.



Between 1993 and 1997, the BTS process was developed in six pilot schools. Other IPS schools saw good things happening and wanted to take part. The only question was how to pay for additional site coordinators who at this point were based full-time at each school site. The council, given its limited resources, had to make a choice: either delay expansion indefinitely until new funds could be found or adjust the model.

The council found a solution that would maintain the model's school-based approach while increasing emphasis on the neighborhood-based aspect of the model. Instead of assigning one coordinator to each school, staff referred to as Area School Coordinators (ASCs) would be assigned to one of five areas in the district and serve several schools. This reorganization allowed the number of BTS schools to grow from six to 26 schools in 1997 and to 44 by 2003.

A significant staffing tradeoff was necessary to expand BTS. The presence of a highly visible point person housed full-time at each school to develop the site team, oversee daily activities and maintain close communication among school staff and providers is a core feature of most community school models. Spreading this function across multiple schools has increased the challenges faced by both ASCs and schools, especially those schools in the early stages of site team development.

At the same time, the shift to area-wide coordination has helped focus the coordinators' role on building relationships within school clusters. It has required them to teach the community school process to others, rather than becoming involved in hands-on service delivery at a single school site. It has also called attention to the readiness of individual schools to undertake the BTS process.

The concept of multi-school site teams has also evolved from this shift to area-wide coordination. Where several schools in the same feeder pattern are engaged in BTS activities it makes sense for site teams to work closely together. This is especially true when elementary, middle and high schools are all

involved. By planning jointly, services can build upon and complement each other as the same children and families move through the grades.

By modifying its original design, the council demonstrated the innovation, flexibility and ability to sustain and expand successful models. In the next section, we look more closely at how other communities can begin to develop their own BTS process.

### *Initial Indianapolis Council Partners*

- Central Indiana Community Foundation.
- Indy Parks and Recreation.
- Community Centers of Indianapolis.
- Greater Indianapolis Chamber of Commerce.
- The Health Foundation of Greater Indianapolis.
- Indiana Network for Education and Training.
- Indiana University School of Education, IUPUI.
- Marion County Health Department.
- Mental Health Association of Marion County.
- YMCA of Greater Indianapolis.

### *What Community Partners Brought to Pilot Schools*

- Immunizations
- Alternatives-to-suspension
- Alcohol and drug prevention
- Community gardening
- Home finance
- Family support services
- Conflict resolution
- Pregnancy prevention
- Anger management
- Computer training
- Job preparedness

## IMAGINING THE FUTURE

*The year is 2051. Indianapolis and its suburbs have developed around a decentralized network of major commercial centers, most of them on the outer-reaches of Marion County. The historic central business district remains the traditional hub of this network, but the five satellite “downtowns” each boast more commercial and residential development than downtown Indianapolis. Education and other public services have developed in this manner as well. The school systems merged with the major social service and recreation agencies some 30 years ago, creating a network of “life learning centers” in each major section of the metropolitan area...Fanning out from the district life learning center is a network of neighborhood primary, secondary and tertiary schools, each with a unique mix of education and community services tailored to the needs and interests of its students and surrounding community.*

—“Toward a Model of School-Community Collaboration in Indianapolis,” 1991.



**Location:** Indianapolis, Indiana

**Grades:** Pre-K through 5th

**Number of students:** 550

**Eligible for free or reduced lunch:** 94%

**Population:** 3% Hispanic, 16% Caucasian,  
79% African American, 2% other

A smorgasbord is the metaphor that Elizabeth Odle, principal, uses to describe the transient neighborhood her school serves. This area of downtown Indianapolis is undergoing rapid change. Economic development is replacing lower income homes with upper income dwellings and families whose children attend private schools.

Housing costs have skyrocketed beyond the means of the school's lower-income working families and many are being squeezed out of affordable housing. High mobility and cutbacks in social services are affecting student achievement. The school serves an increasing number of students from homeless shelters.

According to Odle, a community school approach makes sense. "We don't live in isolation from that which is around us. We think it is important to broaden our children's horizons. And since our children aren't going to live here all their lives, we think it makes sense to reach out beyond this neighborhood for the help they need."

As a result of their outreach efforts, the BTS site team has built strong collaborative relationships with 42 community partners. Activities run the gamut from tutoring and mentoring, afterschool programs, and theme-based summer enrichment activities, to dental and mental health services, a school supplies closet, and neighbor-maintained outdoor learning labs.

The principal is an active participant in the site team and looks to it as a major resource for solving school problems. "Together, we energize our

partners to think of opportunities to further support the school's initiatives," Odle explained. "As we meet, we take time to share, and this sharing allows others to see how they can help, too. I know that once a month I can count on a collective group of supporters to gather and share how we as a community can do a better job of supporting the education of our children."

Community member Ann Hanlon also sees the benefits. "BTS helps us as a community to network, to promote projects and resources, and to bring others to the table," she said. "Mrs. Odle and the faculty certainly understand that it takes a village to raise a child. With so many of our students now coming from homeless shelters and district cutbacks in social services, there are extra burdens on these teachers. Success for students is dependent upon building relationships and working creatively together."

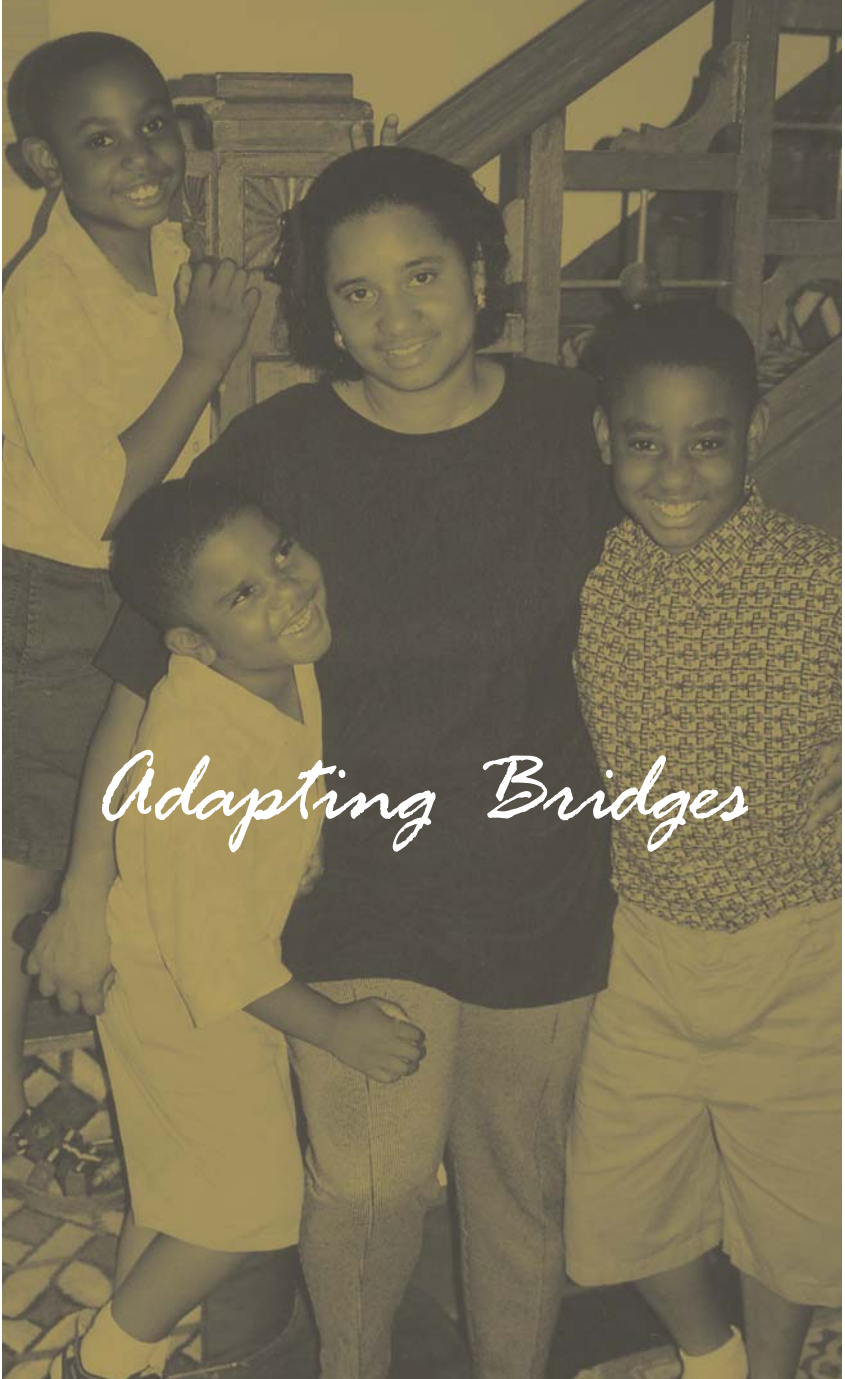
A new partnership with IndyGo, the city bus company, is an example of how the school's site team reached out beyond their neighborhood to solve school problems while expanding student perspectives at the same time. Due to new limits on school district bus use, the school had no way to get students to a day-long economic literacy workshop sponsored by Junior Achievement. Odle invited officials from IndyGo, the local transit agency, to help. What they came up with went far beyond a one-time solution. IndyGo representatives came to the school, taught students and families how to use bus schedules, obtain bus passes, and a participating union representative helped each 5th grader get a free bus pass good for two years. The new partnership gave 5th graders the skills to read a bus schedule and the means to use city buses for local transportation.

Often, when resources shift, other partners step up to fill the gaps. When district funding for a school social worker dropped to two days a week, nearby Shepherd Community Center expanded its family support services. Center staff work with teachers, parents, and students, focusing on academic achievement as well as basic needs. In addition, the center continued its full-time mentoring, Experience Corps volunteers, and mental health services in the school.

These activities have reaped benefits for children, parents and teachers. Between 1997 and 2000, for example, the percentage of students meeting math standards increased from 39 percent to 53 percent. Language performance increased as well. LaTonya Bonner, school staff member, thinks she knows why:

*"We give the children the motivational tools to succeed. Children and involved parents blossom here. Many of our students have gone on to be successful in various magnet programs. Once children leave this building to attend another elementary or middle school, they really want to come back. There's an aura in the building that radiates love, compassion, care, concern, but most of all there is hope."*

PART TWO



*Adapting Bridges*



BTS offers an effective, collaborative approach for strengthening schools and building communities. However, as any BTS replication site will tell you, every community is different and partners must adapt the BTS model to meet their own needs. The remainder of this guide looks more closely at the governance and planning capacities needed to support BTS and the process entailed in developing and implementing a strong collaborative initiative.

Because BTS operates at two levels, we look at how these stages play out, first in governing councils and then in site teams. In Part Three, we consider issues surrounding the initiative's expansion and sustainability.

Organizing a community-wide group to explore and possibly undertake a community school initiative takes credible leadership, planning expertise and knowledge of the community. United Way offers communities interested in getting started the benefit of an organizational home—an institution with the resources and expertise necessary to convene the right players and launch a complex undertaking. As the process moves forward, it can play a significant role in the initiative's ongoing oversight, management and financing.

### **Gathering Key Stakeholders**

BTS is a collaborative strategy to improve outcomes for children by developing community schools. To decide whether this approach is what a community wants and needs, a task force of interested and influential organizations and individuals must come to the table. The group may be small, however, participants must have the organizational clout to make commitments and follow through on them.

It is essential to cultivate a core group of key stakeholders from the onset. Meanwhile, new partners can be identified and brought into the task force. Everyone need not sign on before discussions start. Engaging new leaders should be a continuing process. It is as important in sustaining the work as it is in beginning it.

School system participation is critical. If the schools are not involved early on and represented by a superintendent, chief executive officer, or board chair, the schools' willingness to collaborate fully in the future is questionable.

Equally important is the involvement of high-level leaders from organizations, agencies and government offices with authority over the resources and policies that affect young people. Only senior executives are likely to have the standing necessary to influence their organization's purse strings, policies and future direction.

Diversity also matters. The wider the spectrum of stakeholders involved, the more legitimate and credible the task force becomes and the more widely accepted will be its decisions. It is important to engage leaders with influence throughout the community. The people who lead a community's youth organizations, neighborhood alliances, municipal government, schools and health care organizations have the potential to drive community change from the ground up.

At this stage, the task force's primary purpose is to decide whether it wants to undertake a collaborative planning effort. If it does, the group needs to structure the planning process and make sure that the leadership and expenses necessary to continue this exploration are shared among key stakeholders. In Indianapolis, for example, United Way of Central Indiana and Indianapolis Public Schools signed on as key stakeholders. Their financial and leadership commitment convinced many other partners to contribute resources.

One way that an ad hoc task force moves toward becoming a long-term collaborative initiative is through learning together. Partners research community schools. They develop a more complete picture of what children and families need. They also acquire collaborative decision-making skills. The knowledge that partners develop during this stage will help determine whether the initiative will continue and what its shared vision will look like. It is important to take the time to build a strong foundation.

### **Learning about Community Schools**

Visiting one or more community school sites is often the best way to learn about what a community school is. Conversations with parents, teachers, students and community providers are extremely helpful. If at all possible, schedule peer-to-peer conversations between key stakeholders with similar organizational interests. An opportunity for a superintendent who is unfamiliar with the community school concept to talk with a superintendent who has experienced their benefits can quickly address reservations and build commitment.

During this knowledge-building phase, partners should also familiarize themselves with what the best available research says about how to support successful young people – academically, socially and emotionally. [Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools](#) summarizes the major findings from multiple disciplines on which the conditions for learning in community schools are based. Partners may wish to spend a meeting or

two discussing this research and seeing how community schools promote conditions for learning. This information will be invaluable later on as the council decides what kinds of services and supports will create positive learning environments in their community schools. The Coalition for Community Schools ([www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org)) provides a wealth of information and links to various sources of technical assistance.

### Conducting a Community Assessment

Joy Dryfoos and Sue Maguire, authors of *Inside Full-Service Community Schools*<sup>1</sup>, remind collaboratives, “The first step in planning anything is to figure out what the current situation is and what the potential is for improving it.” Initiatives do not have to start from scratch when gathering essential information. Many United Ways have community planning divisions. Most conduct periodic community needs assessments and maintain an inventory of health and human service resources.

School districts and other partner organizations also have important demographic and organizational information about students and families. Looking at data on school and student achievement, youth development opportunities, and access to basic services helps put needs and resources into perspective. The picture that begins to emerge helps an initiative map a more comprehensive set of supports and opportunities for young people, schools, families and communities.

It is important that the task force not just to rely on statistics, but also to hear personal stories about what is working for young people and what is not. Developing initiatives need to hear from community leaders, residents and family members. Front line practitioners such as neighborhood youth workers, health professionals, police officers and teachers also have valuable first-hand information. Conducting focus groups, like the education study circles promoted by the Study Circles Resource Center, is one way to gather this material.<sup>2</sup> Later, site team assessments will add to this information and create neighborhood level understanding of needs and resources. (See *Assessing Needs and Resources*, page 35).

### Developing Collaborative Decision-making Skills

When done constructively, conducting a community assessment describes the status of a community’s children, families and schools. It also builds trust and ownership. Poorly executed, it can create unnecessary conflict.

An effective assessment does more than simply collect data. It uses government, census, organizational and focus group data to take a critical look at what is happening to young people and their families. It is the first

---

<sup>1</sup> Joy Dryfoos, and Sue Maguire. *Inside Full-service Community Schools*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Corwin Press, 2002.

<sup>2</sup> For further information see: [www.studyircles.org](http://www.studyircles.org).

## COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT STEPS

- **Gather the data:** *“What are our community’s overall needs?”*  
Collect data that describe the community’s health, economic and educational profile. Include other key indicators on the status of children and families, such as median income, unemployment rates, housing data, crime statistics and child immunization rates.
- **Learn what services already exist:** *“Where do we stand now?”*  
Inventory services currently in place in the school and the community, including youth programming, health services, family supports and education. How accessible are these programs? Which are stretched too thin? Are any underused?
- **Look at your strengths:** *“What can we build on?”* Think about tangible resources like a community health center or nearby university, as well as intangible resources like high parent involvement or strong teacher commitment. Both kinds of resources are important building blocks for success.
- **Look to the future:** *“What might be ahead?”* Thinking about what changes in the environment or services are coming in the next three to five years will give you a better chance of solving problems early and of recognizing opportunities.

step in changing the status quo. This kind of analysis uncovers weaknesses as well as strengths in community institutions.

As a result, the ensuing discussions are not always easy for partners. Less than encouraging data may embarrass leaders who have invested enormous energy in organizational efforts to help children and families. It may also lead some to blame others for what they and their agencies could not accomplish on their own.

To ensure a positive outcome, the assessment process should help task force members learn about each other and begin to appreciate each other’s point of view before they discuss findings. Hold meetings at each other’s organizations, host “field visits” and encourage partners to talk about their organizational challenges and goals as well as accomplishments. Identify partners with strong facilitation skills. Invite them to lead meetings and help members develop consensus decision-making skills. Partners will need these skills down the road, when they will be called upon to share resources and make possibly difficult decisions to support the initiative.

The senior executives involved in the task force will expect efficient, well-run meetings. With planning, meetings can also be designed to be interactive and focused on learning. United Way facilitation at this stage can be invaluable. Time spent now building rapport and learning collaborative skills will make it easier to have honest conversations later.

### Agreeing on a Vision

A well-rounded community assessment helps the task force see “the big picture” and brings a community school vision into focus. By this point, partners are ready to deepen their commitment. They agree to pool resources and embark on a long-term initiative. No longer a task force, they have become a community-wide collaborative council. After months of discussion, listening, and learning, partners develop a formal vision statement.

A written vision serves partners as a constant reminder of common goals. It specifies the end-point toward which all their work is directed. Even though communities adapting a BTS model can easily “borrow” an existing vision statement, hashing out an original statement is a powerful way to build ownership and set the initiative’s broad direction.

### INDIANAPOLIS BTS MISSION STATEMENT:

*Bridges To Success helps students succeed by creating enduring partnerships between families, schools and communities.*

### Guiding Principles

At this stage, the challenge for the newly formed collaborative is to convert a broad vision into a practical plan. Spelling out a list of guiding principles further defines the initiative’s direction and establishes content and tone for implementation.

## PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE: CREATING CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

*At Forest Manor Middle School in Indianapolis, site team members identified violence prevention as a major step towards creating the conditions for learning. The site team researched major violence prevention models and the whole school decided on an approach called PeaceBuilders. Teachers, school staff and site team members participated in training and designed a strategic plan to implement the PeaceBuilders model. The concept of creating peace is at the heart of how the school functions and helps the site team connect with other organizations that share this value and want to contribute to the academic success of Forest Manor students.*

Two sets of guiding principles are presented here. The first list, developed by the Coalition for Community Schools, outlines the key principles for community schools in general. The second list, developed by the Indianapolis BTS initiative, is quite similar. It adds the role and relationship of site teams and the council as core tenets of the BTS model.

### *Coalition For Community Schools Key Principles*

- Begin with strong partnerships.
- Set high expectations.
- Embrace diversity.
- Share accountability for results.
- Build on community strengths.
- Avoid cookie cutter solutions.

Establishing specific, long-range goals further defines the initiative. Once agreed upon, they keep the council focused on results and set the stage for accountability. For example, the founding BTS council established two primary goals: 1) to increase the number of at-risk youth who successfully complete their education and 2) to re-establish the school as the focal point of community life. New initiatives must decide how to accomplish the goals they select and how to measure progress toward achieving them. Common knowledge about community schools and the conditions for learning will help partners with both tasks.

### *Bridges To Success Guiding Principles*

- All stakeholders commit to shared decision-making.
- Open communication is essential.
- BTS is based on a community asset development model.
- Families have a significant role in the governance of BTS at all levels.
- Site teams are the hub for integrating school-based services and activities.
- The council supports the work of site teams and respects their individual differences.
- Untapped resources exist in every community.

### *Selecting Target Sites*

Initiatives also need to decide where to target their efforts. They can use community-wide assessment data to help identify sectors and schools in the community where the need for positive change is great. Ideally, efforts should begin at schools with a demonstrated commitment and the capacity for improvement. These criteria are critical in both sustaining and expanding an initiative. (See **Selecting Expansion Sites**, page 45.) A formal school readiness assessment helps an initiative objectively determine school capacity. It also provides a framework for schools that want to improve their readiness. A sample **School Readiness Assessment** form is included in **Appendix B**.

By this point, the council has developed a vision of what it wants to create and a strategic plan for achieving it. Now it must determine the logistics involved. Staffing questions increase in importance.

## Staffing the Initiative

An effective council needs skilled staff to facilitate its work. Managers assigned by partner agencies to participate on council subcommittees often provide valuable knowledge and expertise. However, the scope and scale of a BTS initiative is such that a full-time person needs to take primary administrative responsibility for staffing the initiative and implementing its directives. United Ways are well suited to provide this kind of experienced staff and administrative support and they routinely do so in BTS adaptation sites.

At a minimum, a BTS director must have the ability to work effectively with organizational leaders and the public, a strong commitment to the initiative's vision, and an understanding of its process for change. Specific skills in administration, managing and analyzing data and evaluation are extremely valuable. Adequate clerical support is essential.

As an initiative expands, central office needs may also expand. In Indianapolis, the initiative's success led the UWCI to fund a second management position. The council recognized that additional staff support was needed if the initiative was to continue to expand within IPS. As a result, a coordinator for outreach and development was brought on board.

### *BTS Director*

- staffs the council and its committees and recruits members including parents, principals, teachers and youth;
- supports the community school coordinators (or their equivalents) with resources, including needed training and technical assistance;
- facilitates the development of long-range plans to support and sustain the initiative;
- empowers community-wide institutions to actively engage in site teams and community school planning;
- guides the development of collaborative funding resources for site team activities; and,
- publicizes partnership activities and site outcomes to ensure recognition of collaborative efforts and achievements.

### Staffing Site Teams

Strong staff support is equally important at the school site. The BTS initiative is designed to foster leadership from within the school as well as the community and to position schools as focal points within neighborhoods.

In Indianapolis, area school coordinators employed by IPS work with several schools. Their role is to help strengthen and solidify leadership with the site team and help broker essential services for the school. They are often involved in system-wide activities as well. In IPS, once a site team is self-sustaining, the area school coordinator is expected to move on and work with a new school and neighborhood within their region.

While the Indianapolis BTS initiative does not fund an on-site coordinator for each school, site teams at individual schools are free to reposition staff from partner agencies or find other ways to fill this important staff role. Some have done so, but not all have the necessary resources. Planning to fill this role should be part of a long-range financial plan. (See *Developing Financial Strategies*, page 49).

Regardless of whether a coordinator serves one school or several, everyone needs to understand his or her role. Clarity about the coordinator's relationship to the site team and the site team's relationship to other school-based decision-making bodies is vital.

A coordinator's first responsibility is to build a team able to advance the BTS vision. In some schools where there is no school management team or where it is not functioning well, it may be necessary to develop an entirely new site team. When it is possible to work with an existing team, coordinators may need to broaden membership to include more parents and residents and build ownership for the BTS process. In schools where more than one viable decision-making group exists, the coordinator's task is to help them see the value of working together on a shared agenda.

Promising applicants for the job should show a high degree of personal initiative, inventiveness and ability to see "the big picture." Most importantly, school personnel and applicants need to understand that the job is not to provide direct services. Coordinators should be selected carefully, trained, and supported with ongoing staff development. (See *Developing Staff*, page 47).

### *BTS Area School Coordinators*

- serve the site teams as a liaison to the principal, school staff, community members, parents and service provider representatives;
- support site teams in recruitment, training and technical assistance;
- build the capacity of site teams to accomplish their goals, and empower them to implement their plans.

### *Evaluating Progress*

Evaluation is often seen as something that comes at the end of implementation. In Indianapolis, BTS focused on evaluation from the very beginning. Designing a strategic plan at the same time as methods for its ongoing appraisal allows an initiative to use evaluation as a way to strengthen implementation – not just to grade it.

One of the first BTS evaluation products, conducted by the Indianapolis Consulting Group, documented the theory of BTS. It created a framework for assessing progress toward Bridges' intended city, school and neighborhood system level changes by identifying the inputs, processes, outputs and results (or outcomes) anticipated by the initiative. Subsequent evaluations have used this logic model to systematically track the initiative's

development. The **Theory of Bridges To Success** can be seen in **Appendix C**.

Early and periodic review of an initiative's progress is helpful in many ways. Identifying problems throughout the implementation process allows planners to make adjustments in both inputs (what is being done) and processes (how they are being done). Evaluation can also pinpoint unrealistic expectations for service delivery and utilization (outputs based on program performance measures). Careful analysis can isolate problems and frequently suggest solutions.

Early process evaluation also provides a baseline against which to measure subsequent performance. In the most recent evaluation of the Indianapolis initiative, an evaluator looked at 10 site teams to provide a point-in-time measurement of the BTS core function. The study noted progress and areas of weakness across a broad continuum and became the basis of a four-phase timeline for site team development. Having an overall sense of how site teams mature makes it possible to establish reasonable expectations and puts site team progress into perspective. An outline of the **Four Phases of Site Team Development** is included in **Appendix D**.

### Selecting Results and Indicators

Accountability demands that initiatives evaluate results. In a community-wide initiative like Bridges, partners need to establish both results and measurable outcome indicators. Results are long-term. Indicators set short term and intermediate measures of reasonable progress toward long-term results.

Results (sometimes called outcomes) are much like goals. They are umbrella statements of positive changes that an initiative hopes to attain in its community.<sup>3</sup> They typically require a complex set of actions and interventions over a long time to achieve. The nature of these actions is suggested by the initiative's operating theory. In this case, a BTS community school strategy will keep children in school.

An indicator is a measure, for which we have data, which helps gauge progress toward agreed upon results. In BTS, one broad result is that young people complete school successfully. Creating the conditions for learning that will achieve this result throughout the IPS system will take considerable time.

In the meantime, stakeholders need to identify a number of indicators that show progress. These may include, for example, an increase in the number of children attending school or a decrease in the number of children suspended or expelled at individual BTS school sites. Stakeholders can point to positive indicators as tangible measures of the initiative's growing impact.

The BTS model predicts positive results, not just for students but also for schools, families and communities. Evaluation efforts should focus attention on each of these areas. Success at School, a Bridges to Success adaptation site

---

<sup>3</sup> See: Melaville, Atelia I. *A Guide to Selecting Results and Indicators: Implementing Results-Based Budgeting*. Washington, DC: The Finance Project, 1997.

in partnership with United Way of Greater Greensboro, NC, used evaluation data to develop a Community Impact Report. They looked at indicators in several areas: parent involvement, community involvement and student achievement. Greensboro's outcomes in these three areas are included in Appendix E.

### Designing Evaluations

BTS stakeholders and evaluators should determine together what they want the evaluation to help them find out. They also need to know what they will do with the information once they have it. Since community school collaborations and their intended outcomes are complex, there is a universe of possible questions an evaluation could be designed to answer.

Currently BTS and Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI) are working together to develop a three-year longitudinal-study building on previous BTS evaluations. Its framework, adapted from several national evaluations, asks questions that examine:

- the structure, nature, perceptions and images of collaborative programs;
- a variety of long-term outcomes and context for those outcomes;
- intermediate outcomes and process measures;
- adequacy of funding sources;
- student academic achievement outcomes; and
- the extent to which the initiative helps develop a healthy learning community.

Evaluations conducted by professionals other than initiative participants are often preferable to in-house efforts. Professional evaluators are familiar with the most current techniques and they ensure an objective design and analysis. External evaluations, however, can be expensive. United Way partners can help to identify experienced professionals as well as funding sources to help pay for their services.

At this point, the initiative is ready to launch its central strategy: site teams.

## PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE: ADVANCING THE SCHOOL'S CORE MISSION

*Through a formal assessment, IPS School #15 determined that reading comprehension was their most important academic improvement goal. With leadership from a staff member at the Jordan YMCA, site team partners responded by placing an intentional emphasis on skills related to reading comprehension within their existing programs. For example, St. Paul's Episcopal Church sponsors an afterschool book club and members of the church volunteer as readers in the school.*



The heart and soul of Bridges to Success is the site team. While the community governing council provides oversight and direction, the site team drives the initiative at the school/neighborhood level. Its purpose is to develop, implement, and maintain services, supports and opportunities for students and their families.

The process of developing strong site teams is much like that of developing a strong community-wide governing council. It requires convening the right stakeholders, building trust, and developing a strategic plan – one that is consonant with both school goals and the broad BTS agenda.

### **Site Team Membership**

Like the council, the site team requires a diverse cross-section of school staff, community members, providers and parents. They must have influence within their home agencies and strong commitment to the BTS vision.

Strong support and active participation of the school principal is essential. Early in the pilot phase, the most effective site teams were co-chaired by the principal and the executive of a community agency. The principal must see the value in shared decision-making for real collaboration to take place. “Every partner involved with John Marshall is a part of the site team and they all bring something to the table,” says Jamyce Banks, principal of John Marshall Middle School in Indianapolis. “They work together to help the children and the community, not as separate entities, but as the BTS site team. That is what brings success to our school.”

The strength of the site team comes from active and informed members. Assembling this team requires a significant amount of upfront work for the BTS coordinator and principal. Their first step is to develop an effective working relationship with each other. Then, they must identify potential site team members in the school and community and help educate them about the initiative.

### *Members of Site Team*

- Principal
- Teachers
- School social worker
- BTS school coordinator
- Students
- Parents and other family members
- Neighborhood residents
- Business partners
- Community organization representatives
- Faith community representatives
- Youth development leaders
- Arts and cultural organization representatives

The coordinator's direct outreach efforts are supported by the principal's explicit support and overall advocacy. Organizations already providing services to the school, community leaders and residents, school staff and parents all have a vested interest in student and school success. Through individual relationship-building and education, they are usually willing to join the site team. How effectively they work together will depend on what happens next. A **Community Readiness Assessment** designed to help identify potential partners is included in **Appendix F**.

### *Site Team Leadership*

To function as a cohesive group, the members of the site team need to get to know each other and buy into the BTS approach. Members should have an opportunity to review and discuss the council's vision, its guiding principles, and the roles and responsibilities of the site team. They should feel free to voice any reservations and organizational constraints they may bring to the table. This openness helps members begin to understand the differences in perspective and orientation that characterize most teams. Eventual agreement on key points of the BTS vision allows the team to work effectively and find strength in their differences.

Site teams, like developing community-wide councils, often rush through this stage. Usually everyone is anxious to *do* something right away. New members can become impatient at the work involved in developing considerable shared knowledge and a strong sense of common purpose.

The principal, as a key member of the site team and primary school leader, can help other members see the value of collaborative team building and encourage them to take enough time to develop common ground. Teams often look to the BTS coordinator to decide what should be done and make it happen. But the coordinator should not do what the team can and should do for itself. BTS works best when school and community members run the show.

As team members get to know each other, the coordinator can encourage members in effective facilitation skills to help the group work through issues. Making sure that meetings run efficiently also helps develop an effective team. Site teams in many BTS schools elect co-chairs as a way to promote shared leadership. Often, one co-chair comes from the school and one from the community.

***BTS site team members agree to:***

- identify school and community assets and needs;
- set goals and make collaborative decisions;
- meet regularly, recruit members, and ensure parity of stakeholders;
- plan strategies to address needs;
- implement action steps; and,
- revisit decisions and evaluate outcomes.

## PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE: BECOMING A SITE TEAM MEMBER

*The site team at John Marshall Middle School on the far east side of Indianapolis demonstrates an important criterion of success: New partners want to join. However, membership is not automatic. Prospective partners have to go through a process designed to educate them about BTS and discourage those who are not genuinely committed. First, they meet with the school principal to learn about the school. Second, they meet with the area school coordinator to learn about the BTS approach and the role of the site team at the school. Finally, they must bring resources and/or personal skills and a strong commitment to the table. Only then are they considered to be a member of the site team.*



Members also need to educate themselves about school and community needs and resources. Conducting a comprehensive assessment helps focus the group's energy on a specific task. It also provides a valuable opportunity for sharing knowledge and building trust. Gathering information from a specific process leads to an intentional relationship within the site team – one that is directed towards specific outcomes. **Appendix G**, entitled **Needs and Resources Assessment Process**, diagrams this process.

BTS site teams have ready access to community assessment data already gathered by the community-wide council. They can add to this material by conducting their own formal and informal interviews, surveys and focus groups to better understand their local situation. The basic questions are the same. Which needs are most critical? How effective are current services? What barriers prevent access to services? Having a specific set of questions ensures that site team members gather information from all involved areas. A list of sample assessment questions is presented in **Appendix H: Key Questions of the Assessment Process**.

Providing an opportunity for parents and community members to share their views can uncover useful and surprising information. One suburban school's site team was astounded to discover that food was the most critical family need expressed to outreach workers during home visits.

Another way to gather and organize information about school needs is to ask parents, students and school staff to discuss the five conditions of learning that are characteristic of community schools. Do they think these conditions are in place at their school? What is missing? What would it take to begin filling in the blanks? Using this approach in tandem with a needs and resource assessment begins the process of prioritizing and working toward specific goals.

Once assessment information is in hand, the challenge becomes using it to enhance learning and youth opportunities for students, families and the

neighborhood. Site team members need an implementation plan. It should reflect both current needs and available resources and be consistent with the initiative's operating principles. Members work to mobilize new resources and, when necessary, seek the help of the community-wide council in overcoming barriers to implementation.

### *The Conditions for Learning*

- a core education program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high expectations for students;
- motivated students engaged in learning in both school and in community settings;
- well-met physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families;
- mutual respect and effective collaboration at school among adults and students; and,
- a safe and supportive school climate that connects students to both learning and service in the community.

—*The Coalition for Community Schools*

### **Developing a Work Plan**

A work plan helps the team establish goals, identify activities to support the goals, and decide who is responsible for completing specific tasks. Work plans should align clearly with the school's mission and community goals.

Academic alignment is achieved by creating a logical link between the school's academic goals and community resources. Site teams need to be familiar with the existing school improvement plan. They must also meet with curriculum planners and school leaders in any other decision-making groups to ensure that there is agreement about both academic goals and non-academic needs. A series of questions to help guide site teams in this process (**Creating Academic Alignment**) is included in **Appendix I**.

Site teams prioritize school and neighborhood needs, set corresponding goals, and select three to four goals to work on throughout the school year. A work plan visually lays out each goal and breaks it down into manageable parts called objectives. The work plan outlines the tasks, resources and timeline needed to accomplish each objective and the measurable results the site team anticipates.

A work plan may also indicate barriers to be resolved before goals can be reached or those that are experienced as the site team executes the plan. Progress should be reviewed frequently and the plan adapted when necessary. Work plans used this way help the site team focus its efforts and evaluate progress.

Typically, work plan objectives and related tasks entail providing needed school-based services, supports or activities for children and families. Before finalizing its plan, the site team needs to assess existing school activities and decide whether to continue or end them. They need to ask: How relevant are

current programs to our priority goals? How effective are they? Would it be better to redirect these resources?

When partners identify gaps or weaknesses in current programming, they must find better alternatives. Often, a potential solution begins by identifying an organization that can provide a more appropriate service and inviting a representative to participate on the team. Synergy builds when the right people are around the table and focused on a clear vision and specific goals. Continuing efforts to engage stakeholders and build trust and ownership allow the site team to systematically improve their school's conditions for learning.

### Staffing Strategies

Site teams have developed to this point with the assistance of a community school coordinator. The initiative assigns them to build the site team as a functioning unit and develop its capacity to identify, broker and connect supports and services at the school site.

Coordinators, of course, do not provide direct services to students and families. Therefore, before implementation can take place, site teams must develop a plan for how services, supports and activities agreed to by partner organizations will be staffed. Will staff be relocated or hired? How will new staff be selected and paid? Where will they be housed and to whom will they report?

Lines of authority as well as roles and responsibilities should be spelled out clearly before staff enter the school. When staff are reassigned from their home agency, they may find that that the school rules and expectations are very different from what they have been used to.

Familiarity with school rules and a good working relationship with the principal are critical. Even though relocated staff may report primarily to a supervisor in their home agency, most principals and other school staff will expect non-school staff to conform to school procedures and administrative directives. Encourage new staff to review school policies and respect them. Provide training to help staff working in the school for the first time to anticipate insider/outsider issues and make the necessary adjustments.

When a particular school rule makes it difficult for staff to do their job, it should be a matter for site team discussion. The site team, which includes the principal, can put the matter in perspective, and find a solution in line with BTS goals. The principal becomes an advocate in the process and communicates the revision to the rest of the school community.

A suggested list of questions designed to help site teams think about staffing issues and other program logistics, entitled **Managing Existing Programs**, is included in **Appendix J**.

### School-Community Plan

Once staffing decisions have been made, site teams may choose to organize basic staff and program data into one or more useful formats. Tools like

these keep track of dozens of activities occurring at a single school site and provide easy access to contact information. One format used in Indianapolis also includes the number of students served and estimated value of services, facts that the site team can use later to help measure impact.

Organizing information into daily and weekly calendars is another simple format with multiple uses. At their most basic level, schedules help make sure that teachers, staff, families and students know where they need to be and when they need to be there. They can also visually demonstrate to school boards, the public and other funders how BTS activities fill the school day and contribute to learning. Finally, they can help site teams see what progress they have made toward making the school a hub of the community.

### *An Indianapolis School-Community Plan includes:*

- Partner organization and CEO/Director
- Program contact person
- Primary service category
- Program description
- Targeted population
- Estimated number to be served
- Program days, hours and location
- Number of staff and/or volunteers
- Estimated monetary value

### **Evaluating Initiative Performance**

Once site teams are established and carefully selected services and supports are running smoothly, the site team may wish to look at the impact specific interventions are having on participants. Before they can look at impact, site teams need to assess the performance of the programs themselves. Are they doing what they said they would? BTS uses an evaluation method developed by United Way that is known as the **Program Outcome Model**. Comprehensive in its approach, this model looks at a variety of factors over time including inputs, activities, outputs and outcomes.<sup>4</sup>

Partners should recognize that a variety of factors can influence program performance. Examples of child, family, school, neighborhood, and program variables are listed below. These should not be seen as excuses for poor program performance. Instead, providers should design programming that attempts to address and improve relevant factors.

### **Evaluating Impact**

If a program is reaching its target population, sufficient positive factors are in place, and it is providing needed, high quality services, participants should

---

<sup>4</sup> Adapted from *Focusing on Program Outcomes: A Guide for United Ways*. Washington, DC: United Way of America, 1996.

## PARTNERSHIP PRACTICE: JOINING THE BTS INITIATIVE

*Jennifer Botts-Brown, the principal at IPS School #107, spent a year sitting with a BTS site team before her school signed on with the initiative. During that year, she became familiar with the concepts, expectations and activities required of a BTS school. While not formally participating, she began reviewing the needs of her school to see how other organizations could contribute. She began seeking out partners and talking to local churches. By the time School #107 actually became a BTS school, the principal and school staff already had a BTS mindset and the development of their own site team was well underway.*

benefit. A pre/post assessment is a straightforward way to show program impact on student academic achievement. This design is relatively easy to conduct and data to measure progress, like test scores or attendance data, are readily available. It requires more creativity to develop measures of non-academic impact, but it is worth the effort to show progress on these important dimensions. An outline of a pre/post **Academic Outcomes Assessment for Site Teams** is included in **Appendix K**.

Comparing the academic achievement of students who participate in specific BTS interventions with non-participants is also possible. However, comparison studies are more difficult because they require a close match in the characteristics of the groups being compared. Individual site teams may not have the time or resources to conduct such an evaluation unless special resources are available. Site teams should take advantage of offers to participate in initiative-wide evaluations. The time and effort involved are much less and the benefits are considerable.

### *Factors That Influence BTS Program Outcomes*

- Individual Child Factors
  - Motivation
  - Intelligence
  - Language ability
- Family Factors
  - Education
  - Income
  - Attitude toward school
  - Language ability
- School Factors
  - Teacher experience, age and motivation

- Building repair and maintenance
- Available technology
- Commitment of principal to BTS
- Total enrollment
- Low income enrollment
- Minority enrollment
- English as a second language enrollment
- Neighborhood Factors
  - Crime
  - Home ownership
  - Sense of community
  - Neighborhood support for schools
  - Presence of neighborhood civic groups
- Program Factors
  - Staff training and experience
  - Program attendance

A photograph of a student wearing a grey hoodie, sitting at a desk and writing in a notebook. The image is overlaid with white cursive text.

*BTS School Profile:  
George Washington  
Community School*

**Location:** Indianapolis, Indiana

**Grades:** 6th through 10th

**Number of students:** 880

**Eligible for free or reduced lunch:** 86%

**Population:** 16% Hispanic, 58% Caucasian,

24% African American, 2% other

George Washington exemplifies the spirit of a community school. Situated a mile west of downtown Indianapolis on a major east/west thoroughfare with a growing Hispanic population, it lies at the intersection of several working class neighborhoods.

When residents learned of plans to close the original Washington High School and its feeder school, they rallied around to save the building as a community landmark and focus of the community. Armed with a clear intention and assistance from neighboring Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis, a Westside Education Task Force formed. It secured technical assistance from the Annie E. Casey Foundation and participants researched school models across the country to come up with a plan that would convince the Indianapolis School Board to reopen Washington.

The result: George Washington Middle School opened as a full-service, community school in Fall 2000, serving 6th, 7th and 8th grades — as well as pre-school, kindergarten, adult English as a Second Language classes, and general education classes. A year later, the board authorized expansion to include high school grades, one year at a time — and a new name to reflect the school's mission: George Washington Community School.

This grassroots school is supported by 44 community partnerships. They share a common vision: help every student succeed academically and graduate from high school prepared for higher education or training. More than 60 school-based services for students and families are aimed at

academic goals. A wide range of services reflects partners' determination to do whatever it takes for students to succeed. Tutoring and mentoring are provided along with medical, mental health, dental and family literacy services. Afterschool and summer enrichment opportunities offer swimming, computer building and service learning. The curriculum includes both college prep classes and alternatives to suspension.

Community partners at Washington are much more than visitors to the school. School staff know that the school is there because of the community's determination. As Principal Eileen Champagne tells faculty on the first day of every school year, "We are the guests here, invited by the community to complete a very important mission. If it wasn't for their commitment," she adds, "we wouldn't even be here."

George Washington partners get together monthly during the school year as a "community advisory committee" site team. A volunteer chair from the business sector, Glenna Dragoo of National Starch, Inc., helps the process run smoothly. Her corporation also provides major support for science programs at Washington and its feeder elementary schools.

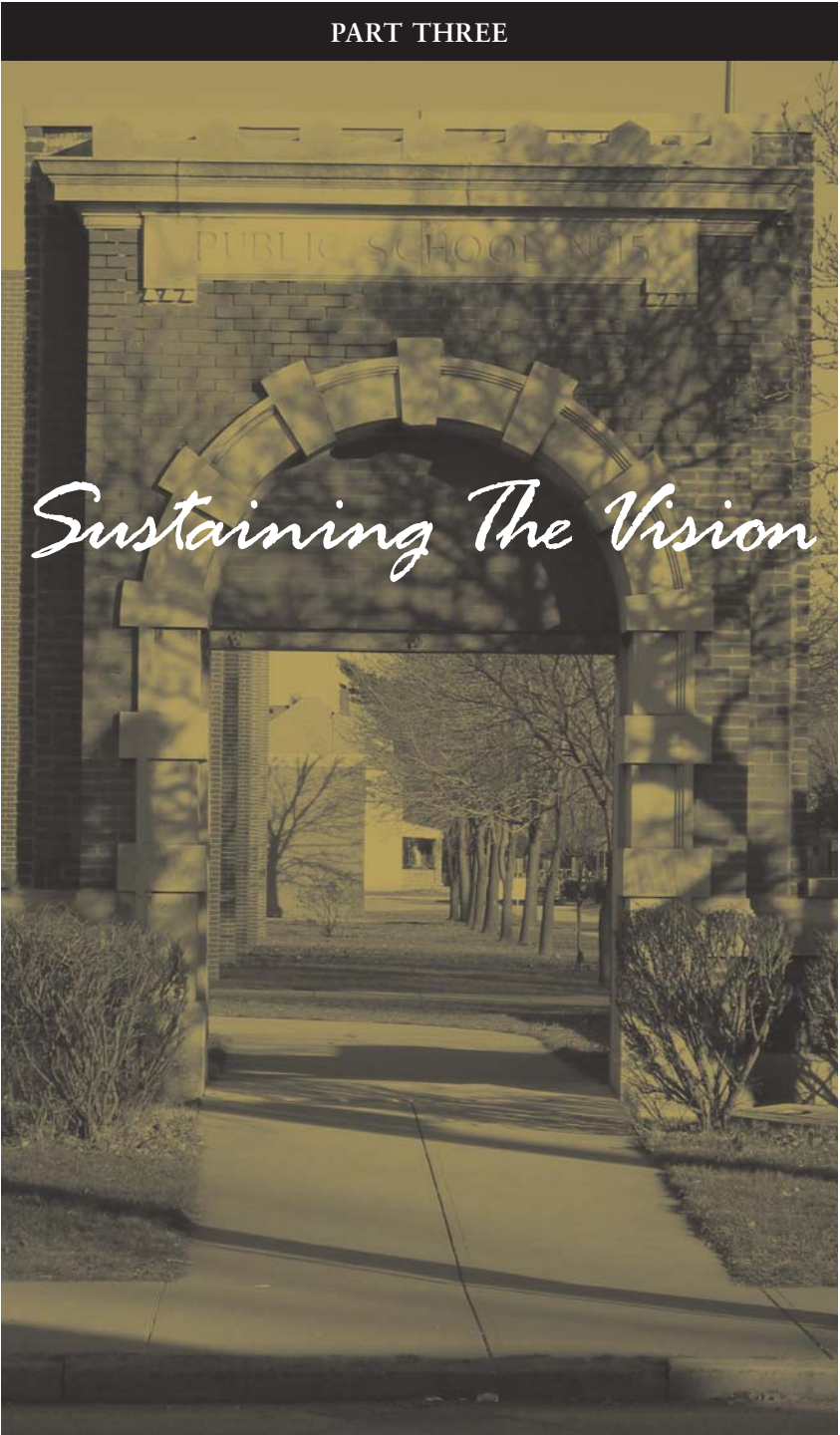
While BTS provides the services of an Area School Coordinator, an agreement between nearby Mary Rigg Neighborhood Center, community partners, and a group of funders provides a full-time community school coordinator. Champagne, who received a MetLife Bridge Builder Award from the National Association of Secondary School Principals in 2003 for facilitating community ties, says she could not lead a community school without the neighborhood partners or the coordinator. "Here on the West Side, we do things differently," she says. "All of us are responsible for making academic success a reality. If we need something to help make that happen, this group goes out and gets it."

Since Washington Community School opened its doors, standardized test scores have shown 10 and 15 percent increases, particularly in math. The school is determined to continue this upward trend and can point to a solid foundation. Teachers are invested in getting the job done despite obstacles. "Our school motto is 'No Excuses,'" Champagne explains. "That applies to all of us."

The real measure of Washington's success will come in June 2006. That's the year the first community school class graduates from high school. Champagne states, "Failure is simply not an option. Our students and our community deserve nothing less."

PART THREE

*Sustaining The Vision*





For a BTS initiative, implementing a successful site team strategy is an enormous accomplishment, but it is by no means the end of the initiative's work. Concerted efforts must be made to sustain and expand the BTS vision and this involves a considerable amount of community-wide planning, marketing and technical assistance. Task forces of the governing council and central staff play a major role at this point. Much of their work focuses on learning from and expanding the work of site teams.

Initiatives should be intentional about moving forward while not losing the opportunity to build on their accomplishments. Successful initiatives will inevitably be pressured to expand. Other schools and even other districts will see what's working and want to get on board. This is exactly what is needed to create system-wide change. Still, oversight bodies should not react hastily.

Adaptability to changing conditions and the ability to take advantage of opportunities is a key to sustainability. Ideally, the initiative should begin considering expansion and their capacity to support it well before external circumstances and the success of the initiative force the issue. Initiatives that have a strategy in mind about where and how to expand are more likely to act wisely when conditions are right.

The Indianapolis BTS devised its first expansion plan in 1997. Even though no new funds were available, the council decided to take advantage of the strong momentum the initiative had generated. The initial six site coordinators, each serving a single school, became area school coordinators (ASC) assigned to several schools in a single feeder school pattern. This modification helped expand BTS from 6 to 44 sites. Because ASCs are expected to move on as site teams mature, school-by-school expansion is built into the model.



A community school strategy will not succeed at a site where it is imposed on a school staff. Nor will it show results in a school without the capacity necessary to develop a site team and work collaboratively with community partners. Schools must want to be involved, understand what is entailed, and demonstrate adequate in-house leadership.

Now that BTS school sites are up and running, the location of new sites with respect to existing sites becomes important. Location in a feeder system with other BTS sites is an advantage. Proximity makes it easier to share resources. In addition, when elementary, middle and high schools in the same feeder system are involved, it is easier to plan for continuity of services and supports for students and families as they move through the grades.

Polling potential sites can determine initial interest and help educate them about the BTS process. Indianapolis invited schools to sign on as either “covenant” schools implementing the full BTS site-team model or as eligible only for BTS brokered services available throughout the IPS system. Priority for covenant school status was given to schools with strongly committed principals and prior collaborative experience. A covenant school contract spelled out the responsibilities of both schools and BTS. Schools that were not selected were able to begin developing collaborative relationships on their own and re-apply for BTS support later.

### *Questions for Expansion Committees*

- Is the initiative ready to expand?
- Can it do so without threatening its current well-being?
- How will expansion demands affect current operations?
- What will it cost and what resources are needed?
- What capacity do current partners have to provide services at additional sites?
- What additional training will staff and partners need?
- How can we engage new partners?



Whether or not the initiative decides to launch a major expansion, it must maintain a steady infusion of new partners and well-trained staff to sustain it. As the council and site teams identify additional needs, they need to reach out to new stakeholders to help meet them.

New players, especially those from the business community, are more likely to invest their time and resources in an idea that is already well proven and where their investment is likely to reap public approval. Demonstrating program success builds broad support and increases the initiative's sustainability. There are many ways to keep the initiative's mission and accomplishments visible in the community. Consider developing a speakers bureau to talk about BTS community schools at civic group meetings; representing the initiative on talk radio panels and call in shows; and developing a relationship with education writers at the local paper.

Initiatives also need to stay in touch with existing partners, primarily those who provide important services but who are not key stakeholders. Participation on task forces and subcommittees is an important way to keep partners engaged. Subcommittee work can also cultivate new leadership within the larger initiative.

An occasional survey offers an organized way to hear from a large number of partners. An effective survey is short, easy to complete and necessary. It must focus on questions that the initiative cannot answer in any other way. Make sure that people know how the results will be used and why completing it is important. Providing a place for open-ended comments can result in useful and surprising insights that survey questions miss. Consider whether or not everyone needs to answer every question. Several "short-form" surveys tailored to specific groups of partners may substantially increase the number and quality of completed submissions.



Even though site team members are not technically BTS staff, their work is what moves the process forward. For a site-based model like BTS, staff development efforts need to be focused on both coordinators and site team members. A recent evaluation of the Indianapolis initiative pointed out an overriding need for better education and technical assistance for all stakeholders involved in the site team process. Subsequent task force studies have confirmed the need for further work in site team development and understanding.

Perhaps the most important component of staff development entails continuing efforts to clarify the roles and responsibilities of both ASCs and site team members. It is one thing to say that coordinators and site teams work to mobilize and integrate school and community resources, but it is more difficult for people new to collaboration and community schools to understand what that means. Many new staff, especially those assigned full-time to a single school, have a hard time understanding the difference between helping a school connect with new partners who can provide services and directly providing those services themselves. Even when staff are carefully selected, role confusion may occur.

The initiative needs to understand the challenges coordinators face and provide ongoing staff development and support. Schools are often short-handed. Community school coordinators are easily seen as another pair of hands by school staff and coordinators themselves. Filling in for absent staff or doing lunch room duty comes naturally to many coordinators, especially those trained as teachers. It is often easier for staff to do this kind of work than figuring out how to develop partnerships and manage resources. While providing direct services may help a coordinator win acceptance in the school, doing so on a regular basis can seriously detract from his or her primary role.

School sites also vary considerably. What a coordinator may need to do and be able to do may be different at each school. In addition, the

coordinator's role is intended to change as the site team matures. Ideally, it lessens as the group develops its own capacities.

Coordinators need to know what developing site team maturity looks like and how best to nurture it. There also need to be ample and ongoing opportunities for coordinators to talk and problem solve together. The BTS director should be available to help coordinators draw lessons from their experiences and keep staff focused on a framework for continuing site team development. Similar tools and opportunities are needed for site teams to better understand the BTS process and learn from each other.

The Indianapolis BTS initiative identified four phases of site team development and corresponding roles for the ASC. Initially, the coordinator serves as the beginning team's primary teacher. As the team builds knowledge, trust and confidence, the coordinator assumes a more side-by-side collaborative role. When the team's internal leadership becomes strong enough to sustain its work, the coordinator steps back and becomes a consultant to the process. The relationship is never fully severed. Even in Phase Four, when the work of the site team is permanently integrated into the school's operation, the coordinator is available to serve as a resource to the team when needed.

*Site Team Development and Roles of the Area School Coordinator (ASC)*

1. Learning . . . . . ASC as teacher
2. Building. . . . . ASC as collaborator
3. Integrating. . . . . ASC as consultant
4. Sustaining . . . . . ASC as resource

**MOVING MOUNTAINS THROUGH BTS...**

*Francis Scott Key School #103 shows what a BTS school can accomplish. More than 90 percent of the student body is eligible for free or reduced price lunch. During the 1998-99 school year, only 32 percent of third graders met state math standards and just 27 percent squeaked by in language arts. Over the past two years, however, test scores have beaten statewide averages. At a presentation to the National Governors Association, the school described how its BTS initiative boosted various services to students with dramatic results. School staff attributed a 50 percent drop in student suspensions to new mental health services provided through BTS partnerships. One hundred percent vaccination rates among kindergarteners and eighth graders are keeping children well. Scores on state standardized exams have soared, in part because of after-school tutoring offered through a partnership with the Boys and Girls Clubs.*



Administrative and service delivery costs will increase as the initiative goes system-wide. A long-term financial plan helps provide adequate operational stability and funding flexibility at the school site.

Specific commitments by key stakeholders cover core operational costs including administrative overhead, staff development, planning and evaluation, field and central office staff, and technical assistance. While stakeholders must ensure the financial well-being of their own institutions, their BTS commitments should be long-range enough to ensure the initiative an extended period of basic financial stability.

Sustaining and expanding the initiative requires increasing sources of core support and services. Increasing the number of key stakeholders is a way to meet these resource demands. Better utilizing major funding streams is essential.

A variety of state, federal and foundation dollars enter most school districts each year. Although arising from separate funding streams, these dollars may have similar purposes. By cataloguing complementary funding streams, BTS planners can bring together a diverse portfolio of funding sources.

Site teams can encourage the principal to exercise his or her own discretion to foster site team goals. Title I funds, for example, can fund a parent involvement coordinator to strengthen parent involvement in the site team and participation in children's learning. Strategically combining funds, especially ongoing funding streams like Title I, adds value to these dollars and greatly increases their impact.

### *The Finance Project's Eight Elements of Sustainability*

- **Vision:** begin with a clear picture of how the initiative will improve the lives of children, families and communities.
- **Results orientation:** demonstrate program success and build support from stakeholders through measurable results.

- **Strategic financing:** identify resources and find ways to bring them together to meet goals.
- **Adaptability:** adjust to changing social, economic and political trends in the community and take advantage of opportunities they present.
- **Broad Community Support:** build a cadre of people who care about the initiative, who need it, and who would care if it were gone.
- **Key Champions:** rally leaders willing to use their power and prestige to support the initiative.
- **Strong Internal Systems:** administrative capacity ensures that the initiative will work efficiently, document its results and demonstrate its soundness to potential funders.
- **Sustainability plan:** clarify where the initiative wants to go in the future, how it will get there and how it will measure success.

The choice to expand to more schools and neighborhoods launches a community school initiative's next round of planning and implementation. Sustaining its vision means continual efforts to bring stakeholders together, build trust and ownership, plan strategically, take action and evaluate results. A framework developed by the Finance Project lists some of the key factors in this process.<sup>1</sup> These eight elements are summarized above.

## SOME FINAL QUESTIONS

**If you are thinking about getting involved with public schools...**

- What kind of impact do you want to have on children?
- What do you want to know about a potential partner school?
- Do you want to visit a school?
- What do you want a school to know about your organization?
- What does your organization want to provide to a school?

**If you are ready to start a partnership with a public school...**

- Read the education section of the local newspaper.
- Look at the Web site for the school district in which your organization is located.
- Visit a school in the geographic vicinity of your organization.
- Create a list of things that you want to know about a school.
- Talk to a professional peer currently involved in a school partnership.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Sustaining Comprehensive Community Initiatives: Key Elements for Success*. Washington, DC: The Finance Project, April 2002.



## SUCCESS AT SCHOOL, BTS REPLICATION SITE

**Location:** Greensboro, North Carolina

**Grades:** Pre-K through 5th

**Number of students:** 303

**Eligible for free or reduced lunch:** 80%

**Student Population:** 1% American Indian, 1% Hispanic, 2% Asian,  
2% Caucasian, 94% African American

Vandalia Elementary School lies just outside Greensboro, NC. Many of its students come from hard-working, single-parent households. Because parents work such long hours, the school wanted an afterschool program where families would know their children were safe and where students could have access to the same extra-curricular activities that other children have. Determined efforts to link positive youth development to academic achievement have helped children with many different learning styles to shine.

“The site team plays a major role in making sure we are reaching our children and our goals,” says Principal Kimberly Erwin. It monitors activities and evaluates the programs to make sure all students are being served and academic achievement links are maintained. “The site team decides how we will do it, what we’ll look for, and tweaks the plan for improvements along the way,” she added.

Site coordinator Ethel McCluney, whose position is jointly funded by United Way and the school, works with the site team and helps oversee day-to-day programming. Partners, including the YMCA and Salvation Army, offer students an opportunity to discover talents and new interests through afterschool classes in art, drama, scouting and aerobics. Students can also try their hand at horseback riding, sign language, Spanish, and receive help with their schoolwork. Activities are designed to enhance self-esteem and to be fun.

Children and teachers respond well to so many different kinds of active learning experiences. Some staff have incorporated afterschool methods in their own classrooms. “Teachers see that these opportunities make the children well-rounded and better prepared to learn,” says Erwin.

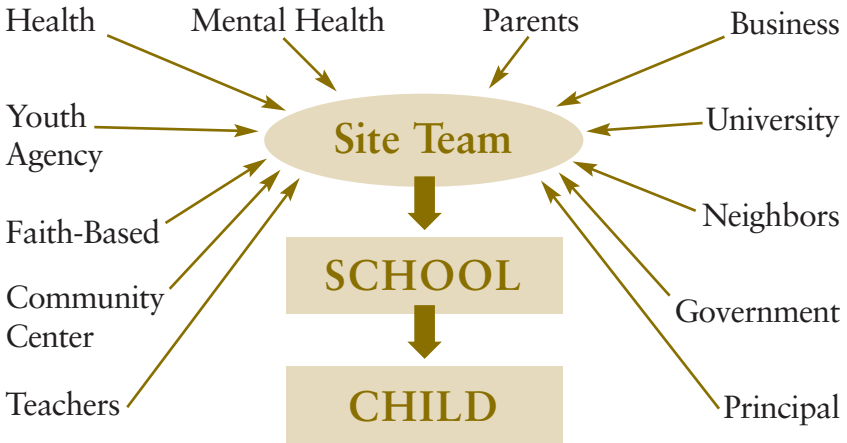
Needs assessment is ongoing. A parent/community survey conducted showed a need for dental and health education as well as for parent and student social groups. Community partnerships were identified and ready to launch both types of activities six months later.

In 2003, Vandalia was named one of the 15 most improved schools in the county. “Many factors played into that designation,” Erwin noted. “Success at School set high expectations.” The activities helped meet student learning styles in different ways and showed children how much they accomplish. Parents who see their children in afterschool theatre and music performance are no longer as likely to say: “I didn’t think my child could do that,” she added.

Improved self-esteem and opportunities to shine played a big part in the gains, Erwin believes. “The Success At School initiative has enlightened my staff,” she added. “It brings out the best in all of us.”

# Appendix

## APPENDIX A: SITE TEAM AS COORDINATING BODY



## APPENDIX B: SCHOOL READINESS ASSESSMENT

*These questions can guide community agencies when they are deciding whether to form a partnership with a school.*

### School Principal

- How many years has the principal been at this school?
- How many principals has this school had in the last five years?
- Does the principal understand the BTS process?
- Is the principal committed to the BTS process?
- Is the principal going to be involved with the site team?

### School Community Leadership

- Does the school already have an active school improvement committee?
- Who is on this committee and what skills do they have?
- Has this committee been effective in the past?
- Does the school have an active Parent-Teacher Organization (PTO)?
- Will this PTO be represented on the site team?
- Has this PTO been effective in the past?

### **School Needs**

- What are the school's perceived needs?
- What data support the existence of these needs?
- Can the school articulate and prioritize these needs?

### **School Resources**

- What resources does the school have that could be shared with the community?
- Is the principal willing to share these resources with the community?
- Will access to these resources address any of the community's perceived needs?

### **School Programs and Services**

- What programs and services already exist at the school?
- Who provides these programs and services?
- Do these programs and services address the stated needs of the school?
- Are these programs and services effective?
- Will these program and service providers become members of the site team?

## APPENDIX C: THEORY OF BRIDGES TO SUCCESS

### System and City Level

Educational, youth, recreation, health, mental health and human service systems relate to each other in new ways:

- Create a vision to meet all of the needs of children
- Enable and support neighborhood level change

### School and Neighborhood Level

Schools, community organizations, parents and residents relate to each other in new ways:

- Collaborative planning and governance
- Cooperative service agreements
- Services located at schools or linked to schools
- Schools made available to the broader community

### Delivery and Utilization of Programs and Services

New, better, more convenient, and/or more cost effective programs and services are offered to students, families and neighborhood residents.

Services are utilized by students, families and residents.

#### Students

Non-academic needs are met.  
More invested in learning.

#### Parents/Families

Needs are met.  
More involved in student learning.

#### Neighborhood Residents

Needs are met.  
More connected to school.

Students achieve better in school

School becomes focal point of the community

**THE COMMUNITY IS STRENGTHENED**

## APPENDIX D: FOUR PHASES OF SITE TEAM DEVELOPMENT

### Phase I: Learning

- Time: Year One
- Leadership: Chairperson provides guidance to the site team in learning the BTS process.
- Staff support: School Coordinator serves as a teacher of the school-community process.
- Activities
  - Learning about the purpose and process of BTS
  - Assessing needs and resources of the school
  - Setting site team outcomes, objectives and tasks
  - Managing existing community programs and services
  - Assessing impact of the site team

### Phase II: Building

- Time: Years Two and Three
- Leadership: Chairperson guides the site team in management and development of programs and services.
- Staff support: School coordinator serves as a collaborator in developing partnerships.
- Activities
  - Assessing needs and resources of the school
  - Setting site team outcomes, objectives and tasks
  - Managing existing community programs and services
  - Creating new partnerships and implementing new programs
  - Assessing impact of programs and services
  - Assessing impact of the site team

### Phase III: Integrating

- Time: Years Four and Five
- Leadership: Chairperson prepares the site team to function independently of the support of the school coordinator.
- Staff support: School coordinator serves as a consultant to the site team.
- Activities
  - Assessing needs and resources of the school
  - Setting site team outcomes, objectives and tasks
  - Creating sustainability for programs and services
  - Creating sustainability for the site team
  - Assessing impact of programs and services
  - Assessing impact of the site team

#### **Phase IV: Sustaining**

- Time: Indefinite Future
- Leadership: Site team determines what kind of leadership it wants.
- Staff support: School coordinator serves as a resource to the site team.
- Activities
  - Assessing needs and resources of the school
  - Setting site team outcomes, objectives and tasks
  - Creating partnerships
  - Managing programs and services
  - Assessing impact of programs and services
  - Assessing impact of the site team

### **APPENDIX E: OUTCOMES FROM SUCCESS AT SCHOOL IN GREENSBORO, NORTH CAROLINA**

#### **Parent Involvement Results**

- Parents are involved in their children's schools.
- 336 parents visited and/or participated in classes.
- 35 parents made programming decisions through their service on site teams.
- 1,000 parents participated in programming surveys.
- 35 parents participated in general educational development classes.
- 70 parents participated in job skills, violence prevention, self-esteem and financial planning workshops.

#### **Community Involvement Results**

- Community organizations have increased interactions with schools.
- A GED program relocated to Wiley Elementary.
- Students from Bennett College, NC A&T State University, University of NC – Greensboro and a local high school serve as volunteers.
- The Center for New North Carolinians provides tutors for ESL students.
- 21 agencies provide services to six school sites.
- \$255,000 was leveraged from private and federal sources to support programming.

#### **Student Achievement Results**

- Student academic performance has improved.
  - Vandalia, Washington and Wiley Elementary Schools were recognized in the top 15 schools with the most improved academic performance for the 2001-2002 school year. These schools have an increased percentage of students scoring at or above grade level in reading and mathematics.
  - Five of six school sites participating in Success at School for at least two years received a designation as a School of Progress.

- Student achievement in the arts has increased.
  - Five Hampton Academy students are members of the Greensboro Symphony Orchestra’s Junior Ensemble.
  - A second-grade Hampton Academy student moved from beginning violin to private lessons through a Greensboro Symphony scholarship.
  - Two Washington Elementary students were offered scholarships to continue Kindermusik classes.
- Student behavior in school has improved.
  - Out-of-school suspensions have significantly decreased at Wiley Elementary.

## APPENDIX F: COMMUNITY READINESS ASSESSMENT

*These questions can guide a school coordinator who is organizing and supporting a new site team.*

### Community Members

- Which members of the community are going to become members of the site team?
- Which sectors of the community do they represent?
- Do these community members understand the BTS process?
- Are these community members committed to the BTS process?
- Is there a community member who could serve as the site team chairperson?

### Community Organizations

- What organizations are providing programs and services to the community?
- Do these programs and services address the needs of the community?
- Are these programs and services effective?
- Are staff members from these organizations going to join the site team?
- What skills do the leaders of these organizations have?

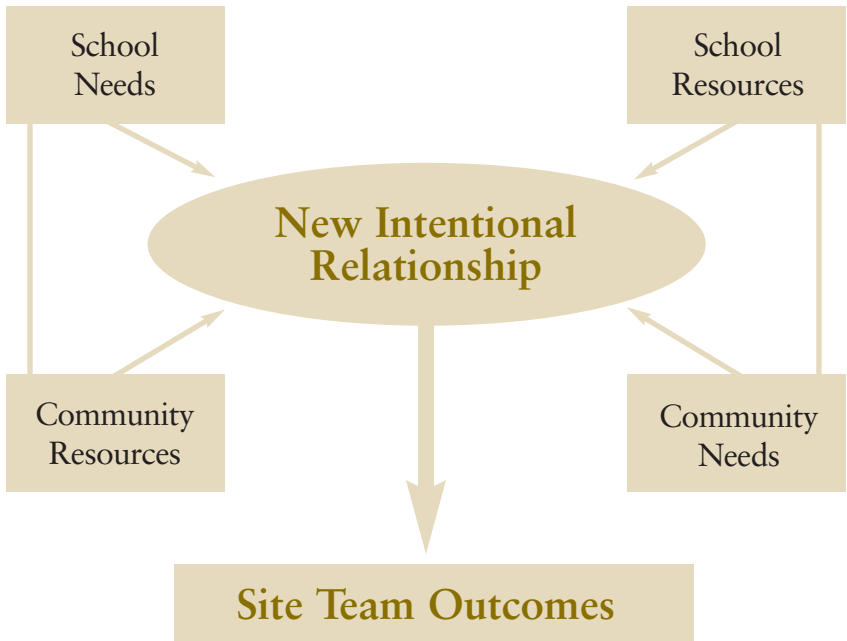
### Community Needs

- What are the community’s perceived needs?
- What data supports the existence of these needs?
- Can members of the community articulate and prioritize these needs?

### Community Resources

- What resources does the community have?
- Does the school have access to these resources?
- Will access to these resources meet any of the school’s stated needs?

## APPENDIX G: NEEDS AND RESOURCES ASSESSMENT PROCESS



## APPENDIX H: KEY QUESTIONS OF THE ASSESSMENT PROCESS

*These questions are designed to guide site team members as they assess the needs and resources of the school and the community.*

### School Needs

- What are current needs of the school?
- What is the evidence for each need?
- What is the priority level of each need?
- What is the cause of this need?
- What happens when this need was met?

### Community Resources

- What kinds of organizations are in the community?
- What kind of leadership and staff does each organization have?
- What kind of programs and services does each organization provide?
- What kind of facilities does each organization have?

- What knowledge and expertise does each organization have?
- What structural connections does each organization have?
- What political connections does each organization have?

### **School Resources**

- What resources does the school have?
- What does it take to fund and maintain each resource?
- What would happen if a particular resource were eliminated?
- Could any of these resources be used to meet the needs of the community?
- Could any of these resources be made accessible to community residents?

### **Community Needs**

- What are the demographic characteristics of the community's residents?
- What are the economic characteristics of the community's residents?
- What is the education level of the community's residents?
- What are the significant social issues in the community?
- What municipal services are needed in the community?
- What kinds of social services and programs are needed in the community?

## **APPENDIX I: CREATING ACADEMIC ALIGNMENT**

*The process outlined below is a guide for site team members as they work with existing programs and services to meet specific academic outcomes for children.*

### **Collect School Data**

- Examine the following information about the school: attendance rate, percentage free and reduced lunch, total enrollment, retention rate, average age and experience of teachers, students per teacher, standardized test scores.
- Have there been significant increases or decreases in any these measurements?
- What are the reasons for the changes in these measurements?

### **Review the School Improvement Plan**

- What are the academic goals listed in the most recent school improvement plan?
- What strategies is the school using to achieve these academic goals?
- What non-academic needs have to be met to achieve these academic goals?
- What strategies is the school using to meet these non-academic needs?

### **Review the Community Resources**

- Determine what community organizations are serving the school's children.
- What programs are they providing to the school's children?
- How often do they provide these programs?
- How many of the school's children do they serve?
- What is the approximate value of these programs?
- Are any of these programs logically linked to the school's goals or needs?
- Determine what other community organizations are in the school's community.
- What is the mission of each of these organizations?
- What programs and services do they have that might benefit children?
- Could these programs and services be logically linked to the school's goals and needs?

### **Determine Academic Alignment**

- The academic goals are known and there is agreement that these are the goals.
- The non-academic needs are known and there is agreement that these are the needs.
- The connection between an academic goal and a non-academic need is logically defined.
- A community organization is willing to meet a particular non-academic need.
- A community organization will meet the need in a way that will help achieve this academic goal.

## **APPENDIX J: MANAGING EXISTING PROGRAMS**

*These questions can guide the site team members as they manage an existing program so that it will intentionally meet an identified goal or need of the school.*

### **Student Information**

- What information about the students does the community partner need?
- What procedures will need to be followed to share such information?
- Will there be eligibility criteria for children to participate?

### **Program Capacity**

- What will be the program capacity?
- If the program is at capacity, will a waiting list be kept?

### **Program Times**

- How many days per week, month, or year will this program be provided?
- Will it be provided on the weekends and/or during the summer?

### **Fiscal Responsibility**

- Who will serve as fiscal agent for this program?
- What will be the total budget for this program?
- Are there any grant restrictions for these funds?

### **Facility**

- Will the program be delivered in the school or at the partner's facility?
- Will physical changes be needed at the school before the program can begin?
- What needs to be done to secure the physical resources of the community partner?

### **Transportation**

- Will students need to be transported to and/or taken home after the program?
- Who will provide transportation?
- Who will pay for transportation costs?

### **Management**

- Who will be directly responsible for delivering the program?
- If there are questions or concerns about the program, how will they be resolved?
- Who will serve as the school's contact person for the community partner?

### **Human Resources**

- How many people will be involved in providing this program to students?
- Are any people going to be relocated or reassigned to provide the program in the school?
- Who will supervise people who provide the program?
- Whose liability insurance provides what coverage for whom?

### **Evaluation of Outcomes**

- What are the anticipated outcomes of this program?
- How will these outcomes be measured?
- Who will be responsible for evaluating these outcomes?

## APPENDIX K: ACADEMIC OUTCOMES ASSESSMENT FOR SITE TEAMS

*This process is intended for site teams that want to measure the impact of school-based or school-linked programs on the academic achievement of students that receive these programs.*

### Plan for Assessment

- Choose the specific group of students that will be assessed.
- Decide what about the academic achievement of these students is going to be assessed.
- Decide what program is supposed to impact the academic achievement of these students.
- Determine what kind of information will measure their academic achievement.
- Determine what other factors may impact the achievement of these students.

### Measure Pre-Program Student Achievement

- Collect the chosen information that measures student academic achievement.
- Organize this information into a standard form.
- Calculate appropriate summary information.

### Implement The Program

- The person delivering the program is not the same as the person doing the assessment.
- Keep records of which students leave the program or leave the school.
- Keep records of any changes in the program that take place after it begins.

### Measure Post-Program Student Achievement

- Collect the exact same information about student academic achievement.
- Organize this information into the standard form.
- Calculate appropriate summary information.

### Compare Pre-Program and Post-Program Achievement

- Determine the difference in achievement before and after the program.
- Reflect on what impact the program had on academic achievement.
- Reflect on what impact other factors may have had on achievement.

### Review the Assessment Process

- Will the assessment process be conducted again?
- Will the same group of students be assessed?
- Will the same form of academic achievement be assessed?
- Will the same program be the focus of assessment?
- Will the same information be used to measure achievement?

# Community School Resources

---

*A Handbook for State Policy Leaders—Community Schools: Improving Student Learning/Strengthening Schools, Families, and Communities.* (2002) Coalition for Community Schools. Washington, D.C.

*Benefits 2: The Exponential Results of Linking School Improvement and Community Development.* (2000) Southwest Education Developmental Laboratory. Austin, Texas.

*Building a Community School*, 3rd Edition. (2001) Children's Aid Society. New York, NY.

*Building More Effective Community Schools.* (2000) The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Baltimore, MD.

*Community Programs to Promote Youth Development.* (2002) National Research Council and Institute of Medicine. National Academy Press. Washington, D.C.

*Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America.* (1997) Lisbeth B. Schorr. Anchor Books/Doubleday. New York, NY.

*Developing Financing Strategies to Support Community School Initiatives.* (2000) Coalition for Community Schools. Washington, D.C.

*Developing Systems of Support to Promote Academic Achievement and the Health and Welfare of Students.* (2001) Pedro A. Noguera, Ph.D. Children's Aid Society. New York, NY.

*Education and Community Building: Connecting Two Worlds.* (2001) Institute for Educational Leadership. Washington, D.C.

*Inside Full-Service Community Schools.* (2002) Joy Dryfoos and Sue Maguire. Corwin Press, Inc. Thousand Oaks, CA.

*Learning Together: The Developing Field of School/Community Initiatives.* (1998) Atelia Melaville. Institute for Educational Leadership and National Center for Community Education. Washington, D.C.

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

*Planning Our Future: Working to Maximize Our Opportunities in the Renovation and Redesign of Ohio Schools.* (2002) KnowledgeWorks Foundation. Cincinnati, OH.

*Reforming Relationships: School Districts, External Organizations, and Systemic Change.* (2003) Robert A. Cranley and Claire Handley. Annenberg Institute for School Reform. New York, NY.

*Schools and Neighborhoods Excelling Together: Bridges to Success.* (2000) Sheri DeBoe Johnson. United Way of America. Washington, D.C.

*Starting Out Right: Developmental Assets for Children.* (1997) Search Institute. Minneapolis, MN.

*Strengthening Families, Strengthening Schools: A Tool Kit for Schools in Making Connections to Communities.* (2003) The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Baltimore, MD.

*Strong Images and Practical Ideas: A Guide to Parent Engagement in School Reform.* (2001) The Annie E. Casey Foundation. Baltimore, MD.

*The Asset Approach: Giving Kids What They Need to Succeed.* (1997) Search Institute. Minneapolis, MN.

*University-Assisted Community School Partnerships.* (2003) Center for Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, PA.