The School as Community Hub
Beyond Education's Iron Cage

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PART I

THE SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY HUB: A PUBLIC ALTERNATIVE TO THE NEO-LIBERAL THREAT TO ONTARIO SCHOOLS

DAVID CLANDFIELD

The School As Community Hub: A Public Alternative To The Neo-Liberal Threat To Ontario Schools

DAVID CLANDFIELD

The first time I walked into Humberwood Centre I had a strange feeling. It was one of those cold blue-sky November days when everything breathes an air of unreality. Opposites meet and collide. What looked like a bleached summer's day felt like a crisp, windless winter's day.

Humberwood Centre on the outer western reaches of Toronto is a large complex, built of banded sandy-coloured brick and concrete. Its ground-hugging architecture breathes a contemporary corporate assur-

ance on the one hand, but gives off a sense of medieval community on the other. The main entrance is reached by crossing a moat-like stream on something akin to a drawbridge. This entrance is dominated by the shallow arc of a hugely protruding canopy, welcoming and protective, yet equally menacing and trap-like. Higher up behind it is another shallow arc acting as the roof of a large hall area, lit by a seemingly continuous row of glass windows visible under the eaves.

Entering a large rectangular atrium, I once again had the sense of two worlds colliding to form something different but unfathomable. Light poured in and there were no dark corners. Ten-foot high square brick columns in two rows held up grey-blue iron posts, tree-like in the way they rose up and sprayed out into four struts holding up the roof over its glazed upper wall.

My first thought was of an abbey church with its nave and aisles, lit by a clerestory. And yet as my eyes tracked round, the abbey turned into a shopping mall. There were notices advertising things, large windows beside doors looking like storefronts, and a sense of sheltered circulation. For a Torontonian, it might well seem like a miniature BCE Place, say, a site of commercial exchange, retail activity, corporate headquarters.

All the same, this building is dedicated neither to God nor Mammon; it is neither wholly religious nor commercial. It is a complex of public services grouped into one setting. In place of the side chapels or shops and office suites around the central hall, there are, in clockwork sequence, a public library, a community centre, a joint school gymnasium, a public elementary school (with over 1,000 pupils from Junior Kindergarten to Grade Eight), a public Catholic elementary school (with some 350 pupils of its own), a joint school library visible on an upper level, and a daycare centre.

Part of what made it seem strange to me on this Friday afternoon was the fact that the place was almost deserted. I had arrived on a Professional Development Day. The public library, community centre and childcare centre were open but seemed dormant. Nobody was circulating in this atrium. Its chief function was evidently to serve as a conduit and gathering place for schoolchildren, and it was not in use.

I had come because this site had been held up to me as a shining example of the school of the future, the school rethought, the alternative to the old way of conceiving and designing school sites, an end to the specialized silo of the single service. This was a version of the community hub: the focus of activity for neighbourhood families finding diverse needs catered to in one public site. And what's more, the plan contained what was, for Ontario, an almost visionary innovation. The two publicly funded school boards (public and catholic), constitutionally entrenched as distinct systems, were sharing the same site, the same gymnasium, the same school library and other facilities. They even held joint school assemblies. The old separate established orders of education in Ontario, the legacy of a Victorian confederation compromise, had apparently found a new plane of co-existence.

I later revisited the site when the pupils were there. Both sets of pupils from the catholic and public schools, it turned out, wore distinct school uniforms. There was no danger of confusing the two school populations. The atrium seemed to work well as the concourse funneled neat regimented lines of pupils into their distinct destinations at the far end. A security guard sat at the school end of the atrium, "to discourage loitering", as he told us. If this had been my first visit, I doubt if I would have had the same somewhat eerie impression. But the detachment offered by the earlier ghostlike visit provided a point of

departure for a reflection about the the threats facing Ontario's public schools today.

For some time, the public school system has been under siege from stresses imposed upon it by the neo-liberal ascendancy. The influence of market thinking on public policy has favoured consumerized competition among schools. The siren calls of private education, independent of local government, are luring away those who flee diversity and inclusion. Some seek advantage, privilege and exclusiveness in high fee-paying establishments. Some seek religious distinctness in faith-based schools, whose fees are substantially lower. So faith-based isolation and consumer choice, contemporary versions of God and Mammon, are hovering over the dream of the community school for all, the dream of one school preparing our country's future citizens together in all their diversity. And so, ironically, the architecture of Humberwood Centre encloses these hopes for educational integration in a vision that equally alludes to their dissolution.[1]

So where does the neighbourhood school, struggling to focus its surrounding community's needs and aspirations in one place, integrating services and learning, fit into all of this? Does a school hub model offer a serious alternative framework to neo-liberal public policy, which favours choice and advantage? And will there ever be a better time to find out as we confront a critical moment in the onslaught on public schools?

I

SCHOOLS AS COMMUNITY HUBS IN A CRITICAL MOMENT

FLUCTUATING ENROLMENTS AND THE VULNERABILITY OF THE NEIGHBOURHOOD SCHOOL

What we are experiencing as a critical moment in public education is another ebb tide of declining enrolment in our publicly funded schools. With fewer children in our schools, the pressure is on to reduce government commitment to the funding of schools for all. But actually, what is under attack is the funding of the democratic principles of equity and

community development, principles that have secured widespread support for universal education in schools catering to identifiable communities, whether in rural villages or urban neighbourhoods.

The neo-liberal argument is that the demand for school space is down and surplus inventory should logically be discarded. School sites are just property, a disposable public asset, and a potential public liability if they do not yield a return on their investment. By this logic, fewer schoolchildren should mean fewer schools. Schools have no place in neighbourhoods too small to supply a large enough clientele to make them "viable." Market forces and market thinking trump democratic ideals for local communities.

It is an argument that is coming down hard on Ontario schools.

In November 2009, the Ontario parent organization People for Education issued a report on school closings in the province. It contained the alarming news that "172 schools are slated or recommended to close in Ontario between 2009 and 2012, and a further 163 reviews are in progress."[2]

To be sure, 44 of the schools being closed are apparently to be replaced by new schools being built in the same area, a reflection perhaps of the chronic underfunding of public schools that has made it more practical to build new ones than to repair or renovate existing buildings. It is also the reflection of a provincial funding formula that calculates maintenance costs on a fixed square foot per enrolled pupil basis. In such a formula, older, roomier schools are judged to be inefficient. The formula is blind to the benefits of roominess to teachers and students alike, as well as of flexibility of use for community partners.

Even without the replacements, the loss of schools under Dalton McGuinty's Liberal government threatens to rival the dark ages of the Conservative Harris government in which massive public funding cuts led to the closing of 250 schools. Of course, the current Ontario government points to significant declining enrolment in public schools as justification that it regards as irrefutable. From its official perspective, as school enrolments shrink, school boards have to merge smaller schools to provide a big enough pupil population to provide specialist teachers in elementary schools, offer a broad range of options in secondary schools and get away from the fixed costs of keeping so many distinct sites in operation. And so arguments are driven to focus on the

optimal size of school, and research studies are canvassed to show this or that answer to the question.

But at the end of the day, the optimal size issue is something of a red herring. It is true that there is plenty of evidence to suggest that the smaller the school, the better the chances that children will benefit from the educational experience.[3] And certainly that is something that the rich and powerful know. Doug Little has pointed out that, when given the choice, parents like smaller schools with smaller classes, and the rich ones are prepared to pay handsomely to send their children there.[4] But public policy decisions are driven by what is considered publicly affordable by the government of the day. And neo-liberal governments will consider optimal school size in relation to the limits they want to put on public expenditures. Once arguments based on economies of scale and public sector restraint are factored in, pedagogical imperatives and parental preferences recede into the background. And private schools are waiting to take advantage of the demand from parents willing to pay extra, as I discovered on a visit to two small subdivisions in the northern reaches of Toronto.

These are residential communities, cut off from their neighbouring areas by major streets and the railway. They stand either side of the val-

ley of the upper east Don River, which completes their sense of enclosure. Each collection of 300 or so owner-occupied houses was built in the 1960s around one open area that served as the site for a small elementary school. This school was the only public building in the community and was the only focal point for any community activity. The two sites housed Page and Appian Public Schools, both named after the streets on which they were located.

In 1981, during Ontario's last declining enrolment crisis, Page Public School was closed by what was then the North York Board of Education. In that same year, the North Toronto Christian School was founded and has been leasing this property ever since. It claims now to have become "one of Canada's largest independent private elementary schools."[5]

Appian Public School was closed some 15 years later. It has been rented to a number of agencies since then, but chief amongst these have been Douglas Academy and now The Prestige School, both private elementary schools renting a school deemed to have enrolment too low to be sustainable as a public school.[6]

So public schools like these are not only bleeding enrolment to private schools, but school boards have actually been making it easier for them to get started. After all, the land and a suitable building, built with public funds, are both ready for occupation for a minimal capital outlay, and on affordable leasing terms.

But what if enrolment were not the only consideration determining the future viability of the school? What if school sites could serve their communities in a number of ways in addition to providing classroom space for compulsory school attendance?

WHAT IF PUBLIC SCHOOLS BECAME COMMUNITY HUBS?

Support for the notion of schools as focal points of community services, community activities, or even community life generally is growing everywhere. It is on the lips of politicians, administrators, educators, journalists throughout Canada and, as far as I can judge, throughout the English-speaking world. Take Ontario. You want to improve the pre-school years of children? Open "hubs for child and family services."[7] You want to reduce poverty? Community hubs in schools.[8] Concerned about youth violence? Community hubs in schools.[9] And so the story goes in provinces and territories across Canada.[10]

The idea of strengthening ties between schools and services to their surrounding communities is certainly not new. The term "full-service schools" to refer to one version of the idea has been in use for a couple of decades at least, particularly since 1994 when Joy G. Dryfoos published her landmark book on the subject.[11]

The integration of services was, of course, on the public policy agenda well before then. I remember when I joined the Ontario Government as a Policy Assistant late in 1991 that the preceding NDP Minister of Education in Ontario, Marion Boyd, had called for "integrated services" as one of her three policy priorities and, by 1993 when she had become the Minister of Community and Social Services, there would be a Secretariat for Integrated Services for Children and Youth.

Earlier still, around 1981-82, when I was a school trustee on the Toronto Board of Education, Community Use of Schools and Parallel Use policies were regularly on the agenda as initiatives designed to bring diverse urban neighbourhood communities into a closer relationship with their schools. Not that we realized that in doing so we were following certain central tenets of the Progressive Education movement in the first third of the 20th century, or following in the footsteps of the settlement movement in the Progressive Era, or that the vision had been realized spectacularly in a small industrial city of Michigan in the 1930s as we shall see below.

Indeed, the school has been a focal point of community activity in rural and small urban communities for as long as there have been schools. And so, if we find the construction of multi-purpose school-community centres such as the one in Port Clements on Haida Gwaii new and innovative in 2008, it is because we have forgotten the rural school movement in Mexico in the 1920s and 30s,[12] or we are unaware of how community school approaches have been used to extend girls' education in Upper Egypt.[13] And we are ignoring such pedagogical leaders as John Dewey, Célestin Freinet, Anton Makarenko, Paolo Freire and their respective movements. The list is seemingly endless.

Regardless of its long pedigree and the amnesia of each successive generation of policymakers, the school-community hub idea has really caught fire now. For all sorts of reasons, ranging from the educational to the penny-pinching. But can or will this be the public alternative to closing schools and selling them or leasing them to private interests?

So I come back to the question asked above: How are we to take the new enthusiasm for schools as community hubs during this time of neoliberal ascendancy? If unused school space can be used for public services offered to surrounding communities, or if it can be used by those communities to bring themselves together in the pursuit of joint ventures for their physical and cultural benefit, then isn't the school com-

munity hub the tool we can use to beat back the neo-liberal agenda of shrinking public assets? Or is this another good idea about to be co-opted into the neo-liberal cycle: privatization, commodification of services, and the conversion of learning for full citizenship into preparation for a world of prosperity-seeking competitiveness where the entrepreneurial few reap benefits at the expense of the regimented many?

As we shall see, then, everything will depend on whether schools as community hubs are seen first and foremost as the tools of co-operative community development or whether they are implemented as an efficient channel through which to deliver viable human capital to the labour market and mass consumption. In the pages that follow we shall try to look at both of these polar extremes, ranging across time and around the world in the process but typically with an emphasis on Ontario.

II

THE SCHOOL AS COMMUNITY HUB DEFINED

The term "community hub" is a politician's dream. It is the ultimate in ambiguity. Do we mean allowing community access to school facilities, or the staging of events and displays of work that are open to the public? Are we talking about the use of schools for community institutions like the police or fire department as learning resources? Do we mean integrating local volunteers such as seniors as mentors for students? Is the hub just another name for a Community School or a Full-Service School? Or should the hub idea take all this and go further still? And if so, how.

I'll start by situating hubs along a five-point continuum extending from the community use of schools to the fully integrated school-community relationship (what I am proposing as the true hub).

A. SHARING ON DEMAND

(1) Community use of schools.

Most schools and school boards in Canada have a permit system in place that allows eligible community groups to book school space for use after hours. It could be for a public meeting in the auditorium, a

sports event in the gym or on the grounds, a book club in the library, or a craft demonstration in an art room. We are talking about a process involving a formal permit application for access by a specific group to a specific space for a specific period of time on a specific day.

It usually involves an extension of school opening hours with additional costs being incurred for the on-site presence of school staff, a caretaker and, in some cases, a school board administrator in a coordinating or managerial role.

(2) Parallel use and shared use of schools.

These arrangements extend the permit system into something more akin to a time-share lease. A community dance class or a yoga group may arrange to use the gym every Saturday morning; the continuing education department may arrange to have a regular program of night classes in school classrooms; the municipality may operate a pool or a daycare centre on school premises; a refugee counselling centre may operate two days a week in space made available in the school.

Both of these forms of contact between school and community are to some extent market-driven. There may be preferred permitholders and lessees, and there may be limitations on which groups are eligible, but on the whole they run on a first-come first-served basis. The school has unused space at certain times and allows it to be used by outsiders, typically for a fee on a cost-recovery basis. Public policy issues involve the creation of user fee grids and scales, exemption policies, overhead calculations, liability costs.

More and more, then, these programs are run like businesses. Indeed, in the market-driven world, the management of this aspect of the school operation can be farmed out to an outside agency so that the school-community relationship takes the form of a business contract whose details are negotiated privately, following an RFP process, and subsequently kept private for reasons of "business confidentiality." Once market forces begin to take hold, however, community development begins to yield to the stimulation of consumer demand, and there is little likelihood of the day school learners and the after-hours space-sharers having anything to do with each other.

For such features of shared use of school space to remain within the

public sphere and to be truly community building, the policy regulating it must be made publicly and a strong element of community involvement in the local school decision-making processes must be guaranteed. In the spirit of Chris Bigum and Leonie Rowan's "Knowledge Producing Schools", the pupils of the school should themselves have an interactive relationship with what goes on in the adjacent spaces and extended time-frames of their learning place.

B. RATIONALIZING SERVICES AND USE OF SPACE

(3) Co-location of community services.

A single plot of land may house a school, a daycare centre, a public library, a swimming pool, a community centre. Some may be operated by the school board; some may be operated by the municipality. The placement of these services targeting the needs of the neighbouring community in a single site thus makes efficient use of public space. In its most fully developed form, this may occur when a new facility is being built for a newly built community. The Humberwood Centre with which I began this article is one such example. A less radical model consists in the conversion of an old facility into a Community School, by the addition of new buildings for co-location or a thorough renovation and a redistribution of uses.

In its ideal form, then, public agencies come together and co-ordinate their resources and service in a planned, mixed-use site, without necessarily limiting facilities to those that serve primarily the needs of children and their families.

In the neo-liberal universe, co-location can bring schools and commercial enterprises into the same planned site. Schools can be located upstairs from supermarkets, in shopping malls, or in office buildings. Publicly owned and operated schools in such an environment share space with businesses motivated and sustained by their bottom line more than the public good. If school space is leased by the public authority, then its long-term viability will be in the hands of the leasing business. If the land is co-owned in a public-private partnership, there will be limits on the room for growth or change in the design and use of the public education facilities. If the land is publicly owned, a business

model for the allocation and renting out of private space is usually negotiated on terms sensitive to commercial market pressures. And if the school is located within a retail commercial environment, the school population becomes a target clientele for the businesses themselves.

(4) Full-service schools.[14]

I make a distinction between this policy and co-location, although the niceties of the distinction may not always be observed from jurisdiction to jurisdiction. The full-service school typically builds its array of services around the needs of children and their families. In this, they recall the efforts of the Settlement Movement in the late 19th century. Family services supplement the daycare centre; children's screening programs (vision, hearing, dental health) and the public immunization of children may be conducted on school premises; immigrant services for newcomers' families may be based in schools; nutritious breakfast and snack programs may operate in schools located in needy neighbourhoods; and so on.

In the public model, the agencies involved will all be publicly funded and operated by different levels of government or will involve partnerships with co-operatives and non-profit NGOs, themselves funded by governments or public foundations or their own fund-raising efforts. This is recognized in the federal funding model in place in the United States.

But the full-service model lends itself to public-private partnerships and U.S. legislation is winding its way through Congress to make this available for boards and schools that want to engage in them.[15] This may be explained by the extent to which health and daycare programs are already private there. But the provision of services through public agencies already lends itself to corporate sponsorships.

The Toronto Foundation for Student Success is a charitable foundation that acts as a conduit for grants and donations directly in support of the programs of the Toronto District School Board. Its corporate sponsors include the Toronto Real Estate Board, the real estate giant Re-Max, Canada Bread (89% owned by Maple Leaf Foods), Sun Life Financial, Russell Investments and Wal-Mart.[16] The Gift of Sight and Sound, consisted of an extensive screening for sight and hearing deficiencies in inner-city elementary schoolchildren in Toronto. It began in

2007, and received optometrist services and glasses at no cost from Wal-Mart's Vision department. A worthy example of the good corporate citizen? Maybe. But I think this goes beyond business profile building in the community and trying to build brand awareness and loyalty among children and their families. I remember a school snack program in a Toronto inner-city school that was sponsored by a big coffee-and-doughnut chain. I also remember the conflict that broke out between supporters of that chain and the principal when she wanted to convert the snack program to a more nutritious alternative. And when the School Board wanted to keep children in school for healthy lunches, the same chain's franchise-holders and employees seem to have led the charge against that, too.

In the two cases of co-located services and full-service schools, the earlier market-driven system of after-hours school use has yielded ground to a public policy model. The supplementary uses of the school premises are those planned and chosen by public agencies – the school board, the municipality, the board of public health, etc. – to provide services deemed necessary for the welfare of the surrounding community. Community consultation may play a role in the development of the policies and the allocation of resources.

But school uses are now more firmly institutionalized in these models and they are usually limited to providing what a public body of specialists and bureaucrats is prepared to consider beneficial for the recipient community. And in the neo-liberal ascendancy, these services may be operated or sponsored by commercial enterprises whose interests may conflict with the educational priorities of the school. Corporate philanthropy works as long as corporate interests are not adversely affected. And once you come to depend upon it, it is difficult to risk losing it.

In all four of the above models, we need to add, there is nothing that by necessity integrates the life of the school with the community uses of the school. There may be substantial overlap, as when nutrition classes are related to the breakfast program, or when a preventive health screening is accompanied by classroom work on the ear or the eye. But that overlap is not required for the public policy to work. The sharing can and usually does remain parallel. It may even create tensions, as when the regular day teacher objects to the use of certain

classroom materials by a night class for adults. Moreover, what is going on in the school often seems to unfold in ways that have no impact on community life outside the school or even on the community users of the school space. They are like ships that pass in the night, fellow consumers of space.

Overall, in these models, the school provides room for others to use its space without any necessary benefit to its educational programs, and the community makes use of the facilities without gaining anything from what is going on in regular school classes. For the relationship between school and community to go beyond this form of separated sharing we need an extra effort.

C. IMAGINING A DIFFERENT COMMUNITY SCHOOL: THE TWO-WAY HUB

(5) The school as community hub.

A school might be thought of as a two-way hub when children's learning activities within the school contribute to community development, and when community activities contribute to and enrich children's learning within the school.

This does not mean that the school dilutes its commitment to the development of critical literacy and numeracy or to the phased development of higher order critical thinking over the years of compulsory education.

It does mean that what the community has by way of knowledge and skills flows into and across a curriculum based on really useful knowledge – engaging its students in understanding and changing the world. It does mean that pupils can develop their own expertise and put it to work in the service of the community. It does mean that teachers' work and responsibilities change substantially. They will have a duty to understand their pupils not only as potential producers of knowledge rather than vessels to be filled, but also as community mediators providing the actual means by which school and community can work more closely together. And among the key vehicles for the development of that relationship will be the various community programs and services located within the school space (as in parallel space and full-service models) and in its immediate environment (as in co-location models).

The pedagogical model is exemplified in a contemporary setting by the "Knowledge Producing Schools" described elsewhere in this book by Rowan and Bigum. But it is an essential feature of many strands of the movements for Progressive Schools and L'Education Nouvelle in the first half of the 20th century.

So the full community hub will yoke the interactive neighbourhood school with the multi-use hub to produce a kind of New Commons where education for all, health, recreation, poverty reduction, cultural expression and celebration, and environmental responsibility can all come together to develop and sustain flourishing communities on principles of citizenship, co-operation and social justice.

This is how our schools can become a bulwark against the principles that would reduce them to factories producing skilled elites, compliant workers, and eager consumers in a drive to achieve competitive advantage and measurable prosperity in the world of neo-liberal globalization.

SO WHAT IS A COMMUNITY?

Until now, we may have being relying on an unstated assumption of what constitutes the community for any particular school. That assumption is that the geographical area surrounding the school, its neighbourhood, contains the community. In other words, the community is thought of as local, a word rich in associations that need to be unpacked rather than swallowed whole.

For example, how big is the area of a school community? And how inclusive is it, really?

The first obvious answer is the catchment area, the area in which all or the vast majority of its pupils live and in which any school-age children would be expected to attend that school. For elementary schools this area would be smaller than for secondary schools.

Of course, that is not as obvious as it sounds. For this definition to work, local families would have no choice on where to send their children to school. In a unitary school system, with no private or independent schooling alternatives, and with hard, uncrossable boundaries defining its catchment areas, that would be the case.

But in most places, private or independent school alternatives do exist, mainly for families wealthy enough to afford the fees, even if in

some locations the private alternatives mean that the children whose homes are in a particular neighbourhood are sent to live in boarding schools far away from home, even in another country. After all, the right to exercise such choices is vigorously defended by those who subscribe to a market-like education system. This niche market for the wealthy and exclusively minded preceded the neo-liberal ascendancy, but has become a growing threat as ideological attacks on the public education system gather steam in conservatively minded political circles and the media that fuel their campaigns.

This version of neo-liberal competitiveness also affects the public system, as pupil selection and school choice become a significant feature there too, ostensibly to staunch the bleeding to private schools by the exclusively minded. Its principal effect, however, is to reinstate or reinforce social strata within what is officially an egalitarian public school system. We see this happening as magnet schools and their like – specializing in sciences, new technologies, languages or bilingualism, the performing and visual arts, culturally specific programming, programs for students designated as gifted, or reflecting an alternative educational philosophy – pull students away from their neighbourhoods for differentiated education for students whose families are generally in higher income brackets. These schools designate their catchment area as part or all of a school board's jurisdiction. They have mechanisms to manage excessive demand. They may use random admission schemes such as lotteries or first-come-first-served systems. More frequently they exercise some measure of selection, as most private schools do, whether by testing, auditioning, portfolio evaluation, student and/or parent interviews.

Such demand-driven choices, whether regulated by school-based selection or not, draw their enrolment from the catchment areas of other schools. And so they undermine our notion of a school community based on a surrounding neighbourhood. The educational experience of individual students may be academically enriched by placement in a school environment officially responsive to the aspirations of their families and themselves. Or not. But what is certain is that there is a social offset to this individualism. The rich diversity of the neighbourhood schools reflecting the rich diversity of the surrounding population is compromised, diluted or lost. Individual pupils and their families making such choices divert their loyalties to other locations. The neighbour-

hood maintains its residential communality, but loses a unifying institutional pillar, the school. It acts as a mechanism converting future citizens into consumers for educational services.

It is important to remember that the ideology of choice embedded here – looking at our schools like an array of boutiques catering to specialized clienteles, circulating freely within an open market before committing to a particular brand – is a neo-liberal fantasy. The tough reality is that while the choice schools (privates, magnets or public alternatives) may (or may not) behave as specialized craft houses lavishing care and expertise on the provision of luxury forms of education, the remaining schools, the vast majority, are relegated to the status of the industrial factory. Gourmet food for some, fast food for the majority.

So how does this affect our sense of community as we contemplate the school as community hub, as part of a New Commons vision? We know that school choice dilutes and fractures neighbourhood-based communities. But we also have to recognize that in some jurisdictions, there are more deeply embedded fractures in the school system.

In Ontario, public education is actually divided into four systems, each with its own local governance structures and its own emphases in educational programming. With the 1867 British North America Act, the compromises that facilitated Canadian Confederation lay in the protection of the rights of two specific Christian minorities, the protestant minority in Roman Catholic Quebec and the Roman Catholic minority elsewhere, especially in Ontario. The result, now seemingly entrenched in the Canadian Constitution since 1981, has been the creation and maintenance of two publicly funded denominational systems in Ontario, a Roman Catholic system alongside a so-called "public" system that has, over the decades, lost much of its connection with protestant Christianity to become a near secular system. So any public school catchment area or neighbourhood community is threaded into a Roman Catholic school catchment area or neighbourhood community. And there is no reason why they should occupy the same size area, since the Roman Catholic population is often significantly smaller in aggregate than that of the rest of the population, and since the proportion of Roman Catholic students over a region may vary significantly from neighbourhood to neighbourhood.

This situation has been complicated by the evolution of French education governance following the repatriation of the Canadian

Constitution and the adoption of the Charter of Rights and Freedoms in 1981 with its protections of the educational rights of official language groups. Charter challenges and court decisions led in the 1980s and 1990s to the creation of French-language school boards distinct from English-language boards in Ontario. Since the system was already divided between public and Roman Catholic boards, the new language dispensation has meant that there are now four kinds of school boards created out of the permutations of English and French, Catholic and non-Catholic populations. Some of the resulting school boards cover very large areas of the Province in order to achieve the economies of scale needed to run a central administration and governance model. And some of the minority official language schools have very large catchment areas and rely on busing to bring pupils to school from significant distances. It must be recognized that this form of school differentiation was not occasioned by neo-liberal choice ideology, but by a commitment to the protection of the educational rights of particular minorities, as these have defined the constitutional make-up of Canada.

The setting is more complicated still. In 1980, amendments to the Education Act in Ontario, reflecting the direction being taken by many jurisdictions within the Province and in much of the Western world, required Boards of Education to make provision for Special Education, meeting the educational challenges of school-aged children with physical disabilities such as deafness and blindness, but more importantly the educational challenges of school-aged children with identified exceptionalities.[16] These exceptionalities formally included such forms as developmental disability, learning disability, behavioural disorders and giftedness. This is not the place to rehearse the debate about the social abuses that have accompanied these exceptionalities (experienced as profiling in many poor racialized communities) and the introduction of legislation ostensibly intended to protect the rights and accommodate the needs of more minorities. The ways in which differentiated programming designed to stream children has favoured wealthier better-educated families' children at the expense of poorer families' children are well-documented elsewhere. But, for this argument, since the full range of Special Education programs required by law, is not available at every neighbourhood school, it means that children do have to leave their neighbourhoods to get to schools where the programs they are said to need are provided.

The image of the school bus as the enemy of the neighbourhood community surrounding a school needs consideration in one more context before we return to the vexed question of how to imagine the community in relation to any particular school that might serve as a hub.

For this we leave Ontario and venture south of the border to contemplate the effects of *Brown vs. Board of Education* (1954), the landmark Supreme Court case in the USA that declared racially segregated schools unconstitutional. In a thought-provoking analysis of African-American education before and after the Brown decision, Jeanita Richardson has shown how the full-service community school had taken root with positive effect in many segregated schools, finding solutions to the demands of educational and community development in the reciprocal relationship that is the subject of this book. She focuses on one K-9 segregated school in a small Pennsylvania steel town called Coatesville. The name of the school was the James Adams Community School (often shortened to JACS) and the key date in its history was 1943 when Thomas Jefferson Anderson (the author's grandfather) became principal. He worked tirelessly with his wife Anita to establish a full-service community school, based on principles developed from John Dewey, who was a faculty member of Columbia University when Anderson had studied there.[18]

But in 1956, the Supreme Court decision on *Brown vs. Board of Education* led to the eventual closure of the school. The point that Richardson makes about desegregation in the wake of the *Brown* decision is that there were thriving efforts under way to build community-school relationships despite the flagrant inequities of funding for the schooling of Black children and their school facilities and that these models of school-community co-development collapsed and died with desegregation. Court-ordered desegregation implanted in people's minds the sense that segregated schools for Black children were in and of themselves inferior to those of white children and that desegregation would fix that. Middle-class Black families moved out into now desegregated suburbs, leaving behind the poorer, less mobile families. Recalcitrant school boards would eventually be required to bus children to schools further afield and institutionalize the breakup of the neighbourhood school even further. The full-service community school and the fully realized reciprocal hub idea was irreparably damaged in the

small number of Black communities where it was being developed. It would have to wait for decades before being given another try.

Research abundantly shows that the children of the racialized poor do best in schools where their teachers are of the community and understand it, and in schools where there is a mixture of social classes and performance levels among the children.[19] That was the logic behind desegregation and bussing. However, when the best and brightest move out, when their local teachers seek residence and employment elsewhere, the odds are stacked against the poor who remain. For us today, the lessons from the JACS experience are there to encourage our schools and our teachers to re-engage with our depressed racialized communities, to build and maintain their confidence and self-respect, to make their schools the first priority for the new hubs.

But it will not be easy in Canada's urban priority neighbourhoods. JACS was closely tied to an ethnoracially homogeneous community. Many of our poorest communities, with immigrant and refugee populations side by side with those trapped inside poverty cycles of longer standing, are significantly more diverse by language, cultural background and faith affiliation. There is no unitary community, other than that which is based on living together, sharing class interests and challenges. The overwhelming temptation for public institutions in the neoliberal ascendancy is to offer what services it does agree to dispense to protect this population from ill-health, malnutrition, substance abuse, insecurity, violence and ignorance with the expectations that a good many will become or remain active within the lower reaches of the service economy. The full-service school can lead us in this direction if we are not diligent in our efforts to promote an alternative view – a view that incorporates community self-help, democratic principles and integrated learning.

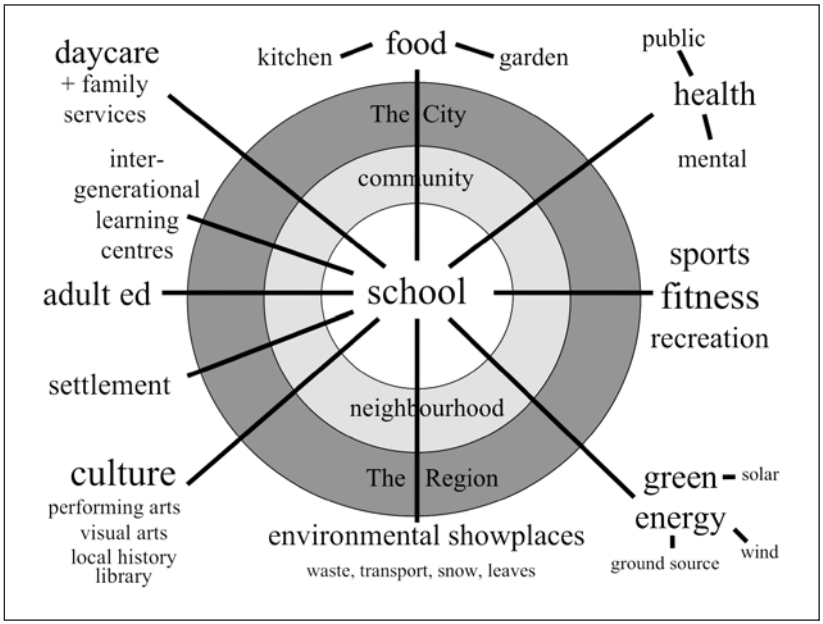
So what is the community? If it is defined primarily as the families of the school pupils, then that excludes other people in the neighbourhood, and also the local families whose children attend schools in other boards (francophone or Catholic). If it is defined primarily as all of the neighbourhood in the school's catchment area, then that excludes those who cross boundaries to get to the school for whatever reason. And if the goal is to provide services not offered in all of the other schools in a cluster of elementary schools feeding a secondary school, say, then

would the other neighbourhoods be excluded from that daycare, parenting program, adult education opportunity or community garden? Clearly not. And finally, we must always think of the community in community hub as plural and, ideally, inclusive.

So the community eludes clear definition. A school can serve as a hub for many activities and each one may create and define its own public, its own community. Residential proximity will always be a major determinant, as will school enrolment. But public institutions, once they provide non-educational services and activities need to be all-inclusive, not because they are competing for clients in an open market for services, but because they belong to everybody. And that is why they need to be funded at the broader, local government level, and not dependent on specific acts of philanthropy or fund-raising efforts whose outcomes depend on the socio-economic status of the parent, alumni body or neighbourhood. Furthermore, there is no reason why all the services and activities on offer must be limited to children and families divided up according to their school board affiliation. A community orchestra does not need to have an official language label; a daycare does not need to decide whether it is Catholic or not. And that is why the co-ordination and governance of school facilities and hubs should be as inclusive as municipal government is generally. We shall return to these questions in our last section. But it is now time to put flesh on the bones of the school as community hub. By its acts we shall know it.

III

THE SCHOOL AT WORK AS COMMUNITY HUB

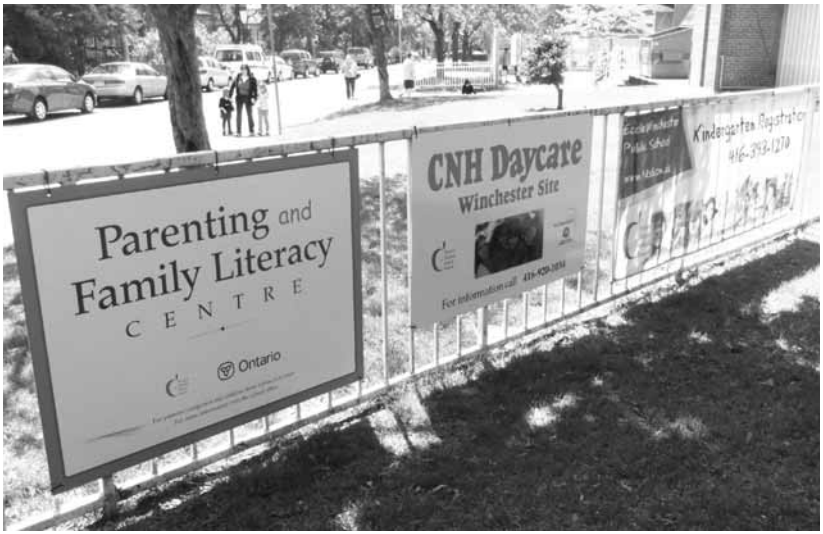


In this section, we survey the range of services and activities that can operate within the school functioning as a community hub. Naturally, each community would need to assess its own needs, priorities and preferences. It is unlikely that all of these uses would be accommodated within a single school, but many could be accommodated within a family of schools.

In well-developed communities, many of the services are probably offered within purpose-built community centres and public health clinics. So it could be argued that there is no need for schools to take on such functions. But the goal is not simply to rationalize services or to find alternative uses for unused school space. It is to transform the relationships between schools and their communities. So this will form part of our focus as we examine what can be done.

CARE AND SERVICES FOR CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Nowadays, it looks as if the idea and implementation of the hub begins with daycare services, located in schools, and catering to the childcare needs of pre-schoolers and school-age children. Seamless integration means gearing programs towards "school readiness" for the former and coordinating the organization of the day for the latter so that it wraps neatly around school hours. This service to families with young children often extends to include on-site group counselling for parents and other family services delivered by health and social workers. This understanding has now entered mainstream public policy.[20]



Advertising integrated early childhood services at Winchester Public School, Toronto

In Ontario, the latest expression of this came in 2009 from *With Our Best Future in Mind*, a report for the provincial government by a veteran civil servant, Charles Pascal. With respect to programs for the youngest children, Pascal recommends that:

- the many existing child and family programs be consolidated into a network of Best Start Child and Family Centres under the systems management of municipalities;

- the Centres be located in or partnered with schools, and provide flexible full-day, full-year, and part-time child care for children up to age 4 (supported by parent fees and subsidies available for low-income families);
- the Centres be a one-stop opportunity for pre- and postnatal supports, parenting resources and programs, playgroups, linkages to community resources, help with early identification and intervention for children with special needs, and other early learning services.[21]

These programs, along with full-day kindergarten for four- and five-year-olds and wrap-around childcare for school-age children in an extended day, would mean that elementary schools would offer a "continuum of service" and become what he calls "true community hubs for children and their families." Elsewhere in the body of his report, Pascal extends his definition of the school as community hub by advocating "the transformation of all elementary schools into community schools, open to their neighbourhoods and capable of providing families with opportunities for children's learning, care, health, culture, arts, and recreation from the prenatal period through to adolescence."[22]

We begin our breakdown of the various features that can be assimilated into the hub with the extension of services offered to children and their families in this Ontario report. It is full of useful reminders and insights into the ways that schools can be made more welcoming to their communities. Finding ways to overcome the fortress mentality that has become the prevailing model for school security by negotiating the balancing of security and accessibility with parents is one such example. At the same time, there are some issues in Pascal's report that need to be raised concerning the development of school-community hubs. There is no mention, for example, of possible negotiations with education workers and teachers over ways to extend opening hours meaningfully, and there remain considerable problems surrounding governance and finance. There are, however, three positive contributions I want to single out and that I will return to later on.

One is the sense that, as a community hub, the school is to be open to the neighbourhood for a range of services and activities that goes beyond the teaching and care of children both in time and space. True,

there is ambiguity over whether the neighbourhood extends beyond the families of schoolchildren and whether the "health, culture, arts, and recreation" provision is limited to children or is open to other generations within this particular vision. We obviously need to work this out in any vision of a genuine community hub.

Second, there is the emphasis on the fundamental role of the government and public sector in the operation of public services for the public good. In an age when the debate over early childhood care and education often crystallizes around the role that market forces and private enterprise might play in the name of choice and the recognition of home-based childcare, it is heartening to see such things taken off the table.

The third contribution is the understanding that the chaos of intersecting jurisdictions desperately needs simplification and a firm commitment to co-ordination and co-operation among a smaller number of bodies. Provincially, it is proposed to give the Ministry of Education the lead in the creation, funding, and program direction of the services offered by these hubs. As a previous Deputy Minister both of Education and of Community and Social Services, Pascal does not surprise anyone by coming up with a systems analysis and solution. Whether his nod to the Ministry of Education as leader would create the inter-departmental collaboration he seems to yearn for remains to be seen. But when he gets to local government, we sit up and take notice. Pascal recommends a joint role for municipalities and school boards in the operation of such services. We shall return to that a little later on.

There are, however, two points on which our vision of the school as community hub differs radically from Pascal's.

One is that his is still essentially a service model with experts making their expertise available to individual families or members of the public. The description of the service does come with a vision, but much of the report deals with the practical considerations of the public policy framework and a systems approach to delivery and governance. Again, this is to be expected of a career bureaucrat whose report is subtitled "Implementing Early Learning in Ontario."

Let us consider the extensive mandate of the network of Best Start Child and Family Centres that he advocates for expectant families and their children from birth to age four. The services on offer go beyond immediate learning and health-related needs to include "links to com-

munity resources such as libraries, recreation and community centres, health services, family counselling, employment trainings, settlement services, and housing." The school that houses such centres will be the home of what we called Citizens Advice Bureaux when I was growing up in England – the one-stop referral service, over-the-counter advice for the passer-by. Valuable as this tool for public information and communication is, the real or implied countertop between the information provider and the visiting member of the public serves as a barrier to the sense of partnership the "true hub" aspires to achieve.

To be sure, the notion that members of the community can be involved as equal partners in parenting program discussions rather than as recipients of expert advice is hinted at in some of the submissions and consultations quoted in Pascal's report,[23] but the notion that early childhood educators and parenting mentors have a lot to learn from the diverse communities in our schools, not only about cultural difference but also about the ways in which they meet the many challenges they face without the benefit of paid help, is more than somewhat muted. Two of the articles in Part Two of this book emphasize the importance of Indigenous knowledge both as a guarantee of cultural continuity and engagement for Indigenous communities in public schools and as a well-spring of really useful knowledge that can bridge the gaps between educators and learners, school and community, and build the hub principle. But this principle of local knowledge can usefully apply to schools with culturally mixed communities, or neighbourhoods whose teachers and education workers are not of that community.

The second point of disagreement with Pascal is his school-community governance model. Not surprisingly in a report by a veteran of the Ontario Public Service, the role of local communities and neighbourhoods in decision-making processes at the school is consultative and, individually, parents are invited to be full participants in the education and well-being of their children. These directions are, of course, vitally important, but if such an array of services is going to be really useful to the community and to be fully integrated into the life of the school hub, there must be an extended role for the School Council. In this context, the School Council is central to the fully-formed two-way hub in which teachers and education workers as well as parents, community members and older children have a voice and a role to play, one

that goes beyond the fundraising and volunteering that are the usual lot of such committees.

Finally, there is a significant omission from Pascal's vision of school-community hubs: intergenerational programming. This perspective is creeping in elsewhere as a feature of the public policy concerning school-located services for families and their young children.

THE INTERGENERATIONAL DIMENSION

Learning togther: Intergenerational IT classes in London and Singapore

In some cases intergenerational learning is a natural extension of the service model in Pascal's report. Such is the case in a 2009 report by Margaret Lochrie in the UK. She calls that country's Sure Start children's centres "integrated service hubs" for children under the age of five and their families. The advice and support for parents in disadvantaged areas includes outreach services and links with Jobcentre Plus, but some have gone further to include projects for disabled children and adults, debt relief advice, housing assistance, food co-ops, arts projects and even family outings.[24] At the same time, there is an element of the learning communities that resemble what we have in mind for school community hubs:

> In recasting children's centres with adult education providers as key partners, alongside health and other family centres, there is both an opportunity, not only to more systematically address poverty, but to offer parents a wider span of learning opportunities, whether of a functional nature (e.g. financial literacy) or more broadly educational. In this, there is the chance to redistribute the benefits of lifelong learning in fairer ways and support aspirations among poorer parents and from them, to their children.

> However, through these closer links, there is also the opportunity to recast children's centres as *learning communities*, providing opportunities for reflection, and enabling parents to take responsibility for particular roles, not just within the private space of their homes, but in the wider community.
>
> At the heart of the original Sure Start model was the idea of breaking with hierarchical models of service delivery and aligning support for families with community empowerment. The aim was to form effective partnerships between local authorities, primary care trusts, voluntary and private organisations, parents and other members of the local community, which would tackle local problems and work towards reducing social exclusion.[25]

Lochrie wryly suggests that the community empowerment through representation and power sharing has lagged behind individual empowerment through the development of coping mechanisms, social networking, and personal employment prospects. In spite of hopes to break with "hierarchical models," what we mostly have here is centrally directed social work.

In contrast to this social work dimension, intergenerational programming often means the opening up of childcare centres and schools to senior citizens.

In a more radical form, schools have been opened for educational and recreational uses by seniors. A famous example can be found in the famous Seniors' Centers in the Community Schools of Flint, Michigan, which went so far as to invite them in to retirement classes or evening gatherings to play cards and drink beer. The Mott program was founded in 1926, and by the 1930s, these centres were well established. Here is one contemporary description of how they functioned:

> The Mott Program provides meals for the elderly, both at the Board of Education Food Center, and in their homes. All elementary schools maintain a list of elderly people living alone within their catchment areas and the school undertakes to contact daily those who would welcome a telephone call. In addition, each elementary school class adopts a "grandmother" – an elderly

> woman living alone with no relatives in the Flint area. This scheme provides contacts with the young for the "grandmother" and provides much needed contact with the elderly for children who, in this era of the mobile, nuclear family, may see their real grandmother yearly, or less frequently.[26]

Now this account does not spell out the range and nature of interactions between the two generations and the extent to which the product of those interactions helped inform classroom learning. My inclination is to think of this as essentially philanthropy at work. But what cannot be denied is that the interconnection with local elders has the potential to build and sustain a mutually enriching relationship between the school and neighbourhood residents. For this community building to be practical in Flint, elementary schools were expected to hold their enrolment under 600 with a catchment area of no more than 1,500 homes, one definition of a school community that we had been looking for earlier.

Back in Canada, the provision of seniors' centres along these lines has not been a regular feature of community schools.[27] The more frequently encountered model of intergenerational programming is that of the volunteering retirees. In Toronto, for example, Baycrest Public School, a K-5 school with an enrolment of 162, has ties with the renowned Baycrest Centre, a local health facility for the elderly with residences from which octogenarians regularly visit the school as "Reading Angels," working one-on-one with the primary students every Friday morning.

More ambitiously, the Toronto Intergenerational Partnerships, an NGO in operation since 1983, have been partnering with schools to facilitate reciprocal relationships between children and the elderly in ways that recall the Mott programs in Flint. Children visit retirement residences; seniors act as volunteers and mentors in daycare programs, tell stories in elementary classrooms, sing in intergenerational choirs, or lunch and play games with secondary school pupils. By 2002, they had partnered with eight daycare centres, 33 elementary schools and six secondary schools. Since then there appears to have been exponential growth. The number of schools has now expanded to over one hundred. The Toronto District School Board and the Municipality of Toronto are now among their funders. It's another reminder that local governments have shared interests in hub-like activities.

Intergenerational programs bringing the very young and the elderly together for mutual benefit will be a critical form of community development for schools as community hubs. Oddly enough, though, the TDSB's current plan for Full-Service Schools refers to them only tangentially.[28] And yet the mutual benefits of intergenerational programming surely lie within the service ambit, even when this is limited to health and health-related initiatives. The cultural benefits are particularly powerful in communities where the wisdom of the elders is prized as the repository of local knowledge. It might be assumed that this would imply stable communities with long attachment to the local land, Indigenous communities in particular. But this holds true in all cultures, including those of newcomers.[29]

IMMIGRANTS AND NEWCOMERS

Students at a Welcome and Information for Newcomers (WIN) orientation program in Camilla Road Senior Public School in Mississauga in late August 2008

In school districts that house newcomer communities, the advantages of partnerships between schools and settlement agencies or of locating settlement workers in schools are considerable. When required, such workers are ideally recruited from the immigrant population in that neighbourhood. They speak the language and are conversant with the social, economic and cultural challenges faced by those neighbourhood families. They have a pivotal role to perform, steering newcomers towards

housing and employment and helping them navigate the health, legal and educational systems of their adoptive country, whether as refugees or immigrants. In the school as community hub, these workers will serve as intermediaries between parents and schools.

Federal government responsibility for immigration accounts for their establishment of a school-based outreach scheme called Settlement Workers in Schools (SWIS) in 1999, bringing Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC) together with settlement agencies and school boards. In the City of Toronto, the partnerships include both English-language boards, several agencies, and CIC in a group called Settlement and Education Partnerships in Toronto (SEPT). Its declared goal is to "promote security in the community for newcomers [and] ensure comfortability [*sic*] during the transition to a new environment."[30] The mixture of frontline groups and governments, local and federal, ensures that the services are designed with the best information available, appropriate workers are hired and documentation is available in all the relevant languages.

But when all is said and done, the aim is to meet government goals to assist settlement. There is nothing in all this to suggest connection with what goes on in classrooms. In fact, the settlement workers do not meet with children in elementary schools at all. That is not their role. Nor, one might suppose, could they involve themselves in anything that might resemble citizens' mobilization or community organizing.

This stands in stark contrast to the philosophy behind a long defunct program of the old Toronto Board of Education, the School Community Relations (SCR) department. There too, community contact workers were hired to facilitate interactions between incoming immigrant families and the school. This role did not extend to general settlement advice. There was quite enough to keep scores of them active in numerous schools, providing services like translation and organizational help to individual parents and at parent or community meetings held in schools. The big difference, however, was that SCR workers were hired centrally but then contracted to school communities. This changed their role entirely. The community had a major say in the kinds of events that SCR workers could help to organize and facilitate. SCR workers were not expected to take initiatives themselves, but their organizational and communications capacity enabled major mobilizations, so that the voices of the excluded newcomers could be heard amongst themselves and

then by the broader society. In my recollection, the great debates over the teaching of Heritage Languages in Toronto schools in which hundreds of deputations had their say at consultation meetings called by the old Toronto Board of Education would never have assumed the importance they did without the SCR department's help.

Naturally, there is only so much of this democratization that any traditional bureaucracy can bear, and when subsequent elections saw the balance of power shift to the right, SCR workers were made to report to school principals, their budget dwindled and they were eventually phased out.

The impact of such an experiment on school curricula was essentially political. Space was made available for subject matter and language programs that mattered to new communities seeking to establish themselves in a big city without sacrificing their identity. As each community made gains, others followed suit. Efforts to establish whole schools for language groups, such as the Armenians, though, were resisted. The goal was not to isolate newcomer communities but to carve out a space for them within a school system that still was meant to form citizens with a common experience of education.

In a school functioning as a community hub, settlement-related meetings would bring pupils and parents and teachers together, so that the kinds of exchanges there could overlap into classroom learning. Teachers would learn from communities and pupils could gradually assume the mediating role so many of them already take on informally.

In Toronto's Model Schools for priority neighbourhoods, the current coordinating principal Vicky Branco insists on taking newly-assigned teachers into the communities and having them become familiar with the diversity, the family dynamics and the daily routines of their future pupils' daily lives.[31] In the absence of local recruitment, this is a valuable beginning. An integrated settlement program in a community hub would find ways to incorporate an understanding of the various challenges faced by immigrant and refugee communities into classroom interactions. Again, there is ample room to dream of ways in which Rowan and Bigum's "Knowledge Producing Schools" would enlist the support of their pupils in the expansion of the school's knowledge and the community's understanding of issues and solutions of direct interest to them.

ADULT EDUCATION

Adult ESL class at Willow Park JPS Toronto

This is hardly the place to open a long discussion on adult education and the place that it can occupy within schools. It has long been understood that adult education is one of the mainstays of Community Schools and the after-hours use of school facilities. It was what the Mott program in Flint became famous for in its glory years.

Now there are some forms of adult education that provincial governments are readier to support than others: basic literacy education and high school courses for credit. Often these are provided in high schools for adults, and the students travel from far and wide to attend. The primary community in such schools is that of the students themselves.

Adult ESL education is much more complicated, since all levels of government are involved and programs are delivered in a variety of settings that include community centres and community colleges. The federal government has a settlement role to play, and this they do through the LINC (Language Instruction for Newcomers to Canada) program, which is strictly limited to landed immigrants in their first three years of residence. Classes are delivered in partnership with school boards and community colleges as well as immigrant and community organizations and agencies.

All other adults who need ESL instruction take programs funded by the province, often delivered by instructors hired and supervised by Boards of Education in their schools at night. Day classes may be taught in the facilities owned by partnering agencies or in spare classrooms located within elementary schools. The latter may include parents of schoolchildren who are elsewhere in the building. Equally, such parents may include registered volunteers in the kitchen or elsewhere in the school. Such programs may also overlap with daycare, family services and parenting programs in a school hub.

But the kind of adult education that brings communities together are the General Interest classes. And these are the ones that are in greatest jeopardy from neo-liberal tightfistedness.

I still recall my one and only experience with a woodwork class 40 years ago. I was a true beginner and needed careful supervision when I used hand tools to saw and plane pieces of mahogany for a sewing stool – not the best choice of wood for a beginner, I discovered. But what impressed me about the class was the atmosphere of general camaraderie. Many of the people in the class had known each other for years. Coming to the class wasn't about seat-time and lectures. It was a chance to use a workshop and tools they didn't have at home and meet neighbours all getting down to something useful and rewarding together. A group of women, whose regular job was cleaning offices, got to work making sideboards and wardrobes as Christmas presents for their in-laws. The school really mattered to them. It extended their community time, got them out of the house, let them catch up on neighbourhood news, swap snapshots, feel good. The instructor was primarily a troubleshooter and a specialist in tips of the trade. The fees were affordable and there were class discounts at local lumber stores. Nowadays, a woodworking course of eight weeks can set you back $150 or so (half that if you're a senior and $10 with a Social Assistance certificate). Not too steep, but out of reach for the working poor. More disturbing is that General Interest courses are seen as the frills for Continuing Education. They are not the serious part of the program – the one that gets you marks, a graduating certificate, a recognition that you have crossed important hurdles, and the one that gets the Board provincial funding.

At first glance, the current TDSB swath of continuing education courses looks bewilderingly varied, from wedding cakes to birdwatch-

ing, from gliding to something called full body boot camp, from Bollywood dancing to Chinese singing for seniors. It's like a community extension of cable TV. But it doesn't take long to realize that it's almost all practical crafts, fitness and self-improvement, performance skills, and language learning. Intellectual engagement is fairly thin on the ground. Perhaps Oprah and home-based book clubs have knocked literature courses off the agenda, but whatever happened to local history, global politics, cultural identities, classes in which real struggles with ideas stretched minds and connected learning with an understanding of the real world?

Of course, we all know that this kind of adult education, bringing reflection, debate and intellectual action happens all over the place: in union halls, community centres, prisons, hospitals, factories, libraries, museums and churches. The list is endless. But wouldn't it be good if schools as community hubs included this kind of community knowledge exchange, and not just to react to architects' drawings of a new development or a city counsellor's consultation on a new transit line? It could be an opportunity to spend time on the significance of food security, social enterprise, evolution, disability, trade unionism, biodiversity, jazz appreciation, information technologies, the sense of smell, the meaning of life.

In this context, I recall my experience working with a group of academics who wanted to bring university level discussions to people living in a large downtown public housing complex. We discussed with the locals the sorts of things they might want to hear about and discuss in person. To be sure, some were interested in discussions about how to start your own business and computing. But the first two series were devoted to a multi-disciplinary approach first to food and then to clothing. A different speaker each week, complete with readings assigned ahead, brought a specific perspective through anthropology, sociology, history, comparative religion, gender studies, materials science, chemistry. The school room where we met was full. Translators were on hand for the Bangla and Vietnamese speakers. Interest ran high. But the surprise came later, when we discovered that one of the most popular series turned out to be philosophy.

I do recognize that this range of questions regularly emerges in the world of public radio and TV. They are debated by invited panels of

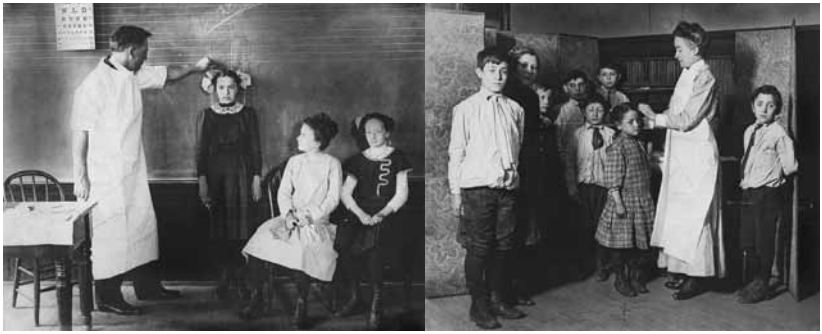
speakers, sometime in front of a studio audience. Sometimes an extended interview allows a public intellectual to expound her ideas. But these are vicariously experienced discussions, an opportunity to see what lively and informed discussion looks and sounds like when you can't be there, the live performance of something we might otherwise get from a good book. So public broadcasters now use a variety of feedback mechanisms (phone-ins, voice-mails, e-mails, tweets, blogs and facebook) to stimulate or simulate conversation. All of this, however, effectively individualizes discussion. Comments become zingers, inquiries or short anecdotes. The discussion is inevitably kaleidoscopic. And the choice of what gets heard or read by the public is controlled by a distant presence.

It is difficult to imagine such things ever amounting to the mobilization of a community, the development of a neighbourhood's consciousness, or the human warmth of personal contact. When I have lived in small towns and villages, I have found over and over again that groups of people formed and gelled around such collective occasions, expanding to incorporate newcomers, constantly in flux, but also constantly aware of shared experiences strengthening community. In Mediterranean villages, the discussion could get pretty heated as the intensity of opinion and feeling ebbed and flowed. It took a while for me to get used to this from inside my own Anglo-Saxon *sangfroid*. Such discussions, often begun in school halls, always ended with "who's got time for a drink?" and the hottest of adversaries would repair to the bar happily, either to resume their debate or to talk over the upcoming community festival or soccer tournament.

It is a shame if a school as a community hub cannot provide fitness activities for the ageing brain, to match their emphasis on physical health and fitness.

HEALTH SERVICES: SCREENING AND PREVENTION

The emphasis on a public health role for schools is central to the Full-Service Schools movement. This is not new as Joy Dryfoos makes clear in Chapter Two of the movement's bible.[32] Settlement movements at the beginning of the 20th century responded to the concern over epidemics, poor hygiene, dental decay, mental health and untended medical condi-



Scenes in a school clinic, somewhere in Ontario, ca 1905

tions in the overcrowded poor neighbourhoods of the inner cities with a variety of measures from trained nurses visiting homes to school-based screenings and examinations. In Canada, the Victoria Order of Nurses and school-based health nurses took their place in the health services menu at this time. Following extensive pressure from Medical Associations in favour of private physician services, medical services had been removed from schools by the 1920s. And then they came and went as epidemics and depressions came and went throughout the 20th century. And now, renewed public anxieties over child poverty and impending pandemics have forced preventive medicine back on the public agenda and the Full-Service Schools concept has surfaced to provide it with a rationale and a framework.

Perhaps the ups and downs of the recent fight to keep public health and public education together are best illustrated by the story of the Saskatchewan Health Dental Plan (SHDP). It came into effect in August 1974 and included provision for school-based dental clinics staffed by qualified dental nurses and dental assistants. They were indirectly supervised by dentists also working within the plan, and did everything from examinations, x-rays, and preventive services to fillings, extractions, crowns, and space maintainers. It was phased in until all children from three to 15 were covered. Then, in June 1987, the Progressive Conservative government of Grant Divine, elected a year earlier, privatized the SHDP, and a new Children's Dental Plan (CDP) covered the cost of basic dental services for children in dental offices[33]. All was not lost, however, as five of the 11 health regions retained a scaled-down version school-based dental screening. In Saskatoon, for example, chil-

Dental exam in an elementary school, Hamilton, Ont. [ca. 1930]

dren adjudged at risk in selected grades are given dental screenings every five years, and they are referred to dentists for treatment where it is called for. Oral health teaching kits are also made available to school staff, so there is some effort to connect the health service with the classroom, but only as an extension of the preventive program.

We referred earlier to a revived screening of children's vision and hearing in priority neighbourhoods of the Toronto District School Board in 2007, this time with Wal-Mart Vision donating the optometrists and glasses.[34]

Such services, as they are described in the literature, seem designed mainly to mitigate impediments to effective learning, with little or no impact on regular classroom work or on community development. They are amply and sufficiently justified as medical interventions, but they reduce the community school to a multi-use site with co-located parallel services. The question is: Do we need to accept this reduction and see the school, in this context, as simply an efficient vehicle for providing designated health consumers with what they need, "a Walmart [*sic*] of human service delivery" as one Tennessee professor approvingly called it?[35] There is no question that this is a useful service, particularly in communities that are unaware of the value of such preventive programs or

too engaged in subsistence work to find the time and energy to use them. It's a good thing if public education and public health initiatives can provide a good health curriculum, thoughtful parenting programs, and available health delivery experts. But the bigger question is: How do you build a lifelong commitment to and pride in healthy living? How would Rowan and Bigum's "Knowledge Producing Schools" do it?

Enter El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice. In 1994, I visited the small alternative public high school called El Puente in Brooklyn, N.Y. It had opened a year earlier as part of a school renewal program by the New York City Board of Education (as it was then called) in one of the poorest, most gang-ridden neighbourhoods of the county, with the highest teen homicide rate and the lowest voting rate of any congressional district. The goal was to pioneer new community-school relationships. In its first year, the two physician-teachers who started it had organized a measles vaccination program as a whole-school project, in which all the elements from human biology to effective neighbourhood communications were studied across the curriculum. When the whole thing was rolled out, it was a huge success, reaching families on a scale never before realized and previously considered unattainable by the local hospitals.[36] The participating students learnt a great deal about public health that they would never forget and the whole neighbourhood gained confidence in the ability of public education to make tangible changes for the better in their lives.

Closer to home is a program connecting a preventive health program to youth culture, the sort of thing that should be second nature in schools as community hubs. I got to know it during my years as Principal of New College at the University of Toronto, which houses the Women and Gender Studies Institute and the research team supporting this initiative. It is called Gendering Adolescent AIDS Prevention (GAAP), headed by June Larkin, and it works on "participatory approaches to working with young people in relation to sexuality, HIV prevention and AIDS awareness." Using young people's interests in visual and performing arts, and working with other groups in Toronto, Montreal, and South Africa, it enables young people to take control of their own disease prevention and awareness campaigns. Among its innovative techniques are such empowering strategies as photovoice and performed ethnography.[37]

This is not to say that each school should engage independently in its own immunization campaigns. But school-wide projects, health across

the curriculum rituals even, drawing in neighbourhood teens, adults, seniors, connecting with local cultural knowledge and the inventiveness of local youth culture, these are the things that can take medical interventions in schools and work them into community empowerment. The hub is then working reciprocally.

FITNESS AND RECREATION

An example of a vita parcours station on a parkland trail in Switzerland

Everyone is familiar with the wide range of fitness, sports and recreational programs that are run on school premises by community associations as well as through continuing education departments. As public money shrinks, the pressure builds to impose user fees to offset part or all of the direct operating costs (supplies, metered utilities, on-site staff) and eventually to cover a portion of what is calculated by way of overhead costs (school board administrative departments such as payroll, accounts and purchasing, program offices, etc.). In other words, the community benefit of these public installations and their operation is funded not from the broader community through taxes, but directly from those with enough money to pay[38]. Use diminishes and the diversity of use diminishes even further. At a time when the focus is on community development, such stratagems have the reverse effect.

The case is particularly acute these days in Toronto where indoor pools located in schools are consistently threatened and, at the same time, con-

sistently supported by vigorous community resistance to cutting pools. It is the right and duty of every citizen to be able to swim, and therefore to have maximum access to the opportunities to do so, at all ages. It is also fun for people of all ages to engage in water athletics and sports. Fitness activities for many, the disabled and the elderly, for examples, may only be feasible or health-enhancing if performed in water. And so, appropriately managed, pools in public facilities located in neighbourhoods are an essential feature of equitable and inclusive community development.

Once it is understood that such facilities and programs can benefit the surrounding community, the question is how this may be cycled back into the school curriculum. This is not simply a question of including fitness and physical education in the schedule, although that is naturally important. It goes beyond embedding an understanding of the relationship of personal health and community development in natural science and social studies. It means connecting potentially hypothetical and disembodied areas of the curriculum to the real, observable and immediate daily lives of pupils and their neighbours. Literacy and mathematics programs do not need to invent complex abstract data for pupils to manipulate. Pupils can maintain inventories of the opportunities for fitness and recreational activities in their neighbourhood parks and community centres. In Toronto, for example, the absence or sorry state of a Vita Parcours installation[39] could be documented, remedies proposed, and a public campaign launched to win public opinion and media attention. Jogging routes in the neighbourhood with exercise stations could be planned out, measured, and a grid provided that shows how many calories would be used up by different population groups at each point along the way. The resultant information could be made available to interested community members.

COMMUNITY GARDENS

The idea of incorporating a knowledge of gardening into the school curriculum and on the school site may be traced back to agricultural education in schools almost one hundred years ago. The Federal Government's Agricultural Instruction Act of 1913 provided funding, topped up with grants from the Ontario Ministry of Education, for the study of agriculture in schools. This was not to be limited to book knowledge, but to

Children working in school garden, Bridgenorth Elementary, Peterborough County, [ca. 1920]

involve "observation and experience through practice." School gardens were one such expedient, giving an "opportunity for practical experience," improving the "appearance of the school grounds," and giving the pupils "a sense of accomplishment and pride in their hard work." In some communities, the schools mounted their own agricultural fairs, in which the pupils made presentations of interest to all, thus involving "the whole community and not just the students and teachers." One such school in Ontario was at Bridgenorth near Peterborough. [38]

Boys giving a presentation on warble flies, Bridgenorth School Fair, September 26, 1939

Some of the most successful recent initiatives linking communities and schools in projects that enhance both learning and neighbourhood have come from the urban community gardens movement. Health and community well-being correlate with food, its production, its preparation and its consumption. Increasingly, schools are re-discovering the virtues of community kitchens and gardens that their rural counterparts had long understood. Vegetables are grown in learning gardens or on intensive roof gardens. The produce is harvested by the school caretaker (on the roof, for example) or by pupils and their teacher or in conjunction with community volunteers. Elise Houghton has given some splendid examples of this movement at work in Toronto (see Part II), both in school-based initiatives reaching out and in community-based initiatives reaching in.[41]

COMMUNITY KITCHENS

Community kitchens in cities have long been a feature of settlement work in the great nineteenth-century tradition, and many still operate in church basements and Salvation Army Halls, providing food for the homeless and destitute with the help of volunteers. They are charitable works not to be denigrated in a society where so many subscribe to the principle that, since the poor will always be with us, there is no need for any redistribution of wealth or income.

For a community kitchen located in a school, however, we are entitled to expect more than charity. Some of the Toronto District School Board's Model Schools located in priority neighbourhoods are beginning that process. Their first use may be to prepare and serve breakfasts, snacks and hot lunches for children who may otherwise arrive in class hungry. In some cases, a class can use it for cooking lessons. In other cases, community members make use of a staff kitchen in the day and permits are issued for evening use. It may be that the kitchens are used simply to prepare food when it is needed. But I like to think that the opportunity to learn in kitchens, whether in formally scheduled classes or more informally as an evening volunteer, goes beyond the important considerations of nutrition and socially responsible food choices and goes beyond the know-how of food preparation and transformation in order to realize two equally important goals.

Community worker, kitchen staff and pupils work and learn together in National Tasting Week in France

The first is the notion of community exchange. People cooking together introduce each other to their diverse techniques and food lore from within their family traditions, but also as an expression of their regional or ethnocultural identities. Out of such encounters strong communities are formed and sustained.

The second has to do with what I call, perhaps rather too grandly, the joy of alchemy and the beauty of taste. Any child who has never had the experience of making a mayonnaise, beating eggs for a meringue, roasting and mixing spices to flavour a curry, has not felt the full magic of transforming food before their very eyes or noses in order to make a treat to taste. And nobody preparing nutritious, healthily prepared food should ever be content with the sense that the body will objectively benefit from eating it. Enjoyment is a vital feature of all eating, the time to eat it in good company, and to savour its finer points in all simplicity and sincerity.

If schools do not help students associate pleasure with the preparation and consumption of food, then pleasure is left in the hands of the promoters of processed meals and fast food chains. Preparation is reduced to popping a packaged product into a household appliance. Pleasure is yoked to mass-produced foods that rely on the addictive appeal of fats, salt and sugar to capture clientele and induce product loyalty.

Scenes from National Tasting Week in France, 2008

This is something the French have understood for a long time. In recent years they have been finding ways to extend the insights of what were once the prerogatives of the rich and powerful to the population at large. Taste education was formally included in the French national elementary curriculum in 1974. This initiative expanded to become a feature of national heritage education in schools in 2000. It was part of an effort to preserve French culinary traditions from the encroachments of multi-national fast food chains in the eating preferences of the young. This school-based initiative reached out to neighbourhoods and communities of schools with the creation of National Tasting Week every October in 1992.[42] Schools and communities work together to learn, revive and celebrate regional and national traditions in the production, preparation and consumption of food. Anyone lucky enough to have been in a small village on the Saturday night of National Tasting Week – seeing tables everyone has brought out on to the main street, enriched with their own family's version of the great produce and dishes of their region for all to enjoy – will never forget it.

CULTURAL LIFE: THE ARTS AND HISTORY

Schools can and do play a positive role in the cultural life of their surrounding communities. Local visiting artists or artists-in-residence work with teachers and children in the creation of public art of high quality within and around the school, taking it out to other public places for exhibition.

I would add to this role and recommend that all students be encouraged to be attentive to their built environment and the crafting of landscape and the natural world. For such projects to be integrated

Two public mosaics by Toronto schoolchildren

into the life of the neighbourhood, students can produce inventories of publicly visible arts and crafts in their area, not just official installations like war memorials and commemorative sculptures, not just commercial ones such as commissioned murals and shop window displays, but less official ones: graffiti, front garden decorations, Christmas lights. Students can periodically design, write up and publish guides to such sights and post them on the web, on various forms of social media, or on publicly visible screens like those in subway stations. Little booklets might be made available at publicly placed stations alongside the screens, serving as an alternative to the advertisements for commercial establishments (restaurants, hotels, theatres) that are the standard fare of stands at libraries and around tourist attractions.

Schools can and do not only act as the site for their own productions of drama, dance, concerts, recitals, musicals and operas, but also can and do host those mounted by community associations and groups. In doing this, they need not stay close to the tried and true repertoires, but try out fresh material or revive forgotten gems. I lived for a year in Paris, and regularly went to schools to attend productions – often of a high standard – of forgotten minor works by celebrated dramatists or composers, works too small to attract professional productions. Schools often allowed musicians to rehearse future public performances on their sites before a school community audience for free or PWYC. Since the local community is the core audience and there is no need to appeal to a mass audience, risks can be taken. Community-written productions can be tried out. The community derives its enjoyment from participation in the production as well as attendance at a performance of the fin-

Toronto Opera Repertoire performing The Marriage of Figaro in a Toronto school

ished article. The school then works with the community in a process of shared cultural discovery and self-expression.

Célestin Freinet, the French founder of co-operative learning, taught in one- and two-room elementary schools in rural southern France in the 1920s and 1930s and founded a pedagogical movement that is still alive today in many parts of the world. Fridays were a special day. Not only would the school meet to review their accomplishments, disappointments, the things they wanted to celebrate and the things they wanted to put right, but it would be the day when the children would set up the latest exhibits for their school museum, a museum stocked, researched and curated by the pupils themselves. It could be a display of art or literature of their own making, but equally it could be items of local history, reflections of the community, archival and family photographs, artifacts and narratives, oral or written. And the public was invited in to visit.

As the hub for a community, the school has its own history, names, architecture, geometry and ecosystem. So does every street and building in the neighbourhood. The possibilities for observation, investigation, calculation, discussing and writing are endless. Schools regularly make full use of those opportunities to enrich their pupils' learning. But such efforts need not rest inside the school with their audience restricted to one teacher, or one class, or in rare cases the whole school. Such knowledge can be mapped on to the community in the form of themed walks, or guides to add to those mentioned above for publicly visible art and artifacts. We are living in a time when attentive, urban rambling is on the rise. The popular Jane's walks on the first days of May have mushroomed from their beginnings in Toronto in 2007 to the point at which, in 2010, there were 120 planned for Toronto and another 294 scattered

across 68 cities worldwide. They are a significant expression of local interest and delight in neighbourhood surroundings and identities. Increasingly, the racks of commercially produced and marketed guides to cities and towns are brimming with walking guides to the best and most famous of their sights to see. What schools and their communities can do is stimulate this interest among themselves about their very own areas, especially if these areas are not on the radar of the tourist information centres. Knowledge about one's own neighbourhood is an important step towards an appreciation of both what it is and what it can become. It is another key to community development and school hubs can do this.[43]

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY AND GREEN ENERGY

Chad Cowan powering an alternator at Abbotsford MIddle School, BC

I could not end this section without a mention of the critical importance of environmentally sensitive and sustainable action as a feature of schools functioning as genuine hubs in their communities. A detailed description of the underlying principles and priorities at work and some

inspirational examples are contained within Elise Houghton's article that closes this book. The growing interest in Eco-schools in Toronto or Green Schools in Australia – schools that motivate, implement and maintain environmentally responsible waste reduction and management, fall leaves collection and snow clearance – can incorporate an understanding of these processes and their impact into their daily curriculum as well as their practice. There are schools that dedicate themselves to promoting cleaner forms of transportation, building and installing their own bike racks, including bicycle safety in the curriculum, setting and monitoring targets for diminished car use by their staff. But the school becomes a fully realized hub when it interacts with its neighbourhood to have the same beneficial effects there too.

Green energy hubs are increasingly being considered for school sites, whether in the form of solar panels on their vast flat roofs, ground source energy under their extensive grounds or even various forms of wind power. But once again a green energy hub can only be part of a school-community hub if it becomes a vehicle for regular learning in the school and a perceivable benefit to the surrounding neighbourhood. Abbotsford Middle School in B.C. is exemplary in its incorporation of alternate energy into the curriculum.[44] The community benefit can occur when excess electrical generation is sold for a local community co-op that co-finances the capital costs. Savings on the cost of utilities can enhance school sites for the use and benefit of both the school population and the neighbourhood. Boards responding to neo-liberal reflexes are tempted to take rent for the use of their roofs by private companies that make their profit from selling off excess production with scant reference to the interests of either the school or the neighbourhood. This process should be nipped in the bud.

Like the struggle for nutritious food, public health, fitness centres and recreational opportunities, the effort to develop environmentally responsible initiatives such as green energy faces tough times during the neo-liberal ascendancy. The market fundamentalists insist that free enterprise motivated by profit is the only effective development tool for such initiatives, and that the role of public institutions and government should be reduced to a minimum. Corporate profits are also bound up in alternatives to responsible public education such as fast food, pharmaceutical treatments, professional sports, recreational franchises, urban devel-

opment and private education. At the same time, schools and their buildings sitting on prime development land represent another target for corporate profit-making. Schools as genuine community hubs will be one more bone of contention on the road to making a fast buck.

The school as a community hub offers the prospect of a New Commons kind of mentality. It gives form to the assertion that we have a collective existence, a common interest in public spaces and facilities and all the activities and services that can involve us there. We need to see this expanded mandate of our schools grow, reaching out to and involving all of us in the learning of our future citizens, and involving those future citizens as today's citizens in partnership with us, participating in the improvement and growth of our neighbourhoods and communities. The more people benefit from this public expansion, the more people will feel the benefits of a public education system for themselves, one that is worth paying taxes to support, one that is an alternative to the individualism and profiteering of the neo-liberal ascendancy.

Much of what is mentioned above has arisen from a combination of efforts by public bodies and local communities. But there are barriers that put the long-term prospects of these ideas at risk. For schools as community hubs to grow and spread, we need to overcome those obstacles. And we shall need new sources of sustainable public funding and new decision-making structures. That is the focus of the last section of this part of the book.

IV

WHO'S IN CHARGE AND WHO'S PAYING?

What the previous section has tried to demonstrate is that the possibilities opened up by Full-Service Schools, the provision of non-academic services in support of children and their families on school sites, are considerably greater than those of planned co-location. The opportunity is there to breach all kinds of boundaries that separate

- the role of teachers and the role of pupils in learning
- the transmission of knowledge and the creation of knowledge
- the work of teachers and the work of education workers

- the place of school and the place of community in education
- academic services and non-academic services for children and families
- school board and school community
- local government of education and local municipal government
- the role of local government and the role of central government

Standing in the way of this integration through co-operative public enterprise are two formidable forces.

One is typified by the inertial tendencies of institutional structures, the so-called silos that work in relative isolation from one another. They operate in vertical hierarchies, rewarding performance by vertical mobility, subordinating personal values to rational codes of behaviour, dividing labour for the sake of efficiency, getting the job done. In other words, they are Max Weber's iron cage incarnate. Thanks to them, the world of detailed expectations and statistical process control have taken hold in the heart of the most personal value-laden collective enterprise – the preparation of young people to find fulfilment in society as fully engaged citizens.

The other is typified by the neo-liberal ascendancy that we have referred to throughout this study. Thanks to this, individualism and private enterprise have been making deep inroads into the democratic aspirations embodied in public service for the public good. The impersonal rationalizations of the iron cage are put to work for the pursuit of economic gain and the preparation of a workforce rather than a citizenry. Public assets are sold off, public services are privatized, public funding of public institutions is stripped away. And at every turn, when the urge is felt to connect schools with their local neighbourhoods – to extend the range of services to meet the needs and aspirations of those communities – the iron cage and the private profit imperative combine to resist.

So if there is public support for the new visions of community schools as hubs, it is by implication support for a return to the human warmth of personal contacts, collaboration, reaching across fences, through doorways, round corners. And it particularly implies support for the inclusion and empowerment of the marginal, excluded members of our society, those not on the bureaucratic or corporate ladders to success, so that they

have the time and space and tools to live fulfilling lives and to challenge entrenched wealth and power in the name of a public good.

Conflicting messages on Toronto District School Board schools

So how can schools as community hubs work if the structures they find themselves in are imbued with values that seem to work against them?

How, for example, can we reconcile two juxtaposed slides in a presentation titled "Vision of Hope" by Toronto District School Board Director Chris Spence, one declaring support for Full Service schools, the other announcing the launch of "eight ARCs [Accommodation Review Committeess] impacting 35 schools"?[45] First he opens the door to schools as community hubs, and then, in the next breath, he initiates a process motivated by provincial cutbacks to reduce the space in which such hubs might operate by closing schools (with the eventual goal of leasing or selling their sites)?

The answer can only come from a rethinking of the governance and financing of our public school facilities. The details of what follows are tentative and provisional. But the principles behind them are not.

We need governance structures that go as far as we can imagine towards breaking down institutional barriers and silos, and we need to find a new balance between central authority and local community decision-making that tilts power more towards the latter.

We need new sources of funding that reflect these shifts of power and structure. More of the taxation in support of local community assets for local community use must come from local decision-making and local taxpayers.

RETHINKING GOVERNANCE: THE SCHOOL COMMUNITY COUNCIL

If school-based councils are going to be involved, indeed to acquire the initiative in planning the transformation of schools into the two-way community hubs that we are advocating, their membership and mandate will have to reflect a genuine community focus – one that can formulate the needs and the strengths of neighbourhood communities for the purposes of building those relationships.

They will need to become genuine school-community councils. Their role must not be limited to that of sounding boards for central initiatives or organizing committees for volunteer assistance and fund-raising. Their role must be significant and real in determining the changing educational needs and priorities of communities and neighbourhoods and the place of buildings and grounds that respond to these needs. Not only parents but other members of the community have an important role to play. By going beyond the parent body, the structure must recognize members of partnering agencies in the extended services regime as well as the importance of neighbours whose multiple possible connections with the school can now be valued and recognized.

We cannot, however, let these new powers detract from the educational focus of the schools. The learning environment must always be always be front and centre in whatever changes are proposed; it must be enhanced by every community initiative, by every added use or service – not indirectly as by-product or secondary effect, but directly by interaction.

The logic of the "Knowledge-Producing Schools" that Rowan and Bigum are promoting is one important key in maintaining this educational focus. These schools – acting as community hubs – require not only teachers but also pupils to play an important role. At present, pupil involvement in school decision-making tends to remain at the consultation level and to be regarded with reservations by many in Canadian society. This has to change. In France, for example, all school councils and all class councils have elected pupil representation by law from Grade 6 up. Indeed, schools that subscribe to Célestin Freinet's cooperative pedagogy find a role in the organization of school life for pupils of every age. In one small town that I got to know in southern France, the middle-school principal told me that he found that the pupil

members of his school council often provided a perspective on the impact of changes in the community on young people that he didn't get from anyone else. If pupils are going to be understood as partners in their learning and producers as well as learners of really useful knowledge, they need to be acknowledged as decision-making partners also.

Unsurprisingly, the provincial government is not sympathetic to such democratic enhancement of local power. Its most recent contribution to school-community decision-making processes has been the Accommodation Review Committees (ARCs) that include representatives of a number of adjacent schools experiencing a significant decline in enrolment. These representatives are there only for consultation; they have no real power. By now in 2010, the formation of an ARC is generally understood as advance notice of school consolidations and the eventual closing of one or even two local schools. In the ARC process, every effort is made by school officials to gild the lily by promising refits and curricular projects in the remaining schools. The process is deeply destructive of the morale of each of the communities affected, and particularly so if any of them were already considering the possibility of developing new school-community hub initiatives themselves. Indeed, the limits placed on the ARC process have tended to exclude such considerations, even if some bold ARCs have ignored such limits, brought up the hubs alternative, and fought against school closures. How much easier it would be to use ARCs to convert some of the school space to the kinds of services and activities we have been talking about. Better still, in place of ARCs in selected schools, all school communities could engage in a regular review of their facilities and the opportunities for hub development in space opened up by reduced enrolment. That is not, of course, what is happening right now. We are currently facing a major increase in school closings and their leasing or sale on the open market (after preliminary offers to other branches of government have been turned down). All of this is moving us further in the direction of privatization and increased inequality. As of this writing, the Toronto District School Board was leasing former public schools to no fewer than 17 private fee-paying schools, many of which regulate admission by tests and interviews to assess the suitability of a pupil's promise of "success." Some of these private

schools only came into being when the opportunity to rent a ready-made public school came up.

The only solid alternative to assaults like this on our neighbourhood schools will come through revitalized school community schools with real decision-making powers and a budget, facilitated by an expanded membership and an expanded mandate.

But, local community school-based planning will not be enough, because the financial resources are not readily available in many communities. Indeed, hubs stand to benefit most the communities with the fewest resources already in place. These are communities, that experience the greatest gap between the official school curriculum and their members and the greatest alienation among students and teachers – and where there is the greatest social and cultural gulf between school staff and the neighbourhood. And since those communities are often the poorest, there are fewer chances of finding community support for an enriched curriculum other than through private philanthropy or commercial incursions.

RETHINKING GOVERNANCE: THE SCHOOL FACILITIES JOINT BOARD

Currently the resources necessary for schools to thrive as community hubs in Ontario are in short supply. School boards have no say over the level of provincial grants that are transferred to them or the property taxes that are levied on their behalf by the province. Moreover, the province insists that capital improvements to public schools must come from the sale of surplus property, using a formula that disadvantages the old schools that often serve poor communities.

However, a cursory glance at the kinds of partnerships that school boards need for hub growth makes it clear that the NGOs and co-operatives of civil society are only a part of the picture. Major partners can also be found in the departments or arms-length branches of municipal government. And the good news is that municipal governments have control of a residential property tax base. As a result, all the public proponents of school-community hubs mention the need to develop working partnerships between school boards and municipalities, but without saying what form they could take.

One helpful point of departure is the realization that in many European countries the construction and management of school buildings and grounds have been the business of municipal governments. Schools are often seen as an integral part of local public space or infrastructure, though not always with the best educational intentions. In England and Wales, school boards were replaced by local education authorities under municipal control as long ago as 1902. In France, in the 1960s, a highly centralized state system devolved responsibility for school facilities in a three-tiered school system to a three-tiered system of local and regional government. And more recently, in some of the restructuring democracies of central Europe (Hungary, Poland, Czech Republic), a similar devolution of responsibilities for schools to various forms of local government is occurring, while responsibility for curriculum and teachers is firmly rooted in the national government.[46] Sad to say, there are moves underway to undermine and remove elected local municipal governments from this role in England and Wales,[47] and under the neo-liberal presidency of Nicolas Sarkozy in France. In retrospect, the destruction of school boards in some of these countries has weakened their communities' capacity to stand up for local engagement in education once school board power was transferred to municipal politicians. But the engagement of municipal government remains important.

We want to hold on to our school boards – indeed, we want to strengthen them in their capacity to deliver good public education – while at the same time we want to encourage greater participation of municipal government in caring for the youth in their jurisdictions and in strengthening their partnership with local school boards. It is this participation and partnership we hope will emerge in a restructuring of governance and finance to develop school hubs.

It is important to recognize, however, that the massive cuts to public education and centralizing direction in the UK and some other Western European governments[48] is matched by Canadian provincial governments. The Conservative government of Mike Harris in Ontario, for example, vastly increased the power of the Ministry of Education at the expense of democratic local government. It was done by further amalgamation of school boards, thereby increasing the power of board bureaucracies, and by linking them more securely to the Ministry, thereby further reducing the power of elected school trustees. It did not stop

there. Local board power was reduced by the imposition of detailed curriculum regulations, by ending the taxation powers of school boards, and by adding restrictions on commercial property taxation. These directions are now being reinforced by McGuinty's Liberal government as it moves to restrict even further the decision-making powers and political freedoms of school boards and their trustees. Yet the same government has declared its commitment to the school-community hub concept and has said that this commitment will require local government reform. Whether this happens or not, is anybody's guess. In the light of the above, I am guessing not.

The simple solution to funding school-community hubs would appear to be a reversal of the Harris reforms – bringing us back to the level of provincial funding in 1991 and to the discretionary taxation powers accorded to school boards. We would not recommend, however, an end to the system of province-wide bargaining for salaries, benefits and pensions for teachers and education workers. We do acknowledge the useful role that the Province can play in maintaining an equitable funding relationship among school boards, with formulae that recognize the special costs and challenges of operating schools in remote northern and rural communities, or in the rapidly changing demographics of urban centres with growing poverty and large immigrant populations. But everything we know and can imagine for schools as community hubs, and the facilities that will host them, suggests that the funding and governance for them must be devolved.

What we propose then is a mechanism that recognizes that hubs are not logically the sole responsibility of the multiple school boards layered over every community. The municipality must be involved in a partnership that draws distinct communities together. Pupils may leave their homes for different schools (Public, Catholic, French and English) within a community, but they live together within the same municipality. They and their families have the right to access services together. If it can be said that not all the extraneous services need to be offered in all schools at the same time, and if municipalities want a role to play in planning the distribution of the services and the access to public space under its jurisdiction, then all must meet and work together. And if communities and schools are going to interact more fully for their mutual benefit, public officials and representatives have

to step out of the iron cage they have been constructing over all these years.

The proposal here is for the formation of a School Facilities Joint Board (SFJB). This is an embryonic proposal. It will need a public debate and full participation by all interested parties in order to emerge in practical form. Briefly it goes like this.

Responsibilities of the SFJB

Under this scheme, a first tier of decision-making responsibility in a given municipality for the maintenance of all school board properties, capital improvements and new construction would pass to a joint board consisting of representatives from public and Catholic boards (English and French) on the one hand, and from the municipality on the other. Within that mandate, then, responsibility for the long-term planning and development of school community hubs would fall to the SFJB.

Composition and voting powers of the SFJB

To maintain this as an arm of local government, rather than at arm's length, we recommend that representation consist of delegated elected trustees and councillors from school boards and municipality respectively.

To provide a symbolic and real reflection of the educational focus and priorities of schools as community hubs, there would need to be more trustee members from each of the boards than municipal councillors.

The school facilities would still belong to their respective school boards for the same reason. Municipality-wide policy decisions would be voted on by all board members, while decisions affecting only a school or schools owned by one board only would require trustee voting to be limited to the trustees from that board. Municipal councillors would need to be in a minority here too. Arguably, school boards would retain veto or referral rights with respect to the use of their own buildings, although considerable thought would need to be given to what limits could be placed on those rights, consistent with the constitutional rights of Catholic and minority language boards under the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

Obviously, this works best where the boundaries of both school boards and a municipality are the same. In many parts of the Province, for example, French-language school boards (both public and Catholic) serve widely dispersed small francophone populations and their boundaries are by no means coterminous with those of other forms of local government. Nor are coterminous Public-Catholic boundaries the rule through much of the province. The SFJB may work best in big cities, but the principle of institutionally sanctioned joint management must be the guiding principle for other models more suitable to rural areas or for the inclusion of French schools and boards.

Where would the money come from?

That portion of all provincial grants to affected school boards for the maintenance and capital construction of schools would be transferred to the SFJBs, although only after they have been adjusted upwards to meet the real costs of a phased plan to clear the massive backlog of deferred maintenance.

That portion of all provincial grants to affected school boards for what is now called the Community Use of Schools would also be transferred to the SFJBs, although it should be enriched by grants from interlocking ministries that support the kinds of programs that can be accommodated in school hubs. The list of ministries is long. I remember working on a long lost educational reform bill in the Ministry of Education when the ill-fated NDP government under Bob Rae was in power. Anyone who has filled in a proposal for new legislation to take to Cabinet will know that one page contains a checklist of all the interlocking ministries that must be consulted for input before the proposal is brought to Treasury to be shot down. For our reform proposal every checkbox was ticked. So the following list of ministries that could be involved in the delivery or support of schools as community hubs is probably too short:

- The Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care
- The Ministry of Health Promotion
- The Ministry of Children and Youth Services
- The Ministry of Community and Social Services

- The Ministry of Citizenship and Immigration
- The Ministry of Culture
- The Ministry of Agriculture, Food and Rural Affairs
- The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
- The Ministry of the Environment

In addition to these sources of hub and facilities funding, the portion of property taxes that can be attributed to school facilities would also be transferred to municipalities for use by the SFJBs and the responsibility for assessing the amounts to be levied would also rest at the municipal level – taking their direction from the SFJB. Responsibility for community development and for deciding how much communities will pay as their share for its development should rest with communities through a democratically elected local government.

But not all municipal decisions will be made at the municipal level. A portion of the budget will have to be distributed to the local schools for use at the discretion of the local school community council in each case, following broad criteria established by the school board.

To conclude, in all of the forthcoming public debates about hub development, it is important to remember that we are working to ensure that public assets will be used for the public good. Public support for schools depends on the daily public perception of the value that schools bring to community members whatever their age, their family status, their class, race, gender, condition or ability. Hubs can deliver that, but only if the activities and services associated within them cycle into and out of the school curriculum and into and out of community enhancement. Models of funding and decision-making must make that possible.

The old barriers between school board departments, between public and Catholic school boards, between school boards and municipalities, and between provincial ministries must all be breached. That is why support for the hub concept must be clearly articulated at the highest levels of government.

At the same time, efforts to bridge the gaps between community and school have to be stepped up. New forms of local initiative and partnerships within civil society at the neighbourhood level must be strengthened and public funds must circulate openly and accountably at this level, too. Only then can we set out on the long road to overcome the depredations

of decades of neo-liberal market fundamentalism, in the name of a more just society and education for all in everybody's schools.

ENDNOTES

[1] The architects of Humberwood Centre were Moffat Kinoshita Associates and Russocki + Zawadski Architects. Both firms had experience in designing Catholic schools before, and the latter had designed an innovative multi-use facility four years earlier: Mary Ward Catholic Secondary School, one of the few schools of its time designed for and dedicated to self-directed learning. The site also co-located the L'Amoreaux Park North Community Centre and a childcare facility.

[2] *School Closings in Ontario. People for Education's report on accommodation reviews and school closings 2009*. Information retrieved on November 12, 2009 from http://www.peopleforeducation.com/schoolclosings2009.

[3] French readers might want to look at the research done on small schools, split grades, and family groupings in France. See the following two websites: http://pagesperso-orange.fr/ecole.et.territoire/and http://ecoledeproximite.lautre.net/index.htm.

[4] Doug Little's article can be read on the Education Action: Toronto website at http://educationactiontoronto.com/home/doug-little-on-rich-folks-education-choices and the Deborah Meier piece is at http://blogs.edweek.org/edweek/Bridging-Differences/2009/10/typos_questions_up_top_in.html.

[5] NTCS claims an enrolment of 300 (K-6) and its annual fees stand at $6,024 – information from Toronto District School Board, *Response to the Toronto Lands Commission*, June 2008 (Appendix 1, page xiii) and http://www.yorkland.on.ca/n-gen.htm. As this book went to press, the Toronto District School Board had decided to put the school site up for sale.

[6] The Prestige School posts a day enrolment of 140 from JK to Grade 12 and its annual fees run from $8,500 to $11,000. Information in *Globe and Mail*, *Our Kids Go to School. Canada's Private School Guide*, Toronto, 2009. The site also leases office space to the French Catholic School Board.

[7] This is recommended in Charles Pascal's report on integrated child and family services, *With Our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*, Toronto, Government of Ontario, 2009 (A report to the Premier from the Special Advisor on Early Learning), page 10. In Ontario's Peel Region District School Board, such centres are called Early Years Hubs and Readiness Centres (information retrieved Nov. 10, 2009 from http://www.peelschools.org/facts/readiness.htm).

[8] "As part of the Poverty Reduction Strategy, the government will invest $3 million in 2009-10 to establish community hubs in selected low-income neighbourhoods, which will bring together a range of partners and resources to identify and provide social, community and educational supports," the *Backgrounder to the Ontario Budget of 2009*, retrieved from http://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/budget/ontariobudgets/2009/bk_families.html on May 1, 2010.

[9] *The Roots of Youth Violence* (the Curling/McMurtry Report of 2008) recommends that the government "enhance or create local centres, often based in or around schools, in which opportunities and services for youth and their families can be maximized, and community cohesion fostered. They will provide space and services, but just as importantly, will also provide hubs in which communities can anchor ever-increasing amounts of local policy-making, priority-setting and program delivery." Schools need "to be open and accessible to serve as hubs and to provide space for youth and youth activities." Schools can play a key role "as community hubs, bringing together children, families, agencies and community organizations." "Settlement services need to be expanded and integrated into the community hubs." The report recommends "Creating community hubs, wherever possible anchored in school facilities, not only to provide programs and services, but just as importantly to provide space and to facilitate connections so that communities can coalesce to play increasingly larger roles in setting priorities, developing policies and providing activities and services for their residents." Retrieved Nov. 10, 2009 from http://www.rootsofyouthviolence.on.ca/english/reports/volume1.pdf.

[10] A readily accessible rundown of some of these was found in *People for Education: School Closings and Declining Enrolment in Ontario*, Toronto, 2009; retrieved Nov. 10, 2009 from http://www.peopleforeducation.com/schoolclosingreport/nov2009.

[11] Joy G. Dryfoos, *Full-Service Schools. A Revolution in Health and Social Services for Children, Youth, and Families*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1994.

[12] The rural school movement in Mexico, launched by Rafael Ramirez in 1922, the federal Director of Rural Schools, was conceived as an agency of social change in the poorest rural areas of the country through community schools, often jointly built by the poor people of the community themselves, and staffed with teachers often recruited locally and trained to acknowledge and incorporate the ways and crafts and culture and economy of their village people into their teaching. In exchange, they brought along their modern ideas on health, hygiene, immunization and nutrition to accompany their teaching of Spanish and ideas of social progress. They were admired by Dewey in 1926 and many other US visitors, even those who expressed reser-

vations about their clear "socialistic" orientation. In more recent years, it has been acknowledged that they achieved a measure of assimilation of the Indigenous populations that threatened their way of life, as more young Indigenous youth chose to abandon their own culture in favour of a more urban, modern, progressive one. The balancing of a priority to retain cultural identities and diversity with a progressive development model based on citizenship and really useful knowledge is still with us in today's Canada.

[13] Malak Zaalouk, *The Pedagogy of Empowerment. Community Schools as a Social Movement in Egypt* (American University in Cairo Press, 2004), in which he shows how decentralizing power to local communities has played a significant role both in community development but also, more specifically, in raising girls' attendance rates and in improving attitudes to girls' education.

[14] A recent endorsement of these schools comes from the Director of the Toronto District School Board, Chris Spence, in his policy paper *Full Service Schools*, Toronto, September 2009, accessible at http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/Director/docs/TD%20Full%20Service%20Schools%20-Sept%2017th.pdf. Much in that document is compatible with the vision put forward in this paper. I would have liked to see more emphasis on the integration of school curriculum and community development. Done right, it would provide an alternative form of accountability to test scores and a much richer set of experiences for qualitative evaluation. The TDSB documents have not yet really tackled the complex funding and governance issues that would need resolution for this approach to get off the ground on a large scale.

[15] *The Full-Service Community Schools Act of 2009* (S. 1655). It defines a full-service community school as one that "participates in a community-based effort to coordinate educational, developmental, family, health, and other comprehensive services through community-based organizations and public and private partnerships."

[16] Information retrieved from the TFSS website at http://www.studentsuccess.ca/sponsors.html.

[17] This is best known as Bill 82, an act to amend the Education Act of Ontario, rather than a separate piece of legislation. Many of the provisions of this legislation have been revisited with the gradual move to more inclusive placement, see the Ministry of Education's *Education for All: The Report of the Expert Panel on Literacy and Numeracy Instruction for Students with Special Education Needs, Kindergarten to Grade 6* (2005) and their *Special Education Transformation: The Report of the Co-Chairs with Recommendations of the Working Table on Special Education* (2006). So the number of students traveling to specialized classes is significantly lower, but the labeling continues and the diminished expectations that often go with it.

[18] Jeanita W. Richardson, *The Full-Service Community School Movement. Lessons from the James Adams Community School*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

[19] A good summary of this is available in Jocelyn Berthelot, *Education for the World, Education for All*, Ottawa, Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives (*Our Schools/Our Selves*), 2008, especially pp. 139-140.

[20] A useful history of Canadian daycare is Donna Varga's *Constructing the Child*, Toronto, James Lorimer (*Our Schools/Our Selves*), 1997.

[21] C. Pascal. *With our Best Future in Mind: Implementing Early Learning in Ontario*. Toronto: Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2009. This summary is quoted on the Ontario Government's website at http://www.ontario.ca/en/initiatives/early_learning/ONT06_018876.

[22] *Ibid*., page 17.

[23] *Ibid*., page 30.

[24] Margaret Lochrie, *Lifelong Learning and the Early Years*, Leicester, National Institute of Adult Continuing Education, 2009, especially page 13. In Colorado Springs, in the same year, the Buena Vista Elementary School, which had been closed, re-emerged as the new home for the West Intergenerational Center, combining daycare programming with activities for seniors, as well as K-5 elementary schoolchildren, "teens and youth." See their website at http://www.springsgov.com/units/parksrec/Sports/WestFall09.pdf.

[25] Lochrie, page 14.

[26] I am grateful to Anne Beaumont for loaning me her M.Sc. thesis on Urban and Regional Planning, *An Evaluation of the Community School Concenpt and Its Implications for the City*, University of Toronto, April 1970. See page 20.

[27] A notable exception in recent years was the construction of a new school in Port Clements, B.C. Built on Haida Gwaii (formerly the Queen Charlotte Islands), and billed in 2007 as a forerunner to the new Neighbourhoods of Learning program, an attempt to move community hubs along (see Larry Kuehn's article elsewhere in this book), this elementary school with a capacity for 50 elementary pupils opened in 2008. It includes a community kitchen, community library, daycare, exercise room, multi-purpose room, seniors' meeting room and a teen room. An intergenerational bonanza indeed. For further details see the following site consulted on April 30, 2010: http://www.neighbourhoodlearningcentres.gov.bc.ca/forerunners.html.

It is important, however, to remember that the multi-purpose building housing most of these features of a regular community centre was built in 2006, and

the school was added later on the same site. So it is a co-location of services which, because of its smallness of scale, has evolved into a hub by force of circumstance.

[28] See Chris Spence, *Full Service Schools*, cited above in note 11, and the briefing notes to TDSB Trustees November 29, 2009 accessible at www.tdsb.on.ca/boardroom/bd_agenda/uploads/generalinfo/091120%20FULL%20SERVICE%20SCHOOLS.PDF, and to TDSB Health Committee March 31, 2010. See also his op-ed article, "Full service schools offer more than just education", *Toronto Star*, Wednesday May, 5, 2010, page A23. These documents refer to seniors under adult education, schools sponsoring a seniors' day and pupils visiting a seniors' residence.

[29] The Chinese community around Queen Alexandra P.S. in the Toronto's East Chinatown is active within Toronto Intergenerational Partnerships, and there are Spanish Intergenerational Programs associated with the Toronto Catholic District School Board.

[30] Retrieved on May 5, 2010 from http://www.tdsb.on.ca/_site/viewitem.asp?siteid=203&menuid=6512&pageid=5682.

[31] Information provided in a personal interview on October 19, 2010.

[32] Joy G. Dryfoos, *Full-Service Schools*, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1994, pp 19-43.

[33] This plan was subsequently scrapped by Roy Romanow's NDP government in 1993. See http://www.sdta.ca/newsite/history.htm, from which this digest was retrieved on May 3, 2010.

[34] See page 13 above.

[35] Robert F. Kronink, *Full Service Community Schools. Prevention of Delinquency in Students with Mental Illness and/or Poverty*. Springfield, Ill., Charles C Thomas, 2005, page 8.

[36] I urge all readers to visit their website at http://elpuente.us/academy/index.htm, to see what other ways they have found to link schools to community organizing. To see an example of their science curriculum at work in the immediate community, visit http://www.aircurrents.org/plans/cenyc2.htm. It is reminiscent of the work of the Quebec collective, La Maîtresse d'École, who took the view that a course on the Chemistry of Solutions that did not have practical applications, including how to organize a press conference, was not taking its civic responsibilities seriously. See La Maîtresse d'Ecole, *Building a People's Curriculum*, Toronto, *Our Schools/Our Selves*, 1989.

[37] Consult their website at http://www.utoronto.ca/iwsgs/GAAP/index.html. An online publication showing a broad variety of participatory art-related techniques developed by young people themselves is available at http://library.catie.ca/pdf/ATI-20000s/26158.pdf. See also the "Photovoice Process" on YouTube for a demonstration.

[38] or not too proud to receive a charitable dispensation.

[39] Vita Parcours is the name given to fitness trails in public parks, consisting in exercise stations distributed along a route to punctuate jogging with physical fitness routines. Typically each one is accompanied by a panel with instructions and diagrams showing appropriate fitness routines for that site. The first one was constructed in Zurich, Switzerland in 1968. Nowadays, they typically include various items of simple yet robust gym equipment designed as weatherproof installations. They do need maintenance, and the one I visited in Taylor Creek Park, Toronto, in November 2009 had fallen into disuse.

[40] Quotes and information retrieved from http://www.archives.gov.on.ca/english/on-line-exhibits/education/agriculture.aspx on May 3, 2010.

[341] Another example in Ontario is an initiative of the Brant Healthy Living Coalition called the School Food Garden Startup Program. See their website at http://www.healthylivingbrant.com/school-nutrition. There are other examples in Canada and elsewhere in the world listed among the links on this website: http://www.cityfarmer.org/schgard15.html.

[42] National Tasting Week (La semaine du goût) became a national festival bringing schoolchildren, communities and foodworkers together by building on National Tasting Day (October 15), an initiative of a Parisian restaurateur originally launched in 1990. See *La semaine du goût*, the official French website, consulted on May 10, 2010 at http://www.legout.com/home.php. But it doesn't really do justice to the experience of this week in towns and villages throughout the country.

[43] The same idea can be seen in the Green Mapping activity described in Elise Houghton's article elserwhere in this book. A wealth of similar ideas may also be found in the recently-published Gregory A. Smith and David Sobel, *Place- and Community-based Education in Schools*, New York/London: Routledge, 2010.

[44] Abbotsford Middle School in B.C. powers its computer lab with a combination of solar and wind energy projects, and when the weather is unfavourable to both, a team of students generate energy on bicycle machines, see "Abbotsford middle school runs computer lab on green energy," *The Vancouver Sun*, October 19, 2009 (retrieved from http://www.vancouversun.com/technology/Abbotsford+middle+school+runs+computer+green+energy/2121432/story.html).

[45] *A Vision of Hope!* - Presentation to Planning and Priorities Committee, October 20, 2009, retrieved from http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/Director/docs/TDSB-Vision%20of%20Hope-Final%20(3).pdf on May 6, 2010. See Slides 32 and 33.

[46] See Kenneth Davey (ed.), *Balancing National and Local Responsibilities. Education Management and Finance in Four Central European Countries*, Budapest, Open Society Institute, 2002.

[47] Richard Hatcher's article elsewhere in this book describes the ways in which this is happening in England and Wales in depressing detail.

[48] See particularly Ken Jones et al. *Schooling in Western Europe. The New Order and Its Adversaries*, Basingstoke, Palgrave MacMillan, 2008, especially pages 50-52.

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Children being measured at the school clinic, [ca. 1905]
Archives of Ontario. Series RG 10-30-2, 3.03.2 (I0005191) Public Health Nursing Branch, page 43

Children being washed by a nurse at school, [ca. 1905]
Archives of Ontario. Series RG 10-30-2 (I0005195) Public Health Nursing Branch, page 43

Children working in school garden, Bridgenorth Elementary, Peterborough County, [ca. 1920]

Archives of Ontario. Series RG 2-43 (4-874-P), S16148 Ministry of Education, page 48

Boys giving a presentation on warble flies, Bridgenorth School Fair, September 26, 1939

Archives of Ontario, Series RG 16-304-0-7 (I0020970) Ministry of Agriculture, page 48

Dental exam in an elementary school, Hamilton, Ont. [ca. 1930],

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Ian Smith, *Vancouver Sun*, page 54

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PART II

COMMUNITY AND SCHOOL: SOURCES OF HOPE IN DARK TIMES

The following articles extend our discussion of the prospects for schools as community hubs both in Canada and beyond.

The first four frame those prospects in the politics of their region, detailing a neo-liberal framework that is not congenial to the strengthening of public sector institutions, local government, and decentralization that we have been advocating.

In the UK, education politics seems to be reduced to arguments about whether a free market model for schools can realize gains with or without massive central state control of the details of curriculum, teachers' accountability and students' moral character. In British Columbia, a provincially mandated revival of community schools comes at a cost that the government is unwilling to pay. In Saskatchewan, a provincial Task Force that rethought schools along local community lines runs into a government that catches the neo-liberal bug and cannot free itself from the cold, dead weight of its bureaucratic silos. In South Africa, the vigorous pursuit of democratic community education as a bulwark of post-apartheid policy runs up against international pressure that favours tuition fees, local school fundraising, public-private partnerships and other policies that re-inforce the inequalities of the previous system.

And yet even in these bleak circumstances, there are forces of resistance such as the Public Participation in Education Network in South Africa. There are counterweights such as School^{Plus} in Saskatchewan, the Neighbourhoods of Learning in B.C. or the Co-operative Trusts and the idea of a Local Education Forum in the UK, if only enough energy can be mobilized to see them through to a progressive realization.

The second group of four articles emphasizes these positive hopes more fully. These show a fuller realization of schools as community hubs and where some of that energy may be found by re-opening the connections between school knowledge and the knowledge of communities. Indigenous knowledge in Mexico or Saskatchewan, or through the co-operative interactions of Chris Bigum's Knowledge Producing Schools in Australia, or through the greening partnerships that link Toronto's schools to their neighbourhoods: all of these show that there are wellsprings of hope to sustain us, even in the darkest of times.

New Lessons from England's Schools: New Forms of Privatisation and the Challenge for Local Democracy

RICHARD HATCHER

In this first article, Richard Hatcher vividly describes the politics of recent British reforms of school governance and finance and shows how they are dismantling the state school system. He provides useful reminders that the new Academies are not conceived in isolation but draw on the experience of charter schools in the U.S. and "free schools" in Sweden. The neo-liberal trinity of consumer choice, cost-cutting efficiency and private enterprise constitutes the controlling dogma, concepts that threaten any serious hopes for schools as community hubs in Canada as well. The failure of these reforms to achieve what was claimed for them has pitted market fundamentalists against the heavy hand of state control, which now has the OECD on its side apparently. But within all the doom and gloom, Hatcher finds a glimmer of hope in a Labour party's governance model called Co-operative Trusts and a proposal calling for Local Education Forums. In the end, the parallels with our governance and finance model for schools as community hubs are more striking than they may seem at first glance.

In the global neo-liberal education policy market England has been both a major importer, especially from the United States, and an influential exporter of policy to the rest of the world. Now, in the aftermath of the recent general election in Britain, the Conservatives under David Cameron and the Liberal Democrats under Nick Clegg have formed a coalition government that will unleash a set of bold

proposals for radically increased autonomy for schools. It is the kind of autonomy that undermines any genuine community engagement in their local school.

When discussions leading to a coalition government began, it was not clear at first how much of each party's education policy would be adopted. But Conservative ideas are shaping the current debate in England and seem to have prevailed overwhelmingly. And now they may go on to influence policy in other countries.

Let me begin by sketching in the current situation under the former Labour government. Its policy for schools was based on four pillars:

- Centralised control through prescriptive targets and data-driven evaluation
- Increased autonomy for schools within the centrally-mandated policy framework
- New models of school and system leadership and workforce management
- The role of the private sector in public education policy and provision

Of course these themes are not uniquely English: they are the result of intensive international policy borrowing and they take different shapes in different national contexts and even within the United Kingdom itself; they are much more advanced in England than in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland.

ACADEMIES AND TRUSTS: SCHOOL AUTONOMY IN OPPOSITION TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Historically, schools in England have had a considerable amount of autonomy within the local authority system, compared for example to the powers which school districts exercise over schools in the United States and Canada.

Building on the marketisation reforms of Margaret Thatcher, Tony Blair introduced a radical new policy in the development of Academies: public schools (mainly secondary, but some all-through primary-sec-

ondary), outside the local authority system, funded directly by government, and owned and run, on a non-profit basis, by private sponsors – multimillionaire philanthropists, private companies, religious organisations – who appoint a majority of the school governing body.

Most Academies replace an existing school and are provided with a new building. The Academy takes over ownership of the school site from the local authority, becomes the employer of school staff, and can set its own admissions policy. The model was imported from the charter school experience in United States. The aim was to create 400 Academies, and so far some 200 exist.

Academies have been opposed by all the main teacher unions and numerous local campaigns have taken place, but they have rarely been able to stop the government, aided by compliant local authorities, from imposing them. It has provided a revealing insight into how local councils exclude or manage popular participation (Hatcher 2008, 2010).

Academies have been followed more recently by another new category of schools: Trusts, which are only just beginning to come on stream. They are a sort of Academy-lite. Trust schools have sponsors who form a Trust, which appoints representatives to the governing body of the school. They may comprise a majority or a minority of governors. The school remains within the local authority, but, like Academies, it takes over ownership of the school premises from the local authority, becomes the employer of school staff, and can set its own admissions policy. All schools are being encouraged to become Trusts or Academies. A number of sponsorship organisations are setting up chains of Academies, and Trusts could do the same.

The rationale for Labour's Academy and Trust policies can be summarised simply as follows: in order to increase the competitiveness of the British economy, student attainment needs to improve, and the involvement of external organisations in running schools can make them more efficient.

The continuing evolution of these policies is the product of continued business pressure for increased privatization.

WHAT BUSINESS SAYS IT WANTS

Employers' representatives drew an overall negative balance-sheet of 13 years of the Labour government's education policy, particularly in terms of the level of education of those destined for middle- and lower-level jobs. Richard Lambert, director-general of the Confederation of British Industry, recently explained.

> The education system is failing pupils from poorer homes and producing exam results which "we ought to be ashamed of", according to the head of the most powerful group representing business leaders.
>
> In an interview with the *Guardian*, Richard Lambert, director-general of the CBI, says that money is being wasted in English schools, which have among the most generous government funding in the world but exam results that are beginning to trail behind competitor countries.
>
> The problems are rooted in a "culture of low aspiration" that predates the current government, but Labour has spent too much time "messing around" with the education system and its high spending strategy has been inefficient, he claims.
>
> Lambert said he was voicing concerns because employers were struggling to recruit people with the right skills – even in the recession – and that many organisations had to give remedial classes in the 3Rs to employees. But he said his decision to speak out was also prompted by concerns business leaders have about social ills, such as illiteracy.
>
> "There is an absolutely straight correlation between GCSE results and free school meals, a straight line so the most deprived get the worst results." (*Guardian* 31 December 2009)

The Economist (5 December 2009, p.38) made a similar analysis of Labour's education policies, headed 'An unacceptable term's work'.

'Some marks for effort but academic attainment is shockingly poor'. It noted that Britain educates a smaller proportion of its 15 to 19-year-olds than it did in 1995, unlike the rest of the 30 OECD countries except France, which still has 86% in education, compared to 71% in Britain. *The Economist* also noted that in the SATs tests at the end of primary school 'the number of schools where all pupils achieved the minimum standard expected has slumped by a fifth. For the first time since the tests began in 1995, the number of pupils leaving primary school with an acceptable grasp of English fell.'

On this basis the Conservatives, like Labour, have been able to construct a discourse which harmonises the social and economic functions of schooling, allowing the Conservative party to lay claim to the traditional Labour terrain of tackling social inequality in education. As Michael Gove, the man who has now become Secretary of State for Education, has said:

> We already have an education system that is shockingly bad at promoting social mobility and helping the poorest in our society. […] that lack of opportunity for the poorest is, to me, plain immoral, but it is also increasingly economically foolish because we cannot afford to waste any talent. We must maximise the country's economic firepower. (*Daily Telegraph* 20 February 2009).

THE TORY SOLUTION

The Tories had announced that if they won the election they would allow all schools, primary as well as secondary, to become Academies. But Academies everywhere was not the only radical proposal by the Tories. They also propose to create at least 220,000 extra school places in new schools funded directly by government and run by alternative providers: private organisations and groups of parents and teachers. This would amount to up to 5,000 new schools in a school system in England of nearly 21,000 schools. It is claimed that the combination of parental choice and new providers will in particular raise standards in socially deprived areas (Conservative Party 2010).

The previous Conservative governments of Margaret Thatcher and John Major in the 1980s and 1980s, influenced by the neo-liberal argument against state intervention in school provision of, among others, Chubb and Moe (1990) in the U.S., had promoted market relations in the school system, though within a prescriptive framework of curriculum objectives, performance targets and evaluation. The Labour government of Tony Blair recognised that parental choice of schools was not a powerful enough mechanism to drive reform, and relied instead on even more prescriptive state intervention. (A recent OECD report has confirmed that it is government intervention, not radical free market reforms in state education, that leads to innovation in the classroom (Lubienski 2009).) Initially this led to a rise in test scores, in part at least because teachers became more adept at 'teaching to the test', but in the early 2000s it levelled off and the limits of heavily bureaucratic top-down prescriptive reform became increasingly evident, not least to teachers, de-professionalised and demoralised. The new Conservative agenda marks a return to the market model, re-engineered by expanding the supply side in order to animate parental choice and therefore competition between providers, while claiming that they will put an end to Labour's bureaucratic prescription – the national curriculum will be less detailed and school inspections eased. The Conservatives' market model draws on models from two other countries: U.S. charter schools and Swedish 'free schools'.

There are different types of charter schools. Some are run by community or charitable organisations on a non-profit basis. Of those run on a for-profit basis by private companies, some are operated under management contracts from the school district or state, while others are owned by the companies themselves. One type of charter school is currently finding particular favour by both Conservative and Labour politicians: the Knowledge is Power Program (KIPP), founded by two teachers in 1994, which now runs the largest chain of charter schools: 82 middle schools in 19 cities in the US, all non-profit.

Swedish independent or 'free schools' are non-fee-paying public schools owned and run by a variety of educational providers, ranging from non-profit co-operatives and faith groups to for-profit corporations, and funded by government on a parental voucher basis. Since the mid-90s the number of free schools has risen from 122 to 1,091. The

biggest growth sector is private companies running chains of schools for profit, which now represents about 75% of free schools. The largest chain is Kunskapsskolan, 'Knowledge Schools', which runs 30 schools. The Swedish system has been strongly praised by Conservative politicians. In England the Sutton Trust is currently planning an academy on the KIPP model (*Times* 21 December 2009).

The case for the success of Academies in the UK, Charter schools in the US and 'free schools' in Sweden has been summarised recently by the New Schools Network (2010), which has been set up recently to promote the Conservative's plans. I now want to look at those claims in the light of research evidence.

DO ACADEMIES RAISE STANDARDS AND REDUCE SOCIAL DISADVANTAGE IN EDUCATION?

There is now sufficient evidence about Academies to show that on average they are no more successful than other schools with comparable intakes. The most recent research study of their performance in GCSE examinations taken at age 16 notes that attainment has risen but that 'Overall, these changes in GCSE performance in academies relative to matched schools are statistically indistinguishable from one another' (Machin and Wilson 2009, p.8). Seventy-four Academies have now taken at least two sets of GCSEs, allowing their progress to be monitored. Of these, 24 Academies (32%) saw their results fall between 2008 and 2009, at a time when most schools' results improved. Some Academies have registered above-average levels of improvement, but the principal factor is that they have admitted a higher proportion of children from better-off families, who are statistically more likely to succeed academically.

CHARTER SCHOOLS

According to Bendor et al (2007, p.14), 'numerous studies have shown that the average charter school performs no better, and in some cases performs slightly worse, than the average public school.' The most recent large-scale study was published in 2009 by the Center for Research on Education Outcomes (CREDO) at Stanford University: *Multiple Choice:*

Charter school performance in 16 states. It concluded that

> 17% provide superior education opportunities for their students. Nearly half of the charter schools nationwide have results that are no different from the local public school options and over a third, 37%, deliver learning results that are significantly worse than their student would have realized had they remained in traditional public schools. (CREDO 2009, p.1)

A study of Philadelphia in 2008 found that 'students' average gains attending charter schools are statistically indistinguishable from the gains they experience while at traditional public schools. (Zimmer et al 2008, p. iii).

The Knowledge is Power Program undoubtedly results in students, predominantly from poorer backgrounds, achieving significantly higher than their peers in other schools (Educational Policy Institute 2005). Eighty per cent of the students are from low-income families but 85% go on to university (*Times Educational Supplement (TES)* 19 February 2010). But the principal explanation may be that KIPP's admission process selects for likely high achievers. Potential parents are rigorously interviewed. Furthermore, some KIPP schools show a high dropout rate, especially for those students entering the schools with the lowest test scores (Woodworth et al 2008). Richardson (2009) makes the point that advocates claim that KIPP's success is due to KIPP schools' freedom from state control, which enables principals to control the budget and the curriculum, select and appoint staff and operate an extended timetable: ten-hour school days with sessions on Saturdays and in the summer holiday, which is 60% more time than other U.S. middle schools. This is a radical departure for U.S. schools, constrained by the school district, but schools in the UK already have this autonomy. Another feature of KIPP schools, according to Knights (TES 26 February 2010) is teacher burnout, resulting from a working week of 65 hours and the expectation that teachers are in contact with students 24/7.

SWEDISH 'FREE SCHOOLS'

There have been a number of studies of the effects of the Swedish reform. The most recent study is by Bohlmark and Lindahl (2008), who found evidence of only small positive effects.

> We find that an increase in the private school share moderately improves short-term educational outcomes such as 9th grade GPA and the fraction of students who choose an academic high school track. However, we do not find any impact on medium or long-term educational outcomes such as high school GPA, university attainment or years of schooling. We conclude that the first-order short-term effect is too small to yield lasting positive effects. (Bohlmark and Lindahl 2008, p.1)

A study of reading found that students in 'free schools' had on average better reading results, but that the explanation was that they had 'a more advantageous socio-economic background than have students in public schools. Social selection hence characterises independent schools' (Myrberg and Rosen 2006, p.185). This explanation is confirmed by Per Thulberg, director general of the Swedish National Agency for Education: 'The students in the new schools, they have in general better standards, but it has to do with their parents, their backgrounds. They come from well-educated families.' (*Guardian Education* 9 February 2010). Independent schools have 'a larger proportion of pupils with parents who have continued in education after upper secondary school' (Skolverket 2006, p.17).

One consequence of the advent of 'free schools' is greater social segregation between schools. 'Several previous studies, and statistics, show that choice in the school system has led to a tendency to segregate in terms of pupils' sociocultural background, performance and ethnic background (Skolverket 2006, p.51). This confirms Ball's conclusion from a survey of international research that 'school choice policies are taken advantage of and primarily work in the interests of middle-class families' (Ball 2003, p.37).

Finally, the freedom from political control enjoyed by the Swedish schools is not as great as the Conservatives suggest. They still have to

follow the national curriculum, unlike Academies, 'where it is only a requirement for English, maths, science, and information and communications technology' (Holmlund and McNally 2009, p.21)

THE EFFECT ON LOCAL SCHOOLS

One argument used by supporters of allowing new schools in order to provide more market competition between schools is that it raises the performance of other schools. In a survey carried out by Skolverket, 'The majority of municipalities with a high proportion of pupils in independent schools consider that relations between independent and municipal schools are largely characterised by competition (Skolverket 2006, p.32). However, 79% disagreed with the statement 'competition with independent compulsory schools in your municipality has contributed to school improvement in compulsory schools in your municipality' (p. 26). Similarly, in the U.S. Zimmer et al (2008, p. iii) found 'no evidence that the district schools located in neighborhoods with the greatest charter competition are performing any better or any worse as a result of the competition.'

REDUCING SOCIAL INEQUALITY IN EDUCATION

The Tories propose two strategies to raise standards of attainment of children from socially disadvantaged backgrounds: a return to traditional methods, and additional funding for schools which enrol them.

The Tories claim that increased parental choice will result in a return to traditional methods in schools. A Conservative spokesperson stated that 'We have always argued that we think that a genuine choice system would lead to more tried and tested teaching methods because that is more popular with parents.' (*TES* 25 September 2009). David Cameron, the Conservative leader, has argued that 'discipline, setting by ability and regular sport' prevalent in the private sector would flourish in state schools once they were freed from government controls, forcing headteachers to respond to parental demands. (*Guardian* 9 October 2009). However, contradictorily, the Conservatives do not rely solely on market pressure: they intend also to intervene directly. 'We will ensure that the primary curriculum is organised around subjects like Maths, Science

and History. We will encourage setting...' (Conservative Party 2010, p.6), and, in Gove's words, 'we'll overhaul exams to get rid of the modules, coursework and political correctness that have driven standards down.' (*Daily Telegraph* 20 February 2009).

A return to more formal traditional methods seems likely, far from raising attainment by working-class students, to increase their alienation from school and reinforce patterns of social inequality.

The second strategy is the proposal to introduce a 'pupil premium' with the aim of narrowing the educational achievement gap between rich and poor students by attaching greater school funding to those from disadvantaged backgrounds as an incentive for higher-performing schools, often in middle-class areas, to admit more students from poorer families. According to an analysis by the Institute for Fiscal Studies (Chowdry et al 2010), schools are unlikely to actively recruit more disadvantaged pupils as a result of the pupil premium: the premium would need to be very high to sufficiently reduce the disincentive for many schools to attract such pupils, putting at risk their academic attainment and public image. The Conservatives have not yet given a figure, and in fact local authority funding formulas already positively discriminate in favour of socially deprived schools so it would need to be significantly higher. Schools' ability to select pupils is also limited to some extent by the School Admissions Code. Chowdry et al (2010, p.2) conclude that 'The pupil premium may lead to a small reduction in covert selection by schools but is unlikely to significantly reduce social segregation.'

Nor is it certain that the pupil premium will provide sufficient incentive for new providers to open 'free schools' aimed at poorer working-class families. The demand may come largely from middle-class parents seeking to maintain their educational advantage by placing their children in a 'free school' rather than a more socially mixed local authority school, in keeping with the pattern of middle class parents benefiting most from parental choice (Ball 2003). The terms of the coalition agreement include the provision for a pupil premium. For the Liberal Democrats, the goal was to lower class sizes in schools serving disadvantaged populations. Whether the amount eventually allocated will achieve such a result remains to be seen.

WHO WILL RUN THE TORIES' 'FREE SCHOOLS'?

The New Schools Network claims that at least 200 parent groups and 100 groups of teachers have come forward to set up a school in anticipation of a Tory victory at the general election. Academy sponsors, education groups and private school proprietors have been approached to work with the parent groups. There is no independent verification of these claims, but there are already signs of who will be interested in providing new schools.

One group of around 250 parents which has achieved publicity has been initiated by Toby Young, a journalist, who is proposing to set up the West London Free School (*TES* 29 January 2010). He describes it as a 'comprehensive grammar school', specialising in music, humanities, and classical civilisation, with every student learning Latin up to age 16. Although the school would be formally non-selective, in reality it would be likely to attract mainly children from professional middle-class families, for whom the school offers the kind of cultural capital which is the passport to professional careers. Young is currently in negotiation with Edison Learning, an American schools-for-profit company, and a similar British company, to run his school.

A second category of supporters comprises religious organisations. The Catholic Church has welcomed the opportunity to open up more Catholic schools (*TES* 29 January 2010). Other religious bodies and individuals, including those holding fundamentalist views, are also likely to want to seize the opportunity, as they have by sponsoring Academies.

However, the most contentious category of providers is for-profit companies. There is a distinction to be made between two ways in which companies could make a profit from running state schools. One is to set them up and own them, as Academies or 'free schools', if legislation permitted. But the other way is to manage schools under contract without owning them. Governing bodies could contract out the operation of the school – including teaching – to a private company and the company would be allowed to charge a 'management fee'. It is important to recognise that this is already permitted, and in fact Edison has been running Turin Grove School in London on that basis since 2007. Parents too could hire a private firm to run a school on their behalf. (*Guardian* 9 October 2009).

How does Kunskapsskolan make a profit? According to a report by Hazel Danson, an elected officer of the National Union of Teachers in England, after a visit to Sweden in 2009, by employing fewer qualified teachers and cutting the cost of facilities.

> The number of qualified teachers in independent schools is a little over 60% compared to 84% in public schools. Kunskapsskolan's selling point is personalised, web based, independent learning via a 'knowledge portal'. Students have an individual tutor who they see weekly, for about 15 minutes, to review work and set a program for the next week, some of which will include taught lessons in small groups but much of which is independent study.
>
> Unlike the Academies program, with the promise of a new, shiny building, many of the Swedish independent schools are not in purpose-built facilities but converted office spaces. Rather than building a library within the school, they use the local municipal library instead. The same is true for outside space and sports facilities with schools renting space or using local sports centre facilities. Rather than provide specialist teaching areas within each school, students spend a week each term in one of the two, purpose built centres run by Kunskapsskolan for art, DT and cookery. (Danson 2009)

VOCATIONAL ACADEMIES FROM AGE 14

There is a strand in Conservative thinking which aims to offer a direct and specific solution to the complaints of employers and the needs of the economy for technically qualified workers. Kenneth Baker, a previous and influential Conservative secretary of state for education, has won the support of the Labour government for a new type of Academy – University Technical Colleges, sponsored by universities, modelled in part on German technical schools and in part on the technical schools initiated in the 1944 Act. They are intended to engage young people from age 14, particularly boys, who are attracted to a more vocationally-oriented education. 12 UTCs are already planned, with the first one opening soon in Birmingham, sponsored by Aston University. Baker proposes one in every town. He explains that:

> University technical colleges would have two streams of entry: one for apprentices and one for those who want to obtain other qualifications provided by Edexcel and City & Guilds, and then move on to foundation degrees. From the start of enrolment, at 14, there would be at least one day release a week to work in local companies. (*Yorkshire Post* 16 August 2008)

Baker explicitly contrasts UTCs with 'free schools', arguing that the latter are more appropriate to primary than secondary, because it is very difficult to create a new school, whereas UTCs can be created quickly. One obvious operator would be Further Education Colleges colleges, which are anticipating being able to take students fulltime from age 14.

THE IMPACT OF CONSERVATIVE POLICIES ON TEACHERS AND LOCAL AUTHORITIES

The generalisation of Academies and 'free schools' would be outside the local authority system of schools, under which local elected town and county councils have some powers to arrange and manage coherent provision in their areas. Local authorities would be reduced to a residual role, responsible only for the rump of schools which chose not to follow the Conservative agenda but unable to secure any coherent overall local provision. The creation of hundreds of new schools, all chasing the same pupils, would force many existing schools to close down for lack of numbers.

Academies and 'free schools' employ their own staff and are free to ignore national and local agreements on the pay and conditions of teachers and other school workers. The consequence, by design, would be a reduction in the power of the national unions and the potential worsening of the pay and conditions of teachers and other school workers.

WILL THE CONSERVATIVE PROGRAMME BE IMPLEMENTED?

If the Tory agenda was implemented in full it would signal, in the words of Stephen Ball, one of the leading academic critics of govern-

ment policy, 'a process of the dissolution of state schooling. This is the beginning of the end of state schools as we know them.' (*Education Guardian* 2 March 2010). However, there are three sets of factors, which may impede its implementation.

One is the likelihood of widespread collective opposition. There is already significant opposition to Labour education policies, led by the campaigns against Academies and SATs. Under the Tories the grounds for opposition will multiply, especially in the context of attacks on pay and conditions. Trade unions and Labour politicians individuals will be less inhibited about attacking the Tories than they have been about opposing the Labour government.

ARE THE MARKET MECHANISMS POWERFUL ENOUGH?

A second set of factors concerns whether the quasi-market mechanisms are powerful enough to deliver the Tory agenda.

Will schools want to become Academies?

The main incentive at present to become an Academy is the extra money, especially the new building. This is far too expensive to apply to the large increase in Academy numbers the Conservatives envisage, particularly in a period of recession and drastic cuts in social spending. Why then would headteachers and governing bodies want their schools to become Academies? They offer some greater freedom from local authorities, but schools already have substantial freedom, and many schools would prefer to remain part of a local authority, with the support service benefits they provide. Some schools will certainly want to become Academies but it is by no means certain that the majority will without sufficient incentives or penalties.

Will the funding for these 'free schools' make them sufficiently attractive for providers seeking to own or manage them for profit?

Edison describe their contract to run one school in London as 'a good business model' (*Guardian* 9 October 2009), but whether it is more than a loss leader remains to be seen.

Will parental choice be a powerful enough driver of market forces?

Attempts to create market forces in the school system are limited by a number of factors. Geography may prevent genuine local circuits of competition. Parents choose schools for a variety of reasons, not solely based on standards of attainment. In the case of over-subscribed schools it is in reality the school that chooses the child.

TENSIONS AND CONTRADICTIONS WITHIN CONSERVATIVE POLICY

The third set of factors arises from tensions and contradictions within Conservative policy itself.

Will private providers of state schools be allowed to make a profit?

Anders Hultin, the architect of Kuskkappsskolan, recently advised Conservative politicians that 'Only the profit motive will drive the level of expansion and innovation that education services require' (*Guardian* 4 March 2010). There are two ways to achieve this. One is for private companies to own and run Academies and open 'free schools' for profit. This would require a change in the law, and it does not feature in the government's current plans, though it cannot be ruled out in future. But the other way is for companies to manage schools under contract without owning them. School governing bodies could contract out the operation of the school – including teaching – to a private company and the company would be allowed to charge a 'management fee,' as EMOs do in the U.S. This is actually already allowed in England, though it is not widely known, and in fact Edison Learning, the American schools-for-profit company, has been running Turin Grove School in London on that basis since 2007. Parents too could hire a private firm to run a school on their behalf, and Toby Young is currently in negotiation with Edison Learning and a similar British company to run the Westminster Free School. Hultin is now CEO of GEMS-UK (Global Education Management Systems), which runs 75 private international schools. Kunskapsskolan itself has recently opened an office in London and become the sponsor of two Academies. He says 'We are exploring possibilties right now, supporting groups of parents. That's a natural start-

ing point.' VT Group, which started as a defence contractor, building and operating ships for the Royal Navy and now runs the education departments of two local authorities, regards running 1,000 schools on management contracts as 'not unrealistic' (*Education Guardian* 25 May 2010).

How will 'free schools' be paid for?

Many critics have pointed out that the Tory proposals are not costed and budgeted for. The provision of 220,000 surplus places would be very expensive. Holmlund and McNally (2009 p.21) point out that setting up new schools could be 'an expensive policy if large capital outlays are required'. The alternative would be, as in 'free schools' in Sweden, to use former office buildings or vacant school premises with minimal facilities. In addition there would be the additional running costs of both the new schools and existing schools. 'The reality that governments will have to support simultaneously the new schools and the older 'bad' ones, and that the latter will not exit at an efficient rate, needs to be factored into the expected cost effectiveness of a 'school creation' policy' (Holmlund and McNally 2009, p.21). The Tories claim it will be paid for by taking £4.5 billion from the Building Schools for the Future budget, a programme to rebuild or renovate all state secondary schools, which would mean that existing schools would be left in an increasingly unsatisfactory condition while 'free schools' flourish at their expense. In any case, in the context of an ongoing recession and a huge budget deficit, that programme may be cut, and a hard-pressed Tory Treasury may be reluctant to fund large numbers of unnecessary extra school places.

Will the Conservative programme meet employers' needs?

We need to remember that the determining imperative of Conservative education policy is economic: to produce more efficiently the future workforce in accordance with employers' requirements (see for example CBI 2008). The evidence from existing Academies is that they are no more successful than schools with a similar student composition (Machin and Wilson 2009). The generalisation of Academies and 'free

schools' raises sharply a more fundamental problem: the internal tensions within the Conservative programme between different ideological strands of Conservative thinking which emerged over three decades ago during the education reforms of the Thatcher government. The three strands can be characterised as the 'free marketeers', the 'cultural right' and the 'industrial modernisers' (Jones 1989, 2003). Clearly in David Cameron's programme today the 'free marketeers' are in the ascendancy. Their policies might secure electoral advantage, especially from middle-class voters expecting that a more diverse system would particularly benefit their children, but can the free market school system, without sufficient steering by the state, produce the workforce employers want, suitably skilled, encultured and stratified? The concerns of the 'cultural right' are embodied in the return to traditional methods, but their promised imposition by government undermines the notion of school autonomy in the market. The interests of the 'industrial modernisers' correspond most closely to those of employers, and are represented most directly by Baker's University Technical Colleges, but they will only be a small minority among schools unless the providers of 'free schools' choose to adopt the model. Furthermore, employers' interests might be better served, at least for less 'academic' students, by adopting 'progressive' methods harnessed to vocational ends, rather than by a return to traditional methods. The likely outcome of the new Conservative-Liberal Democrat coalition government would seem to be a period of prolonged policy turbulence and the emergence of an incoherent patchwork of diverse and competing types of schools in an even more fragmented and locally unaccountable system.

Resistance and the question of local democracy in the school system

I have referred to the likelihood of widespread opposition to the implementation of the Conservative party's policies during this period of coalition. However, on one issue there is a noticeable absence of an alternative: the Conservatives' claim that the market – choice of providers, and the theoretical opportunity, including for parents and teachers, to enter the market as a provider – offers more genuine democracy in the school system at the local level than that afforded by membership of school governing bodies or the procedures of local elected

local government. The absence of a radical democratic alternative means that the response is, by default, an apparently uncritical defence of school governing bodies, which have parent and community members but no structural relationship of accountability to their constituencies and are becoming increasingly powerless (Ranson and Crouch 2009), and of local councils which, in spite of Labour's rhetoric about local empowerment and democratic renewal, exclude any meaningful role for participatory democracy.

Labour had responded to the Conservative claim with proposals to increase parents' power, if dissatisfied with their child's school, by allowing them to vote on whether it should be taken over by one of a small number of government-approved alternative providers (Guardian 23 February 2010). This is merely another form of consumer choice which actually augments the power of the private sector.

However, there is one new Labour model of school governance which points a different way forward: Cooperative Trusts. The first, at Reddish Vale Technology College in Stockport, was opened in March 2008. Eventually 200 are envisaged. The school is governed by a Forum comprising elected representatives of the following constituent groups: school students, parents, staff, community organisations, and local community members. This could represent a step forward from existing governance arrangements provided five principles are adhered to:

- There is a structured two-way relationship of representation and accountability between Forum members and their constituencies. (Unlike current practice.)
- The school operates in the context of union-agreed pay and conditions for school staff. (Increasingly under threat from Academies, Trusts and 'free schools'.)
- The school premises are owned by the local authority. (Unlike Trusts, Academies, and 'free schools').
- Teachers and other staff are forbidden from personally profiting from the school's activities. (Unlike teacher-run 'free schools'.)
- The school operates in the context of effective democratic planning and accountability by the local authority. (Unlike Academies and 'free schools', and unlike current local councils.)

The final point above is crucial because the greater the autonomy at school level the greater will be the differences between schools in the policy decisions they make. This is already the case, even with the current level of centralised government control. It has the potential for both good and bad consequences. The danger is that it will exacerbate social inequalities. But the potential benefits of diversity resulting from local popular participation greatly outweigh the dangers, for two reasons. First, because resisting the present disastrous education policies requires mass popular action combining big national campaigns with local grassroots community activity at school level, and people are more likely to get involved locally if they feel that they can influence policy and make a difference. Second, different approaches in teaching methods, curriculum and internal regimes are necessary in order to challenge social inequality in education, but there is no consensus about what they should be. There will be different and legitimate views about the answers among parents, school students, teachers and the wider community. These debates can't be resolved in the abstract or by fiat. We need to try out a range of different approaches and learn from practice.

The five principles above provide the basis for judging the Tories' proposal that teachers could run schools (*TES* 26 February 2010). While 'free schools' should be opposed, the idea that state schools could be run collectively rather than as a hierarchy dominated by a headteacher is one that should be supported, provided that power is not in the hands of teachers alone but is shared with parents, students and the community, as in the Cooperative Trust model. There are also various models from other countries which can be drawn on, and from England's own experience of early comprehensive schools being run on a democratic basis (Hatcher 2005).

A LOCAL EDUCATION FORUM

If we accept the case for democratic diversity, how can we prevent it reinforcing social inequalities? At the national level, by a framework of social justice entitlement which would guarantee certain rights and exclude certain discriminatory and oppressive practices. But that isn't enough: it's too general to engage with specific policies and practices at the local level. The key to this lies in radical democratic reforms at the level of local school systems.

The key principle is of a space in each local authority area in which deliberative democracy can take place about education policy. Let us call it a Local Education Forum. This would be a body open to all with an interest in education – parents, teachers, other school workers, school students, governors and citizens – though its decisions might be taken only by elected representatives of its constituents. Its purpose would be to discuss and take positions on all key policy issues. As a minimum the Forum should have the right to gain access to information and to present proposals to meetings of the city council and its subcommittees and have its views heard and taken into account. The Forum itself could of course expand with subgroups and working groups on specific issues, and hold wider consultative events. The exact relationship of this process of deliberative democracy to the procedures of representative democracy of the local authority – whether the Forum is accepted as a legitimate body by it, or is a demand to be fought for, or is set up on an unofficial basis – depends on the local balance of political forces.

One vital role for the Forum would be to ensure social justice in local area provision. Distinctive policies which a school decided it wanted to pursue would be assessed in terms of their impact on other schools in the area and subject to the approval of the Forum. The Forum would also have the task of developing, perhaps in a two-year cycle, an Education Plan for the local system of schools and colleges, including what mix of pedagogic approaches it would want to see made available.

Of course more democratic schools and local school systems would still be subject to the dictates of government education policies, and there is no guarantee that they would respond to them by embracing progressive or radical alternatives. But the risk of self-managed incorporation is greatly outweighed by the possibility of creating more favourable conditions to challenge the dominant agenda of whichever party is in power and to reinvigorate the egalitarian and emancipatory role of the school.

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British Columbia's Community Schools: The Return of a Good Idea…But with Contradictions

LARRY KUEHN

Larry Kuehn reminds us of the death of British Columbia's community schools as the neo-liberal shrinkage of public sector spending started gutting public education a decade or so ago. Resistance to school closures has led to an unexpected resurgence of the community school, this time in the guise of the full-service school that has been gathering steam south of the border. But with the neo-liberal framework still firmly in place, choice and efficiency trump community development and the prospects do not look bright for the return of a good idea.

Community schools were once an important part of the education system in British Columbia. However, their demise began with the budget cuts in the 1980s, and they finally disappeared during the last decade of constant cuts to education service.

Now the BC Liberal government is going back to the idea, but with a new name. The current version is being called "Neighbourhoods of Learning."

The New Democrat government developed and funded the community school programs when they were in power in the early 1970s. Probably the most fully developed centre from that period still exists in the form of Britannia, a school and more, located on the east side of the city in the heart of the Drive – Commercial Drive, that is – home to counterculture groups as well as immigrants and Aboriginal peoples.

Britannia has an elementary and secondary school, a joint public and school library, and a community centre with facilities that include a swimming pool and hockey rink. Britannia was the alma mater of Dave Barrett, the NDP premier in the 70s, as well as the richest person in BC, Jimmy Pattison. Its grads reflect the social mobility that was possible in an earlier era as people moved from the cheapest housing in BC though education to political, business and artistic success.

The decision to combine all the different facilities was an attempt to provide on the east side of Vancouver the kinds of services that were already available in most of the more well-off sections of the city.

Now a large percentage of the students in both Britannia schools are Aboriginal. Aboriginal housing projects and cheaper rents for apartments help to locate these students in the neighbourhood. The open enrolment policies adopted by the BC Liberals to ensure "choice" has led to some of the non-Aboriginal neighbourhood students leaving Britannia for schools with a different ethnic mix.

BC's community schools were never just about buildings. They were really about the school as the centre of the community. In fact, many of the community schools did not have extra facilities, but did have staff who were funded to work with the community and to facilitate programs in the school that went beyond a narrow definition of the role schools should play. These programs tended to be in communities that were on the lower end of socio-economic status.

Most of the community school coordinators were teachers. David Chudnovsky, who was a community school coordinator in Surrey, says that this was important because one of the challenges was dealing with tension between community involvement and teachers wanting their programs and spaces not to be disrupted.

Chudnovsky remembers a key to success in resolving these tensions was a richer resource base – having the ability to access additional funding from all levels of government for summer programs, after school activities, seniors programming and the like.

Then came the BC Liberals in 2001, with their cuts to education. Not only did they legislate away all the staffing and class size guarantees in the teachers' contract, but they didn't even provide enough funding to maintain past levels of service. School boards have had to cut programs

and services every year, eliminating any program that did not have a clear connection to the official education mandate.

GOODBYE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Since the BC Liberals came to power, nearly 200 schools have been closed, about one in every eight schools. Many of these closures were in rural communities where these schools played a particularly strong role in providing community identity. They also functioned as major public facilities that could be used by the community–de facto community schools even if not so designated.

The province refused to provide funding for school districts to build new schools unless those with "surplus seats" were closed down and sold, providing money to build new schools in new neighbourhoods. One group in Victoria undertook a provincial campaign against selling public school property, saying it should remain in public hands, even if not for schools.

HELLO "NEIGHBOURHOODS OF LEARNING"

Just before the 2009 provincial election, suddenly things changed. The premier announced a new program called "Neighbourhoods of Learning." In it, the sale of schools was prohibited without approval of the minister. This replaced a ministerial direction that schools must be sold.

What led to this change? Two things: A political problem and a new direction in expanding the role of the education system.

The political problem was in Premier Campbell's Vancouver constituency. He represents some of the most affluent and education-focused people in the province. His constituency has a number of heritage schools that require work to mitigate the effects of earthquakes. Tearing down the old school and building a newer one was the less expensive option. But these new schools would be built just for direct classroom needs and the extra space currently being used for other related purposes would not be replaced. This made the politically influential folks on Vancouver's west side unhappy.

Voilà. "Neighbourhoods of Learning" were announced by the pre-

mier, with three initial pilot projects being in Vancouver. Strangely, two of those three schools are in the premier's constituency – areas least in need of enrichment of experience.

The media release announcing the pilot projects quoted the premier as saying, "This government has a vision for education in BC – one where schools and community organizations can create Neighbourhoods of Learning where people can access educational and community services under one roof. Schools throughout the province will be able to adopt this model in the future to best meet the needs of their students and communities."

A reflection of this philosophy can be seen in an expanded mandate for the Boards of Education (with the name changed by legislation from School Boards to reflect a mandate that has expanded beyond schools).

Each Board of Education is supposed to create a "literacy plan" that takes into account education of both pre-school children and adults throughout their lifetime – from sperm to worm, as some have described it.

Hundreds of StrongStart early literacy pre-school programs have been created around the province, many using the "excess space" created by declining enrolment. Adults can take any high school course for free, either in adult education or distributed (online) learning–free even to adults with a high school diploma and a graduate degree. Language courses are popular.

Kindergarten is being expanded to a full-day program, with half the schools offering a full day as of September 2010, the rest in September 2011. Government is looking at other programs for children as young as 3 and has indicated that it wants to work with the private sector in creating more day care programs–presumably a public-private partnership with some of the for-profit, big-box day care corporations.

The idea behind Neighbourhoods of Learning is described in the Ministry of Education service plan for 2010. The plan describes one of the ministry-approved construction projects, a secondary school in the Port Alberni school district:

> Government's vision for education includes schools and community organizations partnering to give people access to community and education-related services under one roof. The Ministry has

> long encouraged districts to consult with community partners and accommodate community use; now, an inclusive approach is a requirement for all new and replacement schools. In fact, in April 2009, the Province announced that nine schools in six districts would be built as neighbourhood learning centres and models for the inclusion of services, such as child-care programs, office space, health clinics, sports programs, seniors' centres, and family resource centres.

All of these are good ideas.

In addition to schools, public libraries are now a responsibility of the Ministry of Education, although with reduced provincial funding.

THE CONTRACTIONS IN GOVERNMENT POLICY

The public libraries are a good example of a key contradiction in government policy–expand the mandate, but carry it out without adequate funding.

Government expects libraries to be expanding to provide access to more online databases and other information, but it cut the funding that ensured that libraries in small communities would have the same access for patrons that can be provided by the large library systems.

Another big contradiction is in space. The ministry reversed course on selling schools when the decision was made to expand to full-day kindergarten. Too late. Some of the needed facilities are already gone, or committed to day care, StongStart, or even to private schools. The ministry told districts they cannot now expel StrongStart and day care programs to find space. To house kindergarten programs the ministry plans to supply portables complete with washrooms.

Don't expect falling enrolment to take care of space problems. Overall declines in enrolment have come to an end. With the addition of full-day kindergarten, the next two years will have increases in full-time equivalent students. Shortly after that, overall enrolments will grow on a province-wide basis.

The fastest growing district, Surrey, has not been able to get the government to build any new schools and next year will have nearly 300 portables, the equivalent of 12 large elementary schools. Future needs

are clear–10% of births in BC are in the hospital in Surrey. As *Province* columnist Brian Lewis has said, "If the BC Liberal government ever figures out where babies really come from, then Surrey's school district won't be in such a mess."

Another big contradiction is in staffing. The school system has been gutted of all the flexibility that it used to have to allow for programs like the community schools. To take just the mundane jobs, who is going to look after coordinating all the various groups that are supposed to end up in a neighbourhood of learning, booking spaces and the like? Not to mention who is going to be there to organize and carry out the programming that is implied in these centres? Even if staff do get hired, where will the funding for projects come from?

But perhaps the biggest contraction is in the neighbourhoods part of the Neighbourhoods of Learning. The concept is based on a physical sense of neighbourhood – the kids go to the school with the kids they play with in their community. But the school choice agenda of the government is breaking down that connection between community and school.

As boards try to compete for students from surrounding districts with sports academies, art schools, horse riding academies and other "magnet" schools, the link with community is broken. When schools compete with other schools to attract students to keep from closing, the link with a community is broken. When students are encouraged by government to sign up for online courses offered anywhere in the province instead of their neighbourhood school, the link with community is broken.

If we really take neighbourhoods of learning seriously, we have to recognize that these are social institutions, not just physical facilities. As David Chudnovsky says, success requires "opening the doors, inviting in everyone, providing space, resources and programs to meet their needs, managing the inevitable tensions–and most important, seeing the school as a locus for community development."

Encouraging individualism through "choice" programs, takes us in the opposite direction, moving students out of their neighbourhoods. Community schools, hubs, or whatever we call them, will only fulfill their possibilities if they have resources and if there is leadership that rejects neo-liberal competition as an underlying ideology and adopts community and cooperation as central values.

Saskatchewan's School^{PLUS}: An Empowerment Journey, Not a Destination

MICHAEL LECLAIRE

Michael LeClaire's experience with School^{PLUS} in Saskatchewan reminds us early on of the importance of school-community integration for community members themselves. But better than that, it also shows how something as potentially deadly as a government Task Force can result in a really progressive re-thinking of the community role of schools when its members engage in genuine public dialogue and reflect what they learn in their report. In addition, though, we are shown the chilling effect of government bureaucrats confronting the prospects of interdepartmental co-operation or even the need to abandon neo-liberal policy development in the face of new ideas from the real world. His conclusion, however, gives us hope that Saskatchewan's community spirit in education will rise again.

The Saskatchewan Council on Children, in its *Second Report*, dated October 1998, made the recommendation that:

> *The Government of Saskatchewan undertake a public discussion involving all stakeholders (parents, children, educators, Aboriginal communities, human service providers, community organizations, and businesses)* to determine the role public education could play as a locus for holistically meeting the needs of children. (p. 18, emphasis added)

The Government of Saskatchewan had been strongly lobbied to initiate a Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School, which "raises the suspicion that something extraordinary, and perhaps quite fundamental, must be at stake" (Tymchak, 2001, p.4). As a member of the Task Force and Public Dialogue of the Role of the School in 1999, along with 11 other Task Force members appointed by the Minister of Education, I was taken aback with the passion and commitment from the general public of Saskatchewan on the role schools play within society.

What follows is my understanding of what happened during those first few years. I begin with two anecdotes, which will always be with me. (As a Task Force Member, we wanted to protect the anonymity of each community we visited and each individual we met, but we were given permission to retell their stories so others could listen and learn.)

A farming community in central Saskatchewan:

A gigantic man slowly rose from his chair. The bright sunlight streaming in through the school's library windows seemed to dim momentarily, the dust particles scattering as he slowly manoeuvred across the row of seated community members. When he reached the center aisle, he began to walk towards me. His long strides were purposeful and with an accusing finger pointed right at me, his eyes locked with mine. At that moment, I realized that this quiet, respectful, rural Saskatchewan community meeting was about to be shattered. His voice was strong and firm.

> You have asked us questions about our community and our school. We have been honest with you. You have listened to us and we have given you our answers. By coming back here again, you have given us hope. You tell that government of yours that if they don't fulfill their promise, they won't be the government next time!

A northern Aboriginal community:

An elderly gentleman sat quietly all night, patiently listening to what his northern community had to say about the role of their school. As

with most northern communities, everyone turned out at the school gym that day. There were prayers, followed by a feast in which all members celebrated the opportunity to answer questions and pose solutions that would enable their community to survive and thrive. Their stories were passionate, honest, and hopeful. The meeting ended and all went home with one exception. The Elder shook my hand and thanked us for coming. He wanted to say a few things before he went home, and he began to talk about his community where had lived his entire life. He told us stories of how his community had changed with anticipated and unanticipated results of growth and technology.

> I told you that I know everyone in this community. I am related to so many and have close ties to the land here, to Mother Earth. However, I no longer know my children. Today, I see the children walk down our streets. They do not walk; they kind of sway. Their hats sit crookedly on their heads. Some have bandanas wrapped around their heads. Some have bandanas hanging out of the jean pockets. Their baggy jeans look like they are ready to fall off. They are trying to look like rappers from California. They have lost their pride in themselves and their own people. They no longer show respect for Mother Earth. They no longer have interest in living with her. They do not want to hear the stories. I no longer know my children. This dream of having the whole community involved in school is our hope. Thank you for giving us hope again.

The hope expressed by that elder and by the farmer before him was echoed, in different ways, by thousands of Saskatchewan citizens.

In School[PLUS] – the program we were discussing – people felt there was not only a chance to reshape our education and human-service delivery, but to rekindle one of our greatest assets – *community*.

What happened to that hope?

WHAT THE TASK FORCE HEARD

The hope began with what we called the Public Dialogue on the Role of the School. It began with our Task Force listening. It did not begin with

a set of preconceived ideas for which we sought support.

> The lobby effort to create the Role of the School Task Force and Public Dialogue noted above … arises in the context of a growing awareness that the role that schools play in society – and the role they are expected to play – has altered dramatically. Usually this change is captured in the claim that the role *has expanded*. But the question may rightly be asked, where has this role change come from? (Tymchak, 2001 p. 5)

The Task Force reflected on what they heard, attempted to find solutions and create a vision.

> After listening carefully to the perceptions, beliefs and feelings of the people across the province as they spoke to us about schools, children and youth, the members of the Task Force on the Role of the School have gained the unmistakable impression that the ground on which 'school' stands had been shaken. (p. 5)

Schools within their respective communities in Saskatchewan had, for the last two decades, been subjected to powerful change forces at a very fundamental level, much like an earthquake with its movement of tectonic plates. Schools had been shaken by these tectonic shifts.

Each of the tectonic factors (the rise of special needs, demographic shift, information society and globalization, poverty, a suspected increase of at-risk children from 25% to 40%, pupil mobility, family changes, cross cultural issues, human services integration, rural depopulation, curriculum reform, career concerns, violence, student attitudes and behaviour) "had an impact not only in and of itself, but also as it collided with the expectations and practices of what had gone on before, the status quo" (Tymchak, 2001, p. 7).

These tectonic factors were no mystery to Saskatchewan citizens; they knew them well.

Before writing the final report, Task Force members submitted an Interim Report (June 30, 2000). It set out their preliminary findings and recommendations to educational stakeholders and the general public of the province, inviting their reaction and response. Following this publi-

cation, an invitational symposium was conducted to hear comments on the recommendations and to press the public for ideas regarding implementation of the recommendations. The Task Force got a clear message: they had to be a lot more direct in their recommendations; they had to be bold; they had to take a stand.

> Saskatchewan and its schools have come to a turning point, a time of decision … we are about something much more than accommodation and adjustment—we are in the throes of creating a new society! … and the birth of this new society represents both a challenge and an enormous opportunity. (Tymchak, 2001, p. 39)

When they wrote the final report, *School^{PLUS}: A Vision for Children and Youth, Final Report* (Tymchak, 2001), the Task Force had taken in the understanding that this was a time of decision. The report outlined 24 detailed recommendations to ensure that the vision of the citizens of Saskatchewan – for genuine community schools – was honoured and fulfilled. This was a clearly articulated, fiscally attainable vision, supported by political will.

The recommendations were divided into the following four sections.

SECTION A: STRUCTURE, ROLES AND PARTNERSHIPS

Section A outlined the core components of the vision to locate public education within a supportive environment of integrated services and programs for children and youth. Foundational to this concept was the adoption for all public schools of the Community School philosophy (Recommendation 1.1), by which it meant:

- A school that views itself as an integral part of community;
- A school that views the whole community, its agencies, organizations, businesses, trades, churches, and so on, as a resource for the school;
- A school in which parents are valued as partners in the education of their children; where every effort is made to give them meaningful involvement in establishing the goals of the school and in the design of the education program;

- A school in which the culture of the children and the culture of their community is strongly reflected in the school;
- A school in which a sincere effort is made to adapt the educational program to the needs of the children, to give them optimal opportunity for success;
- A school that takes a developmental rather than a deficit approach to children; that begins where the child is and endeavours to take the child as far along the path of learning as possible;
- A school in which pupil consultation at all levels, but especially at the middle years and high school levels, is an important consideration in the determination of school policy and practice;
- A school that views its facilities as a resource for the community and seeks to find ways to share this resource under appropriate supervisory conditions. (pp. 47-48)

According to the feedback from Saskatchewan's public, these foundational recommendations entailed even more fundamental changes in the way that education and human services were offered in Saskatchewan. Human-service integration would lead to the creation and development of a "School^{PLUS} environment that draws upon all of the governmental, non-governmental and community resources available to children and youth" (Tymchak, 2001).

SECTION B: PROGRAMS

The Final Report examined programs and program changes to address a wide variety of needs and issues from youth-not-in-school to information technology, extracurricular education, high schools and others.

SECTION C: SUPPORT

Here, important issues relating to facilities and funding to support this vision were explained.

SECTION D: IMPLEMENTATION

In this section the Task Force clearly outlined the implementation processes and the development of an action plan.

There are six more subsections to Recommendation 1 and 23 and other detailed recommendations, which concisely outlined the development of this new system. The last recommendation under Section 24, Implementation, was, in the Task Force's opinion, paramount for the success of School[PLUS]:

> 24.1 That the Government create a broad-based action-oriented monitoring process, including a core committee, to oversee the implementation of the recommendations contained in this report; and further,
>
> 24.2 That this committee, and process, be known as the School[PLUS] Children and Youth Monitoring and Action Plan (SCYMAP).
>
> 24.3 That SCYMAP be given the mandate and resources to develop special-topic materials, and create a broad-based Symposium, as a follow-up to this report. (Tymchak, 2001, p. 128)

The Government of Saskatchewan issued the report, *Securing Saskatchewan's Future* (2002, February), their official response to the *Role of the School Task Force Final Report*. Signed by six Ministers, and endorsed by the Premier, Securing Saskatchewan's Future outlined the challenges and opportunities, the goals, and a plan of action. The plan of action outlined three basic elements, which it lists as follows:

- establish structures and mechanisms to engage partners, community leaders, stakeholders and individuals in planning and shared responsibility
- undertake consensus building and organizational change processes to facilitate province-wide consensus about how best to implement the vision for School[PLUS] and to ensure sustained

commitment to the significant changes called for in schools and in human service delivery
- take action on priority recommendations. (Government of Saskatchewan, 2002, p.7)

Through an action plan in 2002, the government made a financial commitment to School[PLUS] and outlined 10 Key Priorities for Action. The Government of Saskatchewan was committed to making School[PLUS] a reality, and it lent its support by doubling the number of Community Schools and launching such initiatives as Kids First.

HOW A GREAT VISION LOSES ITS LIFE

In spite of what appeared to be concerted government action on this program, there were major problems with implementation right from the start.

As often happens with such reform packages – in an era of cutbacks – the funds identified for School[PLUS] were placed in "general grants," not in a "target or envelope" fund specifically designated for School[PLUS] start up. School Boards received extra funds with little or no direction and, as a result, the funds designated for School[PLUS] were spent in other ways.

Furthermore, School[PLUS] failed to become a secure and recognized vision through a combination of misunderstandings, a series of unforeseen occurrences or circumstances, and, most importantly, the failure of the bureaucracy to continue to involve recognized and respected leadership and to grasp the complexities associated with the development of a new method of "doing business."

School[PLUS] is a philosophy, not a program; it is a journey, not a destination. It is not only about a critical internal examination of school per se, but it is also an examination of community roles and resources that could positively affect the lives of children, youth, and their families. Even though the Final Report offered explicit directions, Task Force Members clearly understood the need for people to "wrap their heads" around this concept and develop the necessary relationships before venturing out and implementing School[PLUS]. Before any meaningful and purposeful provincial implementation could take place, School[PLUS] had to be discussed from the grass roots level to senior government levels. Unfortunately, some

educators viewed School[PLUS] as the "saviour" and desperately wanted the blueprint so they could begin to implement School[PLUS] in their communities. What they failed to recognize was that School[PLUS] was not a *blueprint* but was, in reality, a *greenprint* – a living, changing, adapting, holistic organism that changed according to need or demand.

School[PLUS] is based on the premise of developing people and relationships, a philosophy grounded in the concepts of shared leadership, ownership, responsibility, and accountability. It is a process dependent on mutual respect, trust, acceptance, tolerance, patience, and open-and-honest communication. School[PLUS] is about developing and growing social capacity, that is, developing interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration. The premise is that by working together in the various disciplines (education, health, business, justice, etc.) we can come up with better solutions, quicker response times, targeted support, more information, and knowledge and services to meet the complex issues facing children, youth, and their families. School[PLUS] is about sharing power and forming a new governance system. Government departments/ministries and community partners need to see what is in it for them. They need to see the bigger picture and use the school as a nexus to begin this journey. It is not about the Ministry of Education leading this vision, but the development of a new model where leadership is shared with all concerned. School[PLUS] is built *with* and not just *for* people. The positive result of this process is empowerment, which, in turn, gives its members strength, a sense of belonging, purpose, and ownership over their own community. Task Force Members heard the communities loud and clear,

> Do not tell us what to do. Do not tell us what is best for our community. Just support us when we are ready in our endeavours to make our school and community a safer and better place in which to live, raise our children and youth. Let us work together. Let us be a part of the solution not apart from process. (Tymchak, 2001)

The failure to recognize this immense paradigm shift and its respective nuances caused School[PLUS] to falter.

A GOVERNMENT AGENDA UNDERCUTS COMMUNITY SCHOOL PHILOSOPHY

Task Force members believed that School[PLUS]could be the conduit to enable the various ministries to work together. As members, we heard strong voices about the stovepipe mentality that was choking the social fabric of our province, hence our communities. Concerned citizens could not understand why government departments could not work with one another, let alone speak with one another. They firmly believed that School[PLUS] could act as the catalyst to create a more effective and efficient human-service system. The government system, however, viewed School[PLUS] as only a piece of the puzzle, not the philosophy or glue to cement these pieces together to create a closer, stronger society.

About the same time that School[PLUS] was being launched, Saskatchewan Learning (i.e., the Department or Ministry of Education) developed, promoted, and instituted a number of initiatives or directives. One was a concerted effort to develop a Continuous Improvement Model which many school divisions viewed as "outcomes-based" thinking. This model acknowledged School[PLUS], but only as a piece of the process. The failure to build the Continuous Improvement Model on the School[PLUS] philosophy caused School[PLUS] to lose ground. And later, school amalgamation/closure became the highest priority, with over 90 school divisions being reduced to fewer than 30. Communities worried about losing their school, school boards worried about losing their autonomy and offices, and teachers and senior administrators worried about their jobs. Everyone knew that no matter what happened, it would never be the same again. With deep emotions and confusion around school amalgamations, School[PLUS] again lost impetus. Today's topic mandated by the Ministry is "Assessment for Learning."

The members of the Role of the School Task Force gained the respect of so many Saskatchewan citizens. Their in-depth knowledge of the passion and hope that Saskatchewan citizens invested in School[PLUS] gained members provincial recognition as leaders for this vision. Many viewed the members as strong grass roots supporters of this new system, and the Saskatchewan people trusted them. Task Force members were vocal on the creation of School[PLUS] Children and Youth Monitoring and Action

Plan (SCYMAP) and strongly suggested that two to three key members be a part of small committee composed of senior government officials, along with an equal representative selection of other Saskatchewan people. It was imperative "that SCYMAP be given the mandate and resources to develop special-topic materials, and create a broad-based Symposium, as a follow up to this report." Task Force members understood the need for this committee as the first step towards ensuring School[PLUS] and as the conduit necessary to begin discussions on the new vision for children and youth.

SCYMAP was never developed. Instead, the government formed new committees to implement the vision. The government restructured the Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth; it established the Strengthening Educational Capacity Forum, as well as the Interdepartmental Children and Family Services Integration Forum. As a result, these new committee members had to learn about School[PLUS]. They had to understand its roots of origin; adopt its beliefs and practices; learn how its structure, roles and partnerships could be developed; and understand the intricacies of the implementation processes. As well, they had to get to know and work with one another and develop purposeful, meaningful relationships: a process that took time, energy, money, and commitment. Yet not one Task Force Member was invited to participate in these new structures. Had they been invited, it may have shortened the transition time and their newly gained expertise may have proved beneficial.

These committees were to oversee the implementation processes. The restructured Saskatchewan Council on Children and Youth, along with government, were given the task of engaging community leaders to:

- develop the School[PLUS] network of integrated services linked to or based in schools
- implement the recommendations of the Task Force on the Role of the School; and
- set priorities for achieving the wellbeing of children and youth, particularly through providing supports to meet their learning needs. (Government of Saskatchewan, 2002)

So many committee structures involved in consensus building and the organizational change processes could be viewed as a sustained

commitment. However, what resulted from all these committees? What actions took place? What key policies were changed? What committees had the express mandate and resources to implement School^{PLUS}? What new legislation was developed to encourage and mandate service integration and interagency collaboration? The Task Force had strongly suggested that

> The province's delivery of human services will be seriously handicapped unless decisive action is taken on at least some of the alternative proposals. The Task Force recognises as ideal a reform that would see coterminous boundaries for all human service agencies and perhaps, other services too, along the lines of a county system. (Tymchak, 2001, p. 57)

There were numerous, positive results from these committees, but the results were shared in a manner that did not seriously inform the general public of the progress of School^{PLUS}.

By nature, government departments are bureaucratic and, for the most part, are independent from each other. The people of Saskatchewan voiced a strong concern that this structure was neither working nor meeting the needs of the people of Saskatchewan. As they had stated, the stovepipe mentality or the "silo concept" was ineffective, inefficient, and costly. Task Force members were encouraged that six ministers had signed "Securing Saskatchewan's Future"; yet in reality, the feeling was that not much had changed.

Interdepartmental collaboration is routinely difficult to achieve. Ministries have their own procedures and policies, their own guidelines, their own mandate, and their own people, and there appeared to be general recognition that Saskatchewan Learning was leading the development of School^{PLUS}. One of SCYMAP's special topics was to examine the development of an interagency, human-service integration policy that would have enabled members of various government departments to work collaboratively to better address the needs of children and youth. The Task Force had wanted to set a system of rewards for interagency work to encourage people to work together, rather than alone, in addressing the complex issues facing children, youth, and their families.

Then the government changed, as was predicted earlier. As with any change in government, change in education happens. The present government has shifted to a focus on school funding and the need for more cutbacks. With this focus on the front seat, once again School[PLUS] has taken a back seat. Furthermore, the Ministry of Education is committed to Assessment for Learning and the term School[PLUS] is seldom heard in educational settings.

It's worth noting, however, the vision of working together to deal with children, youth and their families continues to receive broad support; there is a general recognition that this vision not only makes good common sense, but it also has fiscal benefits. And overall, we haven't lost the vision that interdepartmental and/or interagency policy must be further developed so that those complex issues (tectonic factors) can be addressed and managed in a much more respectful and empowering manner.

THE CONTINUING VISION OF SCHOOL[PLUS]

The term School[PLUS] is no longer officially in vogue, but the vision remains vibrant and alive with a wider public. The "term itself is not terribly important; but the concept of public education taking place within the larger context of human services – by whatever name – is vital" (Tymchak, 2001, p. 45). The primary purpose of schools remains to educate children and youth; to develop the whole child, intellectually, physically, socially/emotionally and spiritually; and to support service delivery where schools serve as centers at the community level, delivering appropriate social, health, justice, recreation, and culture for children, youth and their families.

The vision of School[PLUS] continues to serve as the nexus of community. The Ministry of Education formed School Councils to give parents a more influential role and voice in the school. Numerous examples of School[PLUS] do exist and thrive in the province today. *Many Roads Taken: Stories of School[PLUS]* – a collection of stories compiled by the Saskatchewan Teachers Federation, Saskatchewan Learning, and the Saskatchewan Professional Development Unit (SPDU) – demonstrates how this vision has evolved in rural, urban, and northern parts of the province. Authentic partnerships have been, and continue to be, developed among the school, government agencies, community-based organ-

izations, First Nation Tribal Councils, business, service clubs, parents, youth and volunteers. The Ministry of Health has taken a strong leadership role in sustaining and promoting the philosophy of School[PLUS] by supporting such initiatives as "Enhancing Interdisciplinary Collaboration in Health Care" and the "Canadian Collaborative Mental Health Care Initiative." Saskatchewan Health and Saskatchewan Learning have published the document, *Towards School[PLUS]: Planning for Health-Related Supports for Children and Youth*. The Ministry of Social Services and Justice supported School[PLUS] through their "Youth Services Model "and "Child Welfare Redesign." The Human Services Integration Forum is addressing policy to form "inter-ministry policy and collaboration". A local service club partnered with a school to help make it a safer place for all, and as a result a Restorative Action project has grown with the infusion of more community and government partnerships to support a Restorative Action Program now housed in five other high schools. In all of this, it is clear that School[PLUS] roots run deep in Saskatchewan schools and communities.

My sense of School[PLUS] now is that we have had a winter period where our roots have been dormant. But now there is possibility of new spring growth appearing, marking another growth ring for this vision that has been with us in so many ways over the years. There is now a general recognition among schools and communities that by working together we can make the significant differences needed to bring about positive change for children, youth, and their families. Our world is global; we cannot do this work alone, and we cannot be islands isolated from one another. We know that when we work together; when we invite those whose voice is seldom heard; when we *in-clude* instead of *ex-clude*; when we treat each other with respect, understanding, tolerance, and patience, we will be stronger, our roots deeper. We recognize that the fruit of our labour is empowerment and when school and community feel empowered, significant positive change occurs and hope returns to the lives of children, youth and their families.

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The School-Community Nexus in South Africa

SALIM VALLY AND CAROL ANNE SPREEN

Salim Vally and Carol Anne Spreen take us to post-apartheid South Africa where the struggle for community schools in the face of neo-liberalism has assumed crisis proportions. At first, the scale of the challenges facing a country struggling to emerge from the heritage of apartheid, where the AIDS pandemic has left millions of children parentless and two-thirds of all children live in poverty, seems to place it beyond any meaningful comparison with Canada. And yet, as Vally and Spreen show, with a shift of the focus of inequality from racial separateness to economic disparity, the realities of class struggle readily find their echoes in Canadian society. Public education systems make accommodations to middle-class demands in order to shore up privilege and stem the flight to exclusive, private education; community engagement is narrowly limited to parental involvement in school support and governance, effectively marginalizing or excluding the poor; schools are encouraged to improve their school budgets through fundraising, with only wealthy communities having any success; corporations use donations to cash-strapped schools to promote their image and products. But voices of resistance are being raised and a new approach to community schools as fully engaged hubs of social development offers an alternative.

INTRODUCTION

'Race', class, gender and spatial inequities were the bedrock upon which the development of apartheid capitalism was built. These ele-

ments continue to remain tightly woven into social and economic relations impacting on the school-community nexus.

The adoption of a neo-liberal macroeconomic framework in 1996 (Vally and Spreen, 2006) by the new South African government has compounded unemployment which today stands at 41%. South Africa's Gini coefficient index – which shows the level of income inequality – stood at 0.679, overtaking Brazil as the country with the widest gap between rich and poor (Pressly, 2009). This inequality is complicated by extreme levels of violence and the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which have ravaged South African communities and schools over the last decade and a half.

With these inequities as background, we want to look at the historical and political dimensions of social service provisioning, its link with public education, and the destructiveness of market forces in developing a caring relationship between schools and communities.

According to the newly formed Public Participation in Education Network (an initiative consisting of social movements, trade unionists, teachers, and academics involved in education):

> Our schools must become sustainable community institutions that can be mobilized as hosts towards caring for vulnerable children. For this to happen overburdened staff must be given support by health, psychological and social service professionals. This is not happening at present in most schools. Quality education is not only about the curriculum; these issues of poverty matter as well. (www.ppen.org.za)

The reliance on a centrally controlled bureaucratic framework and the misplaced and disarming hope that the neo-liberal state would deliver the goods has prevented South African communities from building on the energies and creativity that previously existed in their struggle against apartheid education.

In recognition of this reality, the PPEN call to action reads in part: "The absence of meaningful participation has led to the disempowerment of our communities, the failure to engage with the ideas and the potential solutions about the most difficult challenges of education, and a feeling of despair about any possibilities for change" (Ibid).

For PPEN and other community-based initiatives the reliance on formal structures of governance and the 'expert' advice – divorced from the reality and the everyday experience of communities – has failed. What is required, they argue, is the re-envisioning and reclaiming of the public space of schools for community engagement, intergenerational learning, and reciprocal relationships for community engagement and social development.

In the South African experience, the desire to promote schools as pillars of sustainable community development in South Africa as elsewhere directly clashes with market-driven initiatives and private service provisioning on school premises. These privatizing policies undermine the very notion of schools as a community hub for the public good.

This article will provide a historical overview of school-community relationships in South Africa, first under apartheid and then in post-apartheid South Africa with emphasis on the evolution and role of the school governing body (SGB). The latter was meant to be the vehicle through which the community had a determining role in local democratic school governance. We also examine social inequality in communities and its impact on schooling as well as state sanctioned attempts to foist public-private-partnerships on schools. Finally, we describe attempts by a vital civil society to win back schools and education as a public sphere unencumbered by the market and bureaucratic state control.

HISTORICAL OVERVIEW OF COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN SOUTH AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Basic to an understanding of school-community relations in post-apartheid South Africa is the South African Schools Act of 1996 (SASA). The Act replaced the multi-school models of the various apartheid-era education departments with two legally recognized categories of schools: public schools and independent (private) schools. It also provided for a significant decentralization of power to the school level through the establishment at all public schools of school governing bodies with considerable powers subject to national norms and standards determined by the National Education Department. These powers included determining admission policies; administering and controlling the schools' property, building and grounds, including the

right to rent them out for fundraising purposes; recommending the appointment of teaching and non-teaching staff; and running the financing of the schools as cost-centres. The latter included charging fees and suing parents if they did not pay the fees. Presently, as a result of massive mobilization by social movements, teacher unions and non-governmental organizations, 60% of the 25,000 public schools have been designated as no-fee schools (for a description of this mobilization see Vally et al, 2008).

Prior to 1994, 15 apartheid Ministries of Education existed in South Africa: the Department of National Education which was responsible for national norms and standards, 10 'homeland' or 'bantustan' departments, and four racially-defined departments for Africans outside of the homelands, 'coloureds', Indians, and whites. Each department had its own school community models. In all departments school-level structures were variously known as school committees, school boards or management councils. They consisted of parent representatives and had no decision-making powers. In the segregated schools for black groups (that is, Africans, 'coloureds,' and Indians) these committees had very little credibility as the struggle against apartheid gained momentum (Motala and Pampallis, 2005) The struggle against apartheid education took on a coordinated dimension with the establishment of the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in the 1980s (Motala and Vally, 2002). The NECC called on parents to withdraw from statutory parent committees at school and instead urge communities to establish parent-teacher-student associations (PTSAs) outside the control of the apartheid system. The PTSAs grew rapidly, particularly after 1990, and gained a high level of popular legitimacy in many communities; they were seen as organs of people's power at the local level (Motala and Pampallis, 2005). While PTSAs were uneven throughout the country, they nonetheless suggested a desire among many communities to develop systems of democratic school governance and provide a voice to previously powerless communities around issues of education.

After the unbanning of the liberation movements in February 1990, the apartheid government, under pressure to ease racial discrimination and cognizant that such measures were essential to influence the structure of a future South Africa, began to restructure various social institutions including the education system.

At the end of the 1980s, the apartheid regime had begun to prepare the country's white public schools for transition to a new democratic government. As part of that process, government asked parents to choose from three models of integration and school funding (Vally, 2008).

A vote for Model A schools would have made state schools completely private. Model B schools would have remained state schools, but could admit Black students up to 50% of the school's maximum enrolment. Most notably, a vote for Model C schools would have created so-called "state-aided schools." These schools would have received 75% of their budgets via state funding, and would have been responsible for supplying the remaining 25% of their operating budgets through user fees from parents and private voluntary donations. Model C schools, like Model B schools, could also admit Black students capped at 50% of enrolment.

At the end of the voting period, the majority of parent bodies in white schools had voted to remain state schools, or "status quo" schools. In 1992, however, the government required that all Model B and status quo schools convert to the Model C form. It has been argued that the government undertook such unilateral restructuring, and adopted the mechanism of school fees, in part to shift control of schools to local white communities and out of the hands of a soon-to-be-elected democratic government, which was certain to be majority Black. Thus, at the time that the new democratic government took over the reins of power in 1994, most historically white schools were Model C schools and charged school fees.

The drafters of policies related to the organization, governance and funding of post-apartheid schools did not have a free hand to change this situation. Various White Papers and discussion documents were issued between 1994 and 1996, yet these remained inconclusive. A number of legislative, administrative and negotiating processes were required in order to put these new policies into effect. For instance, Section 247 of the Interim Constitution stipulated that negotiations with governing bodies of schools in the public sector (largely white Model C schools) were essential before alterations could be made to their rights, powers and functions.

Section 247 of the Interim Constitution considerably strengthened the powers of governing bodies (benefiting primarily middle-class and

'white' schools) whereby local communities would have ownership and local accountability and could thus control how monies would be raised and spent. From the onset, negotiations over the Schools Bill were marked by controversy and hundreds of parents staged walkouts of meetings with members of governing bodies and provincial Departments of Education. In terms of giving their inputs on school user fees, wealthy parents claimed that copies of the legislation did not reach them on time, violating their constitutional right that the powers of governing bodies could be altered only when "an agreement resulting from bona fide negotiations had been reached with such bodies…" (Chisholm and Vally, 1996).

Initially the funding levels in former Model C schools were left relatively unchanged. This is yet another example illustrating the complexities around 'participation', 'consensus' and the sway of conservative forces as a result of the negotiated settlement between the apartheid regime and the liberation movements. Tikly commented, "Leaving the question of access for Blacks to historically white schools…to market forces is extremely problematic in the South African situation. If past experience is anything to go by, there is every reason to believe that many white parents will continue to prefer to set higher fees rather than admit more Blacks" (Tikly, 1997). Indeed, as things turned out, the poor were further excluded from historically white schools, as an overdemand for the limited places in these schools created upward price pressure on school fees.

A carefully devised system of open public responses intended to give broad stakeholder input instead served to modify policy formulations in favour of white interest groups and the emerging Black middle class. These groups, although relatively numerically small, were better organized and more vocal in their negotiations, while groups who sought more radical changes were less visible and tended to rely on their representatives in the new democratic government to champion their interests.

The influence of private international consultants in diluting social justice issues in these policy formulations should also not be underestimated. It was argued that "instead of incorporating the views of civil society and social agents, the government seemed more receptive to advice from consultants who use theories and methods found within the world of human-capital approaches and rates of return analysis" (Vally

and Spreen , 1998:4). An interview with a finance specialist who played a critical role in the adoption of the user fees school funding model is revealing: "I did play a role … by arguing that we needed to keep whites and articulate blacks within the public sector as an arena for state influence. Hence, the soft option in financing alternatives …The Committee [referring to the committee reviewing the funding model] was skeptical at first but later realized that this matter affected not only white children but children of civil servants working in government. The notion was that there was a need to keep the Black middle class involved in and as advocates for the public schooling sector" (Sayed and Jansen, 2001:276). Some analysts make the deprecatory observation that the black political elite desired the continuation of the former Model C schools in order to be able to "silently permit their own class interests to be taken care of without confronting their own, largely poor, constituencies" (Karlsson et al 2001:151).

Initially, the Review Committee favoured the 'Partnership Funding Option' where fees would be set by individual schools but within limits determined by provincial departments. Crucially, wealthy parents would continue to pay fees on a sliding scale but at least 50% of all parents would be completely exempt from paying fees. However, a second White Paper on the Organisation, Governance and Finance of Schools (DoE 1996), partly a response to the Review Committee's report, introduced a User Fee option. Also worth commenting on is how the Review Committee's earlier recommendations towards a more equitable solution were diluted because the Department aimed for reaching a 'principled consensus' which grew out of an emerging interest in decentralized approaches to decision-making.

The option largely based on user fees was introduced as a scheme to maintain funding levels at previously privileged schools and thereby keep the middle-class in the public school sector. In the end, "an influential task team comprised of members from the Financial and Fiscal Commission, the Departments of Education, Finance and State Expenditure, the Review Committee and the international consultants, had concluded that option four would be the most desirable" (Mokgalane, Vally and Greenstein, 1996: 8). Earlier, the persuasive powers of international consultants and their impact on policy initiatives were noted. This point is raised again to show how these influential

actors were brought in alongside with other 'policy experts' (in this case mostly economists and members of government finance committees) to legitimate the highly contestable and largely unviable notions of governance and school fees.

TIRISANO – A CALL TO ACTION

In 1999 Former Education Minister Kader Asmal's Tirisano or "Call to Action" outlined the government's statement of priorities to revitalise South Africa's education and training system. Tirisano was developed in response to the rampant inequality that continued to persist in the educational system, making long-term and sustainable social development extremely difficult. The increasing social inequality further served to disempower large parts of society which over time gave rise to social alienation and the criminalizing of parts of society. Many felt the gains of the democratic struggles of the past were placed at risk.

Building on the South African Schools Act (SASA) Tirisano continued to focus on the pivotal role of school governing bodies as "indispensible links between schools and the communities they serve". While SASA emphasized that school governing bodies in poorer communities must be strengthened in order for them to become viable, essential to Tirisano was the importance of community 'ownership' of the school and factors which contribute to the establishment of a culture of learning and teaching.

The SASA was the first attempt in South Africa to adopt legislation that would provide for parental participation in the governance of schools. Yet, as many studies since then have shown (Motala and Pampallis, 2005), the ideas of a 'community' or neighbourhood school, which the SASA is based on, is fast disappearing. The phenomenon of migration has become widespread and this choice is not only exercised by middle-class parents. Many Black working-class parents sacrifice much to enroll their children in better-resourced schools, despite their own material constraints and limitations imposed on them in terms of location and cost of schooling. Many of these schools are situated far from townships, making parental participation in school governance difficult or impossible. Just as importantly, 20% of school-age children are orphans (Statistics South

Africa, 2008) and 'community' involvement in the form of the SGBs is premised on parental participation.

The state's notion that schools should become the focus of community life hinges on parental involvement, which the phenomenon of migration and the HIV/AIDS pandemic is reducing more and more. While the obvious solution is to improve the conditions and quality of teaching and learning of schools in all areas, a creative interim option suggested early on was the clustering of schools to share facilities (Smit and Hennessy, 1994). The advantage of this recommendation was aimed at moving schooling away from the apartheid heritage of separate group areas and allowed for the optimal and equitable use of resources for education. Sadly, the post-apartheid government did not pursue this option.

PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

Issues around community participation in schools require further debate. Early on in the establishment of SGBs, Sayed and Carrim (1998) warned that the provisions of the SASA – particularly those that dealt with parental participation and finances – circumscribe inclusiveness in ways that would further marginalize working-class and rural people. They argued that while the notion of community participation had tremendous emotional and popular appeal, the reality is that as societies become more fragmented along lines of class, colour, gender, it becomes difficult to sustain an unqualified commitment to community participation in the education system.

Karlsson, McPhearson and Pampallis question the notion of partnerships which was promoted through Tirisano:

> One of the main concerns of the developers of policy for school organization, governance and funding – at least those traditionally associated with the ANC – has been to redress past injustices and to achieve greater equity in resource provision and educational opportunity. The concept of partnerships between the state and local school communities has been developed to address precisely this in the context of the limited availability of state resources to fund transformation. The problem with this approach, though, is that the main beneficiaries are those com-

munities which are able to contribute the most resources to particular partnerships with the state.

These writers show that community participation in the governance of education has not led to the diminution of disparities between rich and poor as many had hoped. The irony is that the post-apartheid policies, though laying the basis for the improvement of schooling through greater democratic participation by communities in the management of schools, have not shown how they can become an efficient mechanism for the redistribution of educational resources for the attainment of greater equity in education.

So while 'community' as the basis of participation potentially provides a strong sense of solidarity, it may also mask fundamental differences within groups. It is crucial, therefore, to engage with the notion of community in actual settings through actual practice to prevent participation from having the unintended effect of promoting privilege and exclusion, rather than democratizing the educational system or facilitating the empowerment of historically marginalized individuals. The formation of mass-based organizations representing governing bodies will be crucial in determining how these issues will manifest themselves.

Tirisano's community-school idea was intended to boost the flagging Culture of Learning and Teaching and Service (COLTS) campaign and partnerships for school improvement. More importantly, the COLTS campaign was met with varying degrees of success over the past 15 years. Many studies have analyzed the campaign and specific recommendations have been made that were largely ignored. A study by Chisholm and Vally (1996) identified a number of issues in Gauteng schools – infrastructure; facilities and resources; leadership, management and administration; fractured and adversarial relationships between principals, teachers, students and parents; the socio-economic context; and the often distant relationship between schools and the education departments – in understanding and addressing what has been perceived as a 'collapsed' culture of learning and teaching. The study matched an analysis of each issue with strategies for intervention coming from insider perspectives of what happens in schools. While common themes were discernible, the study also made the point that homogenizing solutions are inappropriate in dealing with the complexities and

highly unpredictable character and uniqueness of individual schools and particular community contexts.

SCHOOL GOVERNING BODIES: PROMISES AND PITFALLS OF DEMOCRATIC GOVERNANCE

Although the SASA emphasized the need to support school governing bodies in poorer areas, there was little direction as to how this would have been done. Over the last decade a number of analysts have shown that mechanisms and policies for democratic governance were not reducing inequalities between schools. In fact, there is growing evidence that shows inequalities are increasing (Karlsson, McPherson & Pampallis, 1999; Spreen and Vally, 2006) Underlying the critique is the sense that schooling will be differentiated less by 'race' than by class because of the real possibility of market competition in schools. The Amendment to the Education Laws Act, (1998) allowed governing bodies to employ additional teachers with their own financial resources, further permitted discrepancies between schools. More affluent schools have been able to choose the most experienced and skilled teachers to the disadvantage of those schools, which have less to offer.

We have argued previously that the state seems to be shedding its responsibility for the provision of education and transferring it to school governing bodies (Spreen and Vally, 2006). Parents on the SGBs are increasingly viewing their roles primarily as co-opted fundraisers carrying out provincial and national level instructions and not as decision makers in education matters. Training for governing bodies around the country is uneven at best. The unpreparedness of governing bodies and the complexity of their tasks resulted in serious difficulties. The loss of teachers results in severe and in some cases violent disruptions in a number of schools, partially as a result of the inability of SGBs to provide leadership.

Areas such as the adequate provision of learner and teacher support materials, electricity, libraries and laboratories are critical. Increasingly, more Black schools are being threatened with closure as a result of the exodus to slightly better equipped schools. Equally important though is the working and service conditions and the professional development

and support to teachers as well as increasing the capacity and professionalism of officials in the departments of education. Many schools have had vacant posts for long periods. The South African school system is highly differentiated and is based on social class reflecting the broader inequalities in society. The class-biased labour market in teachers – with only some school governing bodies able to afford additional teachers and permit smaller class sizes – is one example of the inequalities. While there are successes in the area of democratic school governance there are, because of inequalities, also numerous examples of frustration, demoralization and anger.

Ironically, given the emphasis on redress and equity, the funding provisions of the South African Schools Act promulgated with the user fees option appeared to have worked thus far to the advantage of public schools patronised by middle-class and wealthy parents. The apartheid regime favoured such communities with high-quality facilities, equipment and resources. Vigorous fund-raising by parent bodies, including commercial sponsorships and fee income, have enabled many such schools to add to their facilities, equipment and learning resources, and expand their range of cultural and sporting activities. Since 1995, when such schools were required to downsize their staff establishments, many have been able to recruit additional staff on governing body contracts, paid from the school fund.

SOCIAL INEQUALITY AND SCHOOLING: POVERTY, HIV/AIDS AND VIOLENCE

South Africa has very high rates of child poverty. In 2007 two-thirds of children (68%) lived in households with a per-capita income below R350. (The poverty line is set at R350 per person per month, Statistics South Africa, 2008). The 2007 general household survey indicates that there were 3.7 million orphans in South Africa (ibid). These are children without a living biological parent. They amount to 20% of all children in South Africa. The number is driven primarily by the AIDS pandemic. The same survey indicates that there were 150,000 children living in a total of 79,000 child-only households across South Africa. SGB policy and school-community relations are premised on the existence of adult figures as parents when the reality is vastly different.

Many researchers have found the performance of South African schools far below that of other countries including much poorer neighboring countries (Spreen and Fanscali, 2005). South Africa achieved the lowest score on the 2006 Progress in International Reading Literacy Study (PIRLS) which evaluated the performance of Grade 4 learners from 40 countries (Howie, S et al., 2007). In 2008 the Department of Education released the provisional findings from the 2007 Grade 3 National Assessment. It also showed very low achievement levels in literacy – the mean literacy score was 36%, and over half of the learners failed to master the contents of the learning areas related to reading (Department of Education, 2008). Yet, the one area that could make a substantial difference to this situation – the provision of libraries and the enjoyment of reading – is appalling. Only 8% (1,837 schools) of public ordinary schools have functioning libraries and most of these schools with libraries are schools that charge fees and pay for the libraries themselves (Department of Education, 2009).

Many have also expressed great concern over the unacceptably high levels of violence in many South African schools. Beyond the admonition of bringing the conditions and disciplines of compulsory schooling to bear on teachers and learners – regular attendance, punctuality, and a relevant code of conduct – there has been nothing explicit in the educational transformation policies concerning a concrete programme to deal with violence or a suggested approach to address it that relates to the context of communities in which the schools are located.

Increasingly research underscores the importance of counseling to combat the effects of poverty, HIV/AIDS, violence and social tensions in South African schools. Budgetary constraints prevent education departments and most poor schools from employing specialized teachers to assist schools with these pervasive problems. Occasional visits by social workers have failed to address these problems and to win the confidence of school communities. The majority of schools with the greatest need still do not provide:

- An alternative support structure in the context of high levels of dysfunctional families;
- Meaningful life-defining and reflective activities found in artistic and cultural expressions; and

- Forums to process traumatic life experience resulting from violence and or death and instill in children a sense of confidence and self-esteem.

There is a critical need for rehabilitation centres in a number of highly volatile school districts around the country. Models for supporting schools to combat violence by providing skilled trauma counselors or professionals such as psychologists are becoming increasingly important. These personnel are essential in assisting learners as well as supporting teachers to deal with conflict situations and adversarial relations. A solution we suggested previously is to relieve well-liked and trusted teachers of their teaching responsibilities in order for them to provide counseling services. Imparting the necessary skills to these teachers and reworking their teaching time and schedules is only beginning to address the problem. Reports indicate that while some teachers have embraced this role, and are trying to resist the abuse of children and pre-empt violence in schools, the heavy workloads and an unsympathetic management often prevent them from making an impact. With increased budgetary constraints on schools, these teachers are often the first to be declared in 'excess' and transferred elsewhere.

Punitive measures against learners are also a problem. This is not to deny serious problems around drug abuse and violence. Yet, the procedures in most educational policies around these issues are punitive and do not address root causes or broader social connections to the problem. Some programmes, particularly those designed to combat HIV/AIDS have even increased youth resistance and dissent. Simultaneously, the youth are increasingly being denied access to important wellness and cultural programmes including art, music, physical education, extra-mural activities, and/or access to nurses and trained psychologists. The withdrawal of these essential programmes suggests that schools are no longer valued as sites and symbols of the public good and institutions where the youth need to be treated with much greater compassion, solidarity and trust and where their preparation for active citizenship is of primary importance. The corporate model of school governance that protects sectional and exclusive interests is proving disastrous in South Africa.

PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS (PPP) IN EDUCATION

As a result of the failure of public education those advocating for private education and variations of private education have become more and more vociferous in recent years. Talk of public-private- partnership promoted by the South African state has acquired greater credibility. Advocates of right-wing reform stridently demand a variety of responses ranging from outright privatization of education and the withdrawal of the state, to various versions of market-friendly policies and public-private- partnerships (PPP). There has been an upsurge on private provisioning of schools in both cities and in rural areas, and a number of multinational companies have promoted themselves via support to individual schools. For instance, Unilever South Africa, the producer of a major washing brand Omo, regularly publishes full page advertisements in South Africa's largest circulation newspapers promoting their installation of computers and sports facilities in schools and student bursaries. Commenting on its commitments to public schools in South Africa the Chairman of Unilever suggests, "We help people feel good, look good, and get more out of life with brands and services that are good for them and good for others." (*Sunday Times*, 2010) The article unabashedly also states "targeting housewives and mothers, it [Unilever] has undertaken numerous campaigns to empower and upgrade the quality of life for its consumers. Recognizing that mothers everywhere want a better life for their children and acknowledging the desperate need for education in South Africa, Omo found child development to be a perfect fit for its 'cause-related' marketing initiatives." Ethne Witley, public affairs manager of Unilever said the Omo Schools Campaign was established in partnership with the Department of Education to "give pupils a helping hand with their educational development."

COMMUNITY-SCHOOL NON-COMMODIFIED PARTNERSHIPS

A few years ago there was a proposed amendment to the SASA focused on parental involvement, which triggered a widespread debate in South Africa. Many criticised the new proposal for forcing parents to accept responsibility for the poor performance of their own children in a situa-

tion where state support has been lagging and where the contextual realities of poor communities have been ignored. A particularly strong critique came from the SADTU General Secretary, Thulas Nxesi, who stated, "The Department and Ministry of Education are looking for scapegoats for the inadequate performance of the education system: teachers, learners, principals and now parents – everyone except the bureaucrats who preside over the system" (Vally and Baatjes, 2007).

It is unfortunate that, except for the proposed random search and seizure measures against learners, other aspects of the draft bill including revising the minimum norms and standards for infrastructure and capacity in public schools did not generate equal interest. We argue that quality education is linked to the proper resourcing of schools – both material and human – and, if not present as is the case in many schools, positions the limited parental involvement and school governing bodies to be mere 'glorified fund-raising committees'.

It is trite to ask, as one commentator did immediately following the controversy around the proposed amendment, 'Should parents be more interested in the education of their children?' It is extremely rare for parents and caregivers not to be concerned about the performance of their children – parents have and continue to make tremendous sacrifices. It also undermines the close to 200,000 volunteer citizens who participate in school governing bodies nationwide. Rather, in relation to the SASA amendments, the question should have been framed as, 'What are the difficulties and obstacles parents face preventing their meaningful involvement in democratic school governance?'

Research, including reports commissioned by the department, has pointed to many difficulties. These include the fact that in many provinces, most parents are unemployed, and so getting to meetings, particularly for rural parents, is onerous. Other obstacles include language; insufficient capacity around key areas of school governance; the difficulties in navigating through complex laws and regulations; weak channels of communication with and support by provincial departments of education; and conflicts between parents, and educators around the meaning of governance and management. These problems can be addressed while ensuring meaningful partnerships and public accountability of the schools performance. The draft bill purports to do this, but in reality, could widen divisions and exacerbate conflicts.

The former Minister of Education has stressed that the aim of the amendment was not punitive but was intended to benignly issue a "notice" to offending schools concerning the standard of performance of learners and other matters. This we feel was disingenuous – the bill unambiguously stated schools would receive, "written warning notice" as well as the clause "If the Minister approves the notice he or she must publish in the Government gazette the names of those schools identified by the Head of Department." This is not developmental but rather an exercise in naming and shaming. Moreover, the pressure on administrators to prevent the school from being 'listed' will result in increasing tensions with educators.

In the context of rising poverty and inequality and growing protests over service delivery, communities have grasped a fact that sometimes seems to elude bureaucrats: progress (or lack thereof) in schools cannot be divorced from poverty and its consequences. We cannot expect children to come to school ready to learn if they are without parents, if they are hungry, if they have been evicted from their homes or if they lack a light by which to read at night. In this context extending a properly run, non-profit school feeding scheme to all grades and ensuring public transport is also critical and relates to quality education.

Continuing with the legacy of pre-1994 community efforts, issues of inequality and failure in the public education system have become a focal point for social mobilization. Communities once again understand that the corporate model of school governance that protects sectional and exclusive interests will perpetuate inequality. Demonizing learners and teachers, privatizing public education and giving up on equity is not the way to transform our society for the public good. We highlight a few examples of community initiatives that illustrate this understanding. On the 21st of March 2010, Human Rights Day in South Africa, 10,000 community members marched to parliament demanding the roll-out of school libraries in every public school. One of the speakers at the march, the popular singer Simphiwe Dana, referred to herself as "a survivor of Bantu Education, not a product of it" and said that her mind survived partly because she had books in her school library. She urged the government to restore dignity to the children of South Africa (www.equaleducation.org.za). The Caring Schools Network is another school-community initiative which brings together sixty organisations

around the country and promotes partnerships with schools and communities focussing on vulnerable children (www.caringschools.co.za). The PPEN initiative has embarked on working with communities throughout South Africa to organise themselves into education action committees to support education in local areas. It laments the fact that:

> Fifteen years after our first democratic elections, our education system is in a crisis…The absence of meaningful participation has led to the disempowerment of our communities, the failure to engage with their ideas and potential solutions…It has also led to the failure of proper systems of accountability about what happens in our schools and how and what education takes place. We have failed to use the energies that existed in these communities in their struggles against apartheid education. (www.ppen.org.za)

These initiatives eschew a technical rationality parading as 'solutions' which often encourages or sees the encroachment of private providers as unproblematic. Instead, they place their hope on the community to revitalise public education. Appropriately, Munir Fasheh (1990:35), writing of community education in occupied Palestine, expresses the view that "The idea of transforming reality is linked to hope, and hope is linked to the belief that change is possible and that we are all responsible for it. Community education embodies the hope that today's technological-military logic and power can be swept away by human logic and human strength."

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Autonomy and Education: The Contribution of Aboriginal Peoples to Education in Mexico in the 21st Century

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TRANSLATED BY RUTH MARGARET LECKIE

As we survey the global wreckage of public school systems and their communities, progressively weakened and undermined by business bottom-line mentalities and free-market fundamentalism, it is sometimes hard to imagine where to look for an authentic collective spirit to counter the tide of all this individualism. The next two articles suggest that in the Americas the example of Indigenous peoples, values and knowledge is less utopian than we may have thought. In the following article, Hugo Aboites, shows how those collectivist values that seek solutions to immediate problems in community knowledge and traditions are being realized through a variety of Aboriginal peoples' movements and initiatives and are extending to all reaches of the education system. The emphasis is on environmental sustainability, community health and the study of history, all from the community's perspective. And while the leadership in this thinking may come from the Zapatistas in Chiapas, their insights are increasingly finding echoes in Indigenous and campesino communities across the country. We need to remember that full-service schools that concentrate on the delivery of a variety of health-related services must link their work to environmental concerns and the rich histories and cultures of neighbourhood populations if community development rather than social engineering is going to be the result.

We are Indians, with pride…
From us they took (it was robbery)
land, name and religion;
rage fills our hearts;
the shame is over.

– Carlos Lenkersdorf

For the friends and comrades we have lost, Martin Linares and Patricia Ehrlich

INTRODUCTION

The great historic trends that have built the education system in Mexico are not part of some remote and far-off past. The educational experience of the first peoples, the system of the colonial period and those of the liberal Republic and the Revolution are all still present today in different forms. The period of profound crisis in which our country (and its education system) finds itself today is the reason why these trends have (re) emerged with such uncommon strength in current efforts to define the future of education in this country.

These days, colonial-style calls for an end to secular education and a return to Christian values blend harmoniously with demands for a commercialized business-oriented education system for the twenty-first century. Together they are attacking the notion of education that formed through the periods of the Republic and the Revolution: that of education as a public space, as a fundamental human right, and as the responsibility of the state.

One example of the many battles that this historic confrontation is generating occurred at the beginning of the 1990s when the business sector revealed its agenda to the government, asking that in its education policy the government of Salinas de Gortari "eradicate the bias from texts and programs …freeing them of the ideological burden that leads students into a sterile struggle of class, ideology and dogmatism." They stated that education should instead be directed at the "restoration of the moral order and the regeneration of customs…an appreciation of the authenticity and deeply-rooted nature of the moral transcendence and religious principles that the [Catholic] Church and

other denominations instil in their believers" (Instituto, 1989: 140, 146).

This battle for education, which began at the end of the 1980s and continues today, has also seen a new and unexpected protagonist. Since the beginning of the 1990s, as part of the Indigenous peoples' struggle for autonomy, a distinct idea and practice of education has emerged on the horizon of Mexican education.

This paper is an initial and very provisional exploration of the significance of this new entry into the field and the ways it is making an important contribution to the possibility of building an alternative to neo-liberal education in Mexico.

PRECEDENTS FROM A LONG HISTORY

The education proposals coming from Aboriginal peoples are deeply rooted in various historical processes that constantly combine and overlap. We have, in the Aztec and Mayan empires and dynasties to mention the most visible, a mixture of practices aimed at preserving and maintaining the great kingdoms combined with deeply-rooted older communitarian ways. Then came the experience of the Conquest and, above all, resistance to the aggressive subordination that attempted to strip communities of their most fundamental cultural references. Finally, the most visible and recent struggle for autonomy and the emergence of concrete education projects represent an entirely new and distinct phase in the history of the presence of the Indigenous people in Mexico.

Precisely because of these foundational experiences, against oppression and for autonomy, the kind of education that is emerging constitutes an important cultural heritage, a point of reference with the potential to speak to all exploited and oppressed groups. Even more importantly, it is an historic educational trend that offers the possibility of revitalizing and salvaging from the current neo-liberal regime the ideas, practices and legal frameworks of the country and its institutions that generated the educational currents of the liberal period and of the 1910 Revolution.

In the great civilizations of the Americas, as far as we understand them today, education was stratified in order to serve the political, ritual and military needs of these empires, held together by an overriding way of thinking based on the need of the collective.[1] Thus, in the case

of the Aztecs, education was divided into schools for the nobility (*calmecac*), others for the middle class and for the general population. These schools had different subjects and compulsory tasks and there was also a clear distinction between education for males and females. They attended separate schools and received a different education.

The education itself was highly demanding and very broad as it included not only the acquisition of specific knowledge but also the formation of character. Even intimate relations were regulated. Instruction included military and religious topics, but also the teaching of science, especially astronomy and literature. Painting was used to create maps and music played an important role in the relating of stories (Mena y Jenkins, 1981: 15-18; see also Soustelle, 1986:86-87). Another thing that stood out for the Spaniards was the special attention paid to "the rectitude with which the kind of justice system they had evolved was administered in order to lessen the damage done by an offence and maintain the social order…" (Mena y Jenkins, 1981: 17).

The Mayans shared many characteristics with the Aztecs, such as the separation of men and women in education; the existence of specific places for instruction from the age of eight to 20 – in other words the institutionalization of schools; the rigidity, although not repression, of education; the fact that women were not mistreated – a custom that is attributed to the example of the conquerors; the rigorous application of laws. Among the Mayans, young men lived in 'schools' called 'youth homes' where they played, learned, slept and carried out an intense collective life (Souza de Fernandez, 2001: 117-118).

One of the most important values, concludes another author after reviewing the texts of these youth homes, was collectivism. One always had to put the values and needs of the community before one's own. All behaviour had to be guided by a collective social conscience and carried out within it. A deep belief that the highest moral ideal was to respond to the interests and needs of the collective was instilled in children. Community solidarity, obedience (to elders) and piety were the basic virtues that guided the lives of children, youth and adults, both men and women. In Mayan thought, all of these things were concomitant. Individualism, impiety, pride, greed and envy are all attitudes that are constantly condemned in the Mayan texts and seen as causing the ruin of the peoples (Izquierdo, 1983:27).

Other authors confirm that among the peoples of Mesoamerica – Aztecs and Mayans above all – there were many similarities in the education of children and youth. They are peoples with very similar histories and cultures who were in important and constant contact with each other. It is therefore possible, at this distance, to think in terms of a common educational heritage.

Escalante (1985:19) suggests that children first received their education from their parents, learning certain skills. Once they reached a certain age, they would attend school. He emphasizes that when the school-age period was over, these societies had ways of continuing the education process. Through ceremonies, festivals and speeches, the broad guidelines for the behaviour of individuals and communities were reinforced. Another interesting aspect of these civilizations, according to Escalante, was the emphasis placed on self-sacrifice. This is closely linked to the idea of balance, an integral part of the cosmovision of these peoples and a factor in social cohesion. "When a man sacrifices himself, he maintains the balance with the other side of the scale that holds daily pleasures…and promotes the general equilibrium of the cosmos by paying back the gods for the effort (sacrifice) with which they have given and give life to the world[2]." In this vision, those of privileged origins and position are those who "are obliged to (take up) the most demanding disciplines: generally priests and nobles" (Escalante, 1985:19); thus respect for and obedience to authority were reinforced by the example they offered of a life of more sacrifice than others. This contributed to the establishment of very legitimate social leadership.

ARRIVAL OF THE *CONQUISTADORES* AND RESISTANCE

The Conquest had a profound impact on Indigenous culture, not only because of the trauma of subjugation but also because of the emergence of a culture and practice of resistance to the intruders. In 1525, just four years after the fall of Tenochtitlan, the citizens of that city were on the verge of rebellion against the invaders. "Every day Mexico seemed about to rise up", wrote Bernal Diaz del Castillo. In the end, the rebellion didn't happen, but the relief of another chronicler reflects the anxiety of the conquistadors at that time: "It was a miracle that the Indians didn't rise up then as they had the materials, even arms, although they

gave no indication of doing so; but they expected that Cuahutimoccin would send word when he had killed Cortes." "I saw that they were all so united and connected together and so ready for war that they would for sure come out victorious should it begin; and it would have been like that if God hadn't blinded and impeded them, and also the friars did a lot…" (Montell, J., 2005:202).

This story repeats itself over and over. As the Spanish advanced across the territory, the Aboriginal peoples constantly put up armed resistance (and this went on in the north of Mexico until almost the end of the 19th century). They would yield, offer gifts to the conquistadors and then flee back to their hamlets to prepare for war. The most important source of resistance was the despotic treatment they received at the hands of the Spanish. "They Christianized us, but they treat us like animals", said the people of the Yucatan. The Mayans deeply resented the loss of their liberty and the heavy yoke that the whites had imposed on them through the *encomiendas* (control over land, people and their labour which was granted to colonists all over the Spanish empire, Translators Note). They had to serve and pay tribute to their new masters but their independent and bellicose nature made them ready to revolt whenever they saw an opportunity to win. A priest named Chilam Anbal, who claimed to be the Son of God, predicted a holy war against the Spanish (Montell, 2005:279).

The arrogance of the conquistadors imposed subordination but it also created a resistance that later contributed, through the Indigenous armies, to Independence, to the fight for the Republic and against the Second Mexican Empire.

This double legacy of conquest and rebellion left such a strong mark that, in 2005, when the voices from the Indigenous world explained the Sixth Declaration of the Lacandon Jungle, they used the same language of violent and non-violent irruption and conquest of communities and cultures. The Conquest continues to be the point of reference for interpreting what is happening in the present:

"The globalized capitalists go in everywhere, in all countries, to do their big business, their big exploitation and they don't respect anybody. They just conquer other countries. That is why we, the Zapatistas, say that neo-liberal globalization is a war of conquest all over the world…so sometimes it's a conquest with armies that invade a country…but some-

times it's economic, the big capitalists invest money in a country or they lend money, but the condition is that we must do whatever they say. And also they come in with their ideas, with the capitalist culture that is the culture of commodities, of profit, of the market. So capitalism, carries out a conquest, doing whatever it wants, destroying and changing what it doesn't like…destroying what's already there in those countries, the culture, the language, the economic system, the political system and also destroying the ways that people relate to each other in those countries (EZLN, 2005:16)."

But practically in the same breath that describes the oppression, resistance appears: "However, it is not so easy for neo-liberal globalization because the exploited people of each country don't just go along, saying 'oh well' – they rebel. And those who are left over and those who obstruct, they resist and don't allow themselves to be eliminated. And so we see that all over the world those who are the most oppressed are resisting…and not just in one country, but wherever they are…so just as there is a neo-liberal globalization, there is also a globalization of rebellion (EZLN, 2005:16)."

AUTONOMY

One of the clearest expressions of this conquest-resistance pairing is autonomy, not just in its current form, but built over the centuries in a story that is yet to be told. One very interesting study by Gudrum Lenkersdorf about the *gobiernos concejiles*, or municipal councils, allows us a glimpse into how this process evolved. The author reminds us that the colonial regime tried to establish a system characterized by a highly centralized and strictly monarchical, monotheistic and monogamous order. In addition, it introduced commercial monopolies, official monolingualism and single-crop farming or monocultures…they tried to consolidate a system of state control that would promote exclusive and intolerant customs, vertical structures and practices of subordination, all contained within unidirectional movements in linear time. The contrast with the Mayans could not have been greater since their system was based, at that time, on ecological balance, plurality, reciprocity and a complementary diversity that encouraged inclusive practices, adjusted, according to a circular conception of time (Lenkersdorf, G., 2002:144).

She also writes of the different ways in which the Spanish tried again and again to subdue the Indigenous communities. From the caciques (recruited Indigenous) they moved on to a system of *fiscales de doctrina*, or ecclesiastical magistrates, also selected from the communities themselves. Then they used governors, who were a more modern form of the *caciques* and finally, the *cabildos*, made up of people elected by the community (but who had to be confirmed or approved by the *Audiencia Real* or Royal Court). They were a kind of "Indian republic" similar to a municipality, but they were to be supervised by and subordinate to the colonial authorities. The system, however, did not work perfectly. Particularly in the Mayan regions, for various reasons, the state's presence was very weak (for example, there were no officials in charge of overseeing the functioning of the cabildos) and this meant that these entities began to evolve into models of increasing autonomy.

The different Indigenous groups elected the people they wanted (and not those the friars suggested via little notes), they made their own decisions, and even opened up their meetings to non-members (particularly the village elders), which was unprecedented. This is how the still public character of such meetings was established and how the important role of elders in Indigenous tradition was incorporated into the system. This whole process resulted in the establishment of collective rather than individual authority. It got to the point that the few desperate Spaniards who had contact with these communities felt marginalized from processes they either didn't understand or were not admitted into. Thus they reported to their superiors that as far as the Indigenous people went, "everything among them was meetings, discussions, councils and mysteries, and nothing but doubts and questions for us." They were, they said, as if it were quite incomprehensible, "Indians who lived without a higher authority to obey."

Thus, the Mayan peoples (Yucatan, Chiapas, Guatemala) put up an active resistance to the conquistadors using their centuries-old *multepal* system. According to Gudrum Lenkersdorf, this was the system that succeeded the old single-person, hereditary style of government. After the fall of the dynasties of the classical period, the *multepal* system, a shared style of governing through confederations, councils and collectives, expanded. The *cabildos* … of the colonial regime were a suffi-

ciently flexible institution that they could be transformed according to the Mayans' own traditions… This autonomy – the author concludes – ended in the 19th century…which is why the Revolution of 1910 fought for "free municipalities" and … the fight continues… into the third millennium (Lenkersdorf, G., 2002: 154-155).

One of the most important traces of this long process can be seen today both in the virtually unchanged community practices and in the language used. It also shows how ideas about education entered into the conception of and struggle for autonomy. Ideas about education are connected in an important way to the predominant role of the community, but without ever forgetting the individual. To educate, in the Tzeltal language, according to Antonio Paoli, means "to help another to become *unico germinal*" which means that the capacity of a person exists to the extent that the person is unique and irreplaceable in their creativity, and "no one can be capable except in their own unique way," but this, he adds, "assumes integration, ability to arrive at consensus within the framework of the community. It assumes the integration of two opposites: personal initiative and collective organization; to bring innovation without abandoning tradition" (Paoli, 2001: 54-55). A personal education made for creativity and skill in the building of community. This long and complex process explains why, during the Indigenous rebellion of 1994, ideas of territories and autonomous governments were raised immediately along with, as we shall discuss later, a concept of education that was very much their own. "This style of autonomous government was not just invented by the EZLN. It came out of many centuries of Indigenous resistance and out of the experience of the original *Zapatistas*. It's about the self-government of communities" (EZLN, 2005: 9). So right now, in the third millennium, the *Juntas del Buen Gobierno* – JBGs (Juntas of Good Government) and autonomy (and within it, education) are concrete manifestations of the resistance and autonomy of the last centuries.

In addition to autonomy, this kind of social organization clearly brings together some of the other ideas and practices of the Indigenous past and gives them a new dimension: the collectivism of the ancient Mayans; self-sacrifice for others ('everything for everyone, nothing for ourselves'); obedience to those who lead, but authority subject to the intentions of the community ('lead by obeying' or, as Paoli reports

(2001) in his linguistic analysis, 'whoever leads must obey the mandate of the community').

The struggle for autonomy-education was one weapon against the domination of the Conquest that gathered strength and ultimately went much further than just the Indigenous communities, in the breath of freedom it gave not only to the battles for Independence but also to twentieth century university struggles. The young Argentinians who rebelled in 1918 clearly proposed that autonomy replace the Spanish colonial power that still shackled the university communities. "We have just broken the last chain that even now in the twentieth century has kept us tied to the domination of the monarchy and the church" proclaimed the young students in their manifesto[3].

In the twenty-first century autonomy, although now almost completely dismantled[4], continues to be of strategic importance for educational institutions. Unlike the autonomy promoted by neo-liberalism (financial self-sufficiency, flexibility to the demands of business), the autonomy that comes of resistance seems inextricably linked to the idea of returning to and serving the community.

Thus, the link with the popular sectors is more than a tradition; it is an effective survival mechanism in the face of oppression. The concept and practice of autonomy-service is appearing more and more as the twenty-first century gets underway. It is not only the Mayans, Cholos, Tzetales and other groups in Chiapas with a centuries-old tradition who are expressing the vitality and modernity of the autonomy-resistance model. Many other non-Indigenous people are seeing its great potential to present and defend the interests of huge sectors of the population.

At the Second Gathering on Indigenous Women and the United Nations System that took place in Mexico City in June 2005, the leaders of the Indigenous movements in Chihuahua, Oaxaca, Chiapas, Puebla, Veracruz, Michoacan, Morelos, San Luis Potosi and Guerrero all put forward the same idea of self-determination in contrast to the neo-liberal governmental vision. The report states that "the themes (of the meeting) simply and strongly set out the transformational principles for a new social contract: 1) self-determination: we want to decide what we want to do with our territories, not to be told by others what we must do; 2) we defend our territory and the natural resources, because most of the natural wealth is in our areas; 3) globalization began with colonization and

since then government programs have been further and further removed from the reality or our peoples; 4) the neglect of intercultural education has contributed to the loss of identity, culture and language and to the fact that both Indigenous and non-Indigenous people have lost this rich cultural and sacred potential" (Rodriguez, G., 2005: 29).

The growth of autonomy as a key concept can be seen in other Indigenous groups far from Chiapas. Even within the limits of the Metropolitan Zone of Mexico City, in the mega-urban chaos of neo-liberal modernity, the Indigenous community of Santa Catarina del Monte has established a modest but new order by winning a battle against the transportation monopolies that were mistreating and over-charging them. In open rebellion, they decided to block the privately-owned vehicles and create their own service upon which their vehicles were immediately confiscated by authorities "for not following regulations". The residents then went to the Texcoco municipal hall, accompanied by members of other communities (including Atenco), took over the building, held the officials hostage and closed down highways. The government relented and returned the vehicles and, in a community assembly, a cooperative was formed based on the idea that "transportation service should always be not-for-profit and for the good of the community" (Salinas, 2004: 29).

A similar process of recovering Indigenous and community identity took place in San Jeronimo Amanalco in the mountains of Texcoco. "The community has defended the use of their language, *Nahuatl*, organized their own transportation and street safety systems and set up committees to protect the forests and water and to organize residents when there are important tasks to be done to benefit the community" (Fernandez Roman, 2004: C5).

AUTONOMY AND EDUCATION

All calls for autonomy and for the recovery of the culture, language and territory of ancestral communities sooner or later end up talking about education. With the disappearance of the Indigenous aristocracy, schools slowly became centres and instruments of culture. So it is no coincidence that education is placed in the forefront of Zapatista demands. "Education is one of the demands of the EZLN – explain two

members of the coordinating committee of the Zapatista Rebel Education System – and that's why we've been trying to organize education in our communities since 1994" (Munoz Ramirez, 2004: vi).

They tell how they organized the Zapatista autonomous education system. At the beginning they invited the teachers from the state schools: "more than a hundred came… but it was difficult to organize the work with them, not because they didn't want to participate with us but because they were used to getting paid". Other testimonials talk of differences with the official pedagogy.[5] More profound were the two radically different conceptions of education: the "official" version and the community one. Carlos Lenkersdorf (2002) illustrates this distance on the topic of individualized evaluation which, from the community perspective, is completely absurd .

Ultimately, they decided to invite "the young men and women of the region. They were students and not accustomed to getting paid." The participants speak of their first impressions:

"In each community meetings were held to set up a new education system with the *promotores*, or facilitators, being from the same community. Some of them were chosen and others just volunteered. And we didn't really know what kind of project it would be or how we were going to do it. When we left our communities we were very excited and at the same time a little afraid about whether it would be easy or difficult. But when we got to the training centre we were really happy to meet the community there and the other *compañeros* because that's the most important thing – the friendship and comradeship. Now we know that the schools are autonomous and the idea is to have a school with dignity where the children can learn a lot about the culture and society. People in the communities feel very proud of the promotores because they are part of the resistance. Education, if it's useful and appropriate, is for the rest of your life" (quoted in Linares, 2000).

Over two years, twenty young people were trained and in September 2000 the classes began. They were accompanied by men and women from civil society or "accompaniers".

"Course planning was a collective task. There were endless meetings with participants from all the different communities to analyze their needs and then plan courses and programs of study. In the Zapatista secondary school in Los Altos (the Chiapas Highlands), the subjects are

language and communication, mathematics, social sciences, natural sciences, humanities, mother tongue (Tzotzil) and production. In humanities the Zapatista philosophy is studied and they discuss the struggle. Our primary objective is that the students who finish school have a different view of life, that they don't live in an individualistic way, but work for the good of the community and the collective. We want the young people to understand our struggles more and to know who dominates us and who exploits us…After three years of study, we have seen that they understand the reality of our situation and their awareness is raised. It's not that we come in to convince people about the struggle. What happens is that here they are learning more tools to know their rights and to defend them. Education, without a doubt, motivates us to struggle and it strengthens the autonomy of our peoples…When the students finish high school we ask them, as part of their graduation, to decide how they can help their people. They choose to do agro-ecological work, to teach in the elementary schools, to work in the pharmacy, etc. They all have the obligation and the commitment to share what they have learned with their community. If not, there's no point in educating them" (Munoz Ramirez, 2004:vi).

In the case of primary education, in the Caracol de Morelia, "the children not only learn to read and write but also, and most importantly, 'they learn to fight, to defend their environment, to care for nature and to be proud of their culture'. The subjects they study are: production, political education, artistic education, culture, reading-writing, health, sports, mathematics, history and languages (Spanish and their mother tongue). These were decided upon in dozens of working meetings with 200 Indigenous educators from the seven municipalities. When they register for school, each child brings a hen as tuition, so now the *promotores* have enough chickens and eggs to feed their students" (Munoz Ramirez, 2004: xiii).

By 2005 the Junta of Good Government (JBG) in La Nueva Semilla, which brings together the rebel municipalities of the northern zone of Chiapas, for example, was saying that education was one of the three fundamental aspects of its action plan: "Health, education and agroecology" (meaning food). "In order for us to advance, each one of these must be integrated into the others. Without food, there is no health or education. That's our challenge – to integrate these three areas." These

are common goals, but each municipality organizes education differently with different projects.

"In the work of building autonomous education, the people are working hard. We place a lot of importance on this. Each municipality organizes to carry it out. We are just in the first phase. We need to improve in order to have a high school. What we do have are *promotores* all over the zone, but many of them are teaching in their own homes or in those of others. In some communities, schools have been built. We call them all 'cultural centres.' The Zapatistas in the northern zone have almost 300 *promotores* trained here. Most of them are Choles, but there are also Tzetzales and Zoques. In the northern zone the *Semillita del Sol* (Seed of the Sun) project is responsible for carrying this out according to the JBG. They report that construction of the Autonomous Centre for Technological Education is currently underway. It will train young people in theory and practice in the context of their campesino reality. The project is supported by two organizations, *Operacion Jornada* and *Foro Internacional Infantil* of Denmark…One man from the JBG points out that the Zapatista teachers don't get a salary. Some are supported by their communities who help with their productive work as well as with food…. Other communities in the region are used to the theoretical education from the SEP (Ministry of Education) but in our autonomous way we believe that in order to learn the children should work on something productive. This is a challenge to the ministry way. Here the campesino child learns as a *campesino*. S/he learns the theory but applies it to the protection of the environment and the collective work in the fields." (Bellinghausen, 2005: 19).

Education here, as can clearly be seen in the previous quote, is not simply technical training for agricultural work. Unlike the kind of education imparted by the ministry, this is holistic and firmly rooted in the social and cultural processes of the communities. The students in the Zapatista rebel high schools have written, in both Spanish and Tzotzil, a book titled *Habia una vez una noche* (Once Upon a Time There Was a Night) (also published in Italy by the magazine *Carta*) which tells the story of their origins as Zapatista communities. It explains how, tired of the chaos generated by oppression, "the first day of January 1994 Subcommandante Marcos organized his commanders and told them: 'No more of this mess! That is why the Zapatistas took up arms and

began a battle that lasted three days" (Bellinghausen, 2005: 46). But the students also, in a clear attempt to recover their culture, "wrote the stories (the Mayan legends, popular tales and the stories of the Zapatista struggle from the point of view of and experience of the students and their communities) in their mother tongue, Tzotzil, which until then had had only an oral tradition."

Among the stories is one about a small pine tree that, like all the others in the forest, had green needles. Unhappy with this, it asked for golden leaves, but that turned out worse for the tree because they were all stolen. So it had them changed again into glass leaves but along came a whirlwind and broke them all and the tree was left naked. So it decided, "I'm going to ask for the leaves I started with so they don't get taken away from me". It's a similar lesson, in its rejection of the need to be different or special, that in the Zapotec tradition is expressed in the saying that "the one who has more is not the richest, but rather the one who needs the least" (*Ojarasca*: 1).

These schools are also contributing to the development of writing in Tzotzil, which until now had been non-existent. They call all of this "self-sustainable education" because it generates its own cultural products (Bellinghausen, 2005: 46). "Our education – say the members of the Junta of Good Government of Garrucha – comes out of the thinking of the peoples. Nothing comes from outside and it's nothing like the official education where they don't respect the Indigenous people or their story" (Munoz Ramirez, 2004: xi). Although they don't say so, stories like this also have the function of bringing together head and heart which in official education are usually separate. They are recovering the Indigenous educational tradition, based on myths and rituals: "where the message educated, because it went to the heart and not the head" (Marcotegui Angulo, quoted in Poy Solano, 2003).

One detailed and very complete description of these education projects emphasizes recovering the relationship with the land. In *The Education We Are Calling for as Indigenous and Non-Indigenous Zapatistas*, they talk of recovering the "knowledge that our ancestors, the Mayans, Aztecs, Mexicas, etc. had about conserving Mother Earth, given that Mother Earth is what maintains our existence in this unjust world. We are planning this kind of education in order to strengthen the lives of the human beings who live on our lands and territories. This is

the kind of learning that we must impart so as not to be unfair to the earth;" "our school studies the environment as a compendium of existing natural, social and cultural values that influence the material and psychological lives of people" (Munoz Ramirez, 2004: xi).

Another important area for the autonomous schools is health: "for us, the Indigenous and non-Indigenous people, it is very important to know about health because health is life, health is the ability to analyse our situation as peoples at the social, political, economic and cultural levels. It is part of the holistic education of human beings and, without quality education that comes out of our reality, there is no mental or physical health. So health and education are intimately connected."

They go on to say that "the kind of education that we are carrying out in our communities-in-resistance and rebellion is to educate ourselves in the recovery, conservation, strengthening and improvement of all our knowledge of economics, society, culture, religion, territory, etc; the recovery and strengthening of our Indigenous languages, the conservation of our historic patrimony, the appreciation and conservation of our natural resources, renewable and non-renewable." They finish by emphasising the importance of the study of history:

"We believe that the study of history in our autonomous Zapatista education is the fundamental basis for the cultural, political, social and economic development of any community. History is the root of our existence; it is the root of our identity as Aboriginal peoples before the Conquest. If a people don't have their own history, they don't understand or know their reality. A people who is not told its history, is a people without life; a people who lack that most elemental thing, their history, will disappear…education without history is a murderous education. And that's what we, the people in resistance in the southeast of Mexico, will not accept. An education system that doesn't teach our true history will lead to our death, for sure. That is exactly what we don't want in our Zapatista National Liberation Autonomous Rebel Education System of the Chiapas Highlands (General Coordination of the Zapatista National Liberation Autonomous Rebel education System-Chiapas Highlands Zone, 2004).

THE BROADER IMPACT: INDIGENOUS AND POPULAR EDUCATION IN HIGHER EDUCATION

The presence of a site of rebellion and autonomous Indigenous education in the South has had a national impact in only a few years, especially in post-secondary education. Indigenous groups in different parts of the country have demanded that state and federal authorities provide education to their young people and, under this pressure, they have responded. The idea that there should be post-secondary education for Indigenous communities has started to take root, although the official educational structures are often only paying it lip service.

Much in the way of all current business-oriented education, what the authorities do is to cloak a polytechnic university in *indigenista* discourse even though that institution (which may well be located in a rural Indigenous region) doesn't vary a bit from the neo-liberal focus of education – de-contextualized from all social processes except that of corporate globalization. This is true in the case of the Technological University of the Mixteca where, although "many students come from Indigenous families and speak Mixtec, Mixe, Triqui, Amuzgo or Zapoteco [and where they acknowledge that] it is important to recover the original cultures of Oaxaca [they state that] what young people require are scientific and business skills in order to be able to survive in a labour market that is more and more competitive." The director of Industrial Engineering, himself Indigenous with Masters and PhD degrees from the University of Manchester, explains that the pedagogy is based on the survival of the fittest: "those who are most capable will survive" (Gonzalez, 2005: 23), voicing a very different conception of education than those which have been described above.

A slightly different case is the Autonomous Indigenous University of Mexico, founded in 1999 in Mochicahui in El Fuerte, Sinaloa. They use methods that allow for more personal and, hopefully, collective creativity. The program is based on intensive work by the individual student (there are no classes) and they serve about 1,000 students (40% Yoremes from the north of Sinaloa and the south of Sonora; 20% Choles, Mames, Tzotziles and Tzeltzales; 30% Tarahumaras and Seris and 10% Mestizos). They also talk of the importance of "protecting native cultural tradition, but also of exposing students to western culture. At

Mochicahui, students must achieve at least 80% in English, know how to use multimedia as a basic tool and each have their own personal educational plan with the support of professor-advisors" (Gonzalez, 2005: 26).

The Intercultural University of the State of Mexico in San Felipe del Progreso, which has almost 300 Mazahua, Otomi, Matazintla and Tlahuica students, has gone a bit further. The president says that "the idea is to recuperate the knowledge of the Indigenous communities in such diverse fields as medicine, agriculture, law and philosophy" and "students must learn a regional language as well as English. It is a multicultural project that puts the young people at the forefront of universal knowledge, but at the same time values the profound significance of the culture of their parents and grandparents" (Gonzalez, 2005: 26).

The Zapatista project and its belief that education must be appropriate to the reality of Indigenous people have also influenced the more academic institutions of higher education. Thus, in 2005 the Veracruz University was planning to offer two new degrees – in sustainable regional development and intercultural management and facilitation – in the Indigenous zones of the region for four hundred participants from the Huasteca, Otomi, Tepehua, Totonaca, Nahua, Zapoteca, Chinanteca, Popoluca, Mazateca, Mixe and Zoque ethnic groups at four campuses in the Huasteca, Totonaca, Highlands and Southern Zones of the region. They want to "find solutions to the severe problems of soil erosion, destruction of forests and jungles, loss of mangroves, pollution and rural production" (Morales, 2005: 32). This initiative is seen as "payment in part of the historical debt owed to the first peoples and to serve as a catapult for recovering cultural and linguistic richness, as well as a way to slow down the massive out-migration because of lack of opportunities" (Morales, 2005: 30).

The Indigenous University of Rayon in Chiapas is a collaborative effort by faculty from the Autonomous University of Chiapas, *campesino* groups and municipal mayors from the northern region of the state, "because what's being offered by the public and private sectors does not respond to their needs." However, it is very controversial and has encountered opposition from the state government and the legislature itself. Some of the teachers have been called up and accused of 'fraud' (Mariscal, 2005: 32).

In the federal legislature proposals have emerged like those of Representative Marcelino Diaz de Jesus (Nahuatl from Xalitla, Guerrero) who says that "Indigenous education programs should include people who have been trained by us, not with a paternalistic attitude, but rather one of self-affirmation, with the right to write in my own language", he said in an interview (Ehrlich y Zamudio, 2001:35).

The higher education project that is by far the most closely linked to an Indigenous education philosophy is the recently founded University of the Land (*Universidad de la Tierra*) in San Cristobal de las Casas, Chiapas. They grant degrees in agro-ecology, agrarian law and advocacy, vernacular architecture, water surveying and community/collective project management, all from an anthropological and cultural perspective and with a clear commitment to serving as cultural/educational centre for the Indigenous communities of the surrounding area, Zapatista and non-Zapatista.

Finally, there are also examples of education projects that, while not being articulated as 'Indigenous', are located in areas with high numbers of people of Indigenous ancestry and which draw on the strong community-based heritage of the region. The Municipal University of Chicoloapan, in the Texcoco zone of the state of Mexico, is supported by the municipality of the same name and by state legislators. This university not only provides education that responds to the needs of the community, but social organizations of the region have a voice in who is admitted to the institution.

CONCLUSION

The legacy of the educational culture of the Aboriginal peoples, strongly linked to a tradition of resistance, is making an important contribution in Mexico today. It is opening up doors and windows and allowing teachers and students to see the future of education in this country in a different way. And this Zapatista-led trend is not happening alone. Other Indigenous and *campesino* communities around the country have quietly and for many years been promoting education projects linked to appropriate land use at the secondary and post-secondary level. This has been the case in the northern mountains (Sierra Norte) of Puebla and in other areas of the country (see Mata and others: 2004). Most important-

ly, however, the recognition and expansion of the need to establish local regional and cultural entities is actually being fuelled by the failure of the official business model of education and the hegemonic ideology (*pensamiento unico*) of the last three federal government administrations. The Zapatista experience also opens up a new panorama for the students and teachers who are fighting for the right to education for all. The right to education is no longer simply something to be demanded of the state. It can be built from below and then be taken on by the state.

All of this has the potential to produce an historic convergence of forces capable of challenging neo-liberal policies. Paradoxically, these same policies are increasingly making necessary, and even facilitating, the growth of grassroots educational projects. What's now needed is to begin sharing experiences and coordinating efforts. A new relation with the state in the area of education is emerging and, as was stated above, it is no longer just a case of demanding that the state respond to the educational needs of the people. Aboriginal peoples are teaching us that the way to go is to generate initiatives in cities, neighbourhoods and communities that can become part of state policy, but in increasingly autonomous spaces.

Thus, the centuries-old struggles of the first peoples are also making a contribution in the field of education; a contribution full of hope and vision amid an educational context of crisis and lack of direction. Education is becoming one of the most important areas of active resistance as called for in the Sixth Declaration of the Lacondon Jungle.

ENDNOTES

[1] The presentation of the documents of Padre Sahagun, for example, gives an account of Indigenous culture and education (Lopez Austin, 1985) as well as the essays about the education of the peoples of the centre of the country (Lopez Austin, 1985; Escalante, 1985; Diaz Infante, 1981, Mena y Jenkins, 1981), an important interest that continues to the present (Souza de Fernandez, 2002).

[2] Leon Portilla tells how the gods gathered in Teotihuacan and by sacrificing one of their own, created the Sun and the Moon. But "neither the Sun nor the Moon was moving. The gods then began to ask: 'How are we going to live/The Sun isn't moving!/How on earth are we going to make the people live?/We must revive the Sun!/We will sacrifice ourselves, we will all die.'

The gods freely accepted their death, sacrificing themselves so that the Sun would move and the life of humans would be possible. When the Sun finally began to move, the days and nights began again. The people had deserved to live, thanks to the sacrifice of the gods. Thus, humans would be known from then on as *macehuales*, which means 'the deserving' " (Leon Portilla, 2000:27).

[3] In Venezuela, and other countries, the local bishop was still naming university professors to their posts well into the nineteenth century. The student rebels proclaimed to the Argentinian people: "men of a free republic, we have just broken the last chain that even now in the twentieth century has kept us tied to the domination of the monarchy and the church". They added that "the pain that we feel is for the freedoms that we still lack". They had no doubt about the importance of achieving the independence of the university: "we believe that we are not mistaken, our hearts tell us so: we are starting a revolution, we are living a truly American hour" (quoted in Trindade, 2001). Curiously, almost a century later, in 1999 the struggle for Indigenous autonomy and the fight for university autonomy converged in the UNAM conflict of that year in which the freedoms of Cordoba were defended by the students: free tuition, student participation (congress), autonomy in the processes of selection and evaluation of students by the university. It was not simply a chronological coincidence. The revitalization of the student movement after 1994 was due to a great degree to the impact on students of the Zapatista rebellion (Aboites, H., 2001).

[4] The evolution of university autonomy, especially from the 1990s on, ended up with higher education institutions being converted into higher education "*dependencies*" (DES) as established by the Program for Improvement of the Teaching Profession (PROMEP) and, as such, subject to arbitrary funding criteria and ongoing centralized and privatized supervision (the testing and certification of applicants, students and graduates). Most importantly, all this having been done in the name of "the responsibility and transparency" of the public universities, the result was to break the link (which was already highly bureaucratic) with communities themselves and to lose the notion of universities as a response to the knowledge needs of communities and many other large sectors of the population. In its place, the needs of large corporations like CEMEX and *Banca Serfin Santander* and of government entities now take priority.

[5] One of these people says that "the teachers from the Ministry (SEP) don't teach well and they don't care if the children learn or not. They make them do a lot of homework and read textbooks without asking the children what they have understood. And they don't allow them to speak their mother tongue.

The teachers punish the children if they don't hand in their work and they make them buy uniforms. They have to go up to the board and if they don't know the answer, they make them kneel on bottle caps. We don't want our children to keep being mistreated. We want them to have the space to think and act and to have their own cultural traditions respected." In some cases the state teachers were kicked out of communities because, "they would get drunk and some of them are informers for the government" (quoted in Linares). Felipe Catalan offers a systematic look at the non-functioning relationship between the government schools and the community in *Los Altos de Chiapas* (the Chiapas Highlands) (2001).

[6] Lenkersdorf tells how a group of students insisted on being given the same test as those given in the public schools. This was not normally done in the community schools because after discussing all the concepts and information in groups, "we all knew what everybody knew and we were all aware that there was much that we still didn't know". There's not even a word for 'test' in Tojolabal. When they were presented with a problem to solve, the students automatically got into a circle and began an intense debate on how to solve it. After a while they presented the solution they had arrived at. When they asked if that was how exams went in the public schools, they couldn't believe that each student had to answer the question individually. "We have twenty-five heads that, of course, can think better than one. And we have fifty eyes that can see much better than two" (Lenkersdorf, 2002: 67-69). In cultures such as the Tzeltales, the idea of meetings and consensus is fundamental: "consensus means that when one's word is given in an assembly it is seen as a commitment of honour…consensus is reached when everyone has spoken and it all comes together in a resolution" (Paoli, A., 2002: 55).

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Good Community Schools are Sites of Educational Activism

RITA BOUVIER

Rita Bouvier offers the perspective of Aboriginal peoples in Saskatchewan. Alongside Hugo Aboites' documentation of the rise of Indigenous support for community schools drawing on the collective wisdom of ancient cultures in Mexico, Bouvier has recast a passionate advocacy paper delivered to the Community Schools Association of Saskatchewan. In it, she cries out for democracy, activism, local knowledge and social justice in the effort to make community schools meaningful and valuable for those most in need, the urban and rural poor who, for the most part in Sakatchewan, are people of the First Nations. The emphasis is similar and compatible with what Aboites has told us about the Indigenous movements in Mexico, but what is added here in a Canadian context is the reminder that liberal tolerance is no substitute for a strong cultural identity reinforced by love and unreserved inclusion for the children of marginalized communities. As full-service schools pick up steam, we need to remember that they must nurture love and respect for their young people as essential members of the broader community. And their democratic structures cannot be allowed to re-inforce the uneven distribution of decision-making powers inside and between communities and generations, any more than their access to funds can be allowed to re-inforce the uneven distribution of resources among schools and their neighbourhoods.

INTRODUCTION

This chapter explores a vision for community schools/education as a journey toward the discovery of ourselves, at a local and global level. Applying a theoretical definition of community schools, the vision seeks to balance short and long term purposes of education; it seeks to establish trust and respect in relationships; it places value on the gifts that everyone brings to this endeavour; and finally, it seeks results that honour all life. The ideas explored are based on selected literature, community school evaluations in Saskatchewan and the inspiration of dreams that promise hope for our children.

This is a revision of a paper developed for an annual conference of the Community Schools Association of Saskatchewan. The organizers of the conference invited a critical and renewed look at community schools. The theoretical definition applied in this exploration warranted that I place myself as a participant, given the responsibility I have in the community. To challenge our current conception of community schools I asked questions rhetorically, at times. I reflected upon and celebrated the accomplishments of the program. Since then, community schools in Saskatchewan have had a renewed mandate as expressed in a policy statement titled, interestingly enough, *Building Communities of Hope* (Saskatchewan Education, 1996). It has extended the designation of community schools to northern schools.

The historical context and development of community schools in North America, and specifically the province of Saskatchewan, are perhaps best exemplified by a quotation that comes from the initial evaluation done on community schools approximately a decade ago.

The community schools program is, without a doubt, the largest and most successful program directed toward the social problems of inner city students in any Canadian province. It bridges the gap between the culture of the school and the culture of the home (Saskatchewan Education, 1984). It is a program directed toward a specific population, which is not made explicit in this earlier text. The issues confronting us in this context are viewed and analyzed as "social" problems. In addition, bridging what is viewed as a cultural gap between the school and the home is viewed as a central issue. It suggests we have strong emotional ties to these programs. That was 10 years ago; has our thinking changed?

Since then, much has changed at both provincial and federal levels. Controlling deficits, restructuring and globalization are the buzzwords of political agendas at both levels. In Saskatchewan, we have developed a new model for delivery of services to "at risk" families and children, the integrated school-linked services model. It invites all the agencies involved with the lives of families and children "at risk" to work together. It makes good sense, but it also holds some challenges, the most critical one being the need for a clear understanding of roles, relationships and responsibilities of the agencies involved and the beneficiaries themselves. What will be their role, relationship and responsibility to the vision articulated? From a service delivery viewpoint, there are ethical considerations about the information shared.

The questions I have raised are explored through a framework of community schools offered by Sharilyn Calliou, a Cree-Mohawk woman. Sharilyn Calliou (1993) offers the community school model as a way of promoting and supporting "healthy" sovereignty for First Nations communities for both rural and urban environments. The work is based on 30 articles theorizing on the idea of community schools. She writes, "In community schools theory, community is identified as a laboratory for community-based teaching, learning and planned change." Education in this context is people-centred, problem-centred and community-centred. Summarizing the definition of community, based on a cross-cultural exploration, she identifies four components: first, there must be participants and our definition of participants must move beyond a human one to one that is inclusive of all species; second, there is a need to comprehend thoroughly the nature and inventory of the elements and relationships evident within a locale; third, there is a need to understand the common premise for choosing to live in a certain way; and finally, certain results are expected, if we are to be successful in lasting change and if we are to achieve social justice.

A re-examination of the idea of community schools/education is a timely one, given the quest and emphasis for community in the literature. Perhaps, it promises to fill the spiritual void that many of us feel. For example, Sergiovanni (1993, 1994), a leading theorist on educational leadership and administration, offers community as a future metaphor for the organization of schools; and promotes schools as "community learning centres." As an aside, I offer an observation I have

made on the recent literature, particularly surrounding leadership: a congruence between Indigenous thought and philosophy is growing. This recognition is important to Indigenous peoples around the world as they seek changes for their communities and define a new relationship with peoples in their respective homelands (World Conference of Indigenous Peoples on Education, 1993). As Indigenous people, the richness we can provide to the human family is not material. I had almost forgotten. In a school visit in the northern region of New Zealand, during my sabbatical leave, I met a little young person I will not forget. After sharing a few comments about myself and the land I had come from, she insisted on getting my attention with a question that I decided, at the time, was out of place. She asked me the same question three times before I answered her. The question was, "Are you rich?" On the third count, my mouth opened and the words were to this effect: "Yes, oh, yes I am very rich." I went on to list the names of my extended family, my friends, my son, to which she responded, "Like you, I am very rich."

COMPREHENDING THOROUGHLY THE NATURE OF THE ELEMENTS AND THE RELATIONSHIP OF A LOCALE

Let me return, then, to the historical and present context of community schools as they exist in Saskatchewan. If there is no attempt to understand the nature of the elements and relationships of the locale, there can be little meaning to our discussion and the future. The first recognizable fact of the inner city is one of poverty. In Saskatchewan, and I suspect elsewhere, there is a complex dimension to the nature of this poverty because it arises out of situations of chronic unemployment, poor education, illness and deep-seated systemic issues. Large segments of the population served by community schools in Saskatchewan are Aboriginal people. Poverty involves economic deprivation with its own brand of social and psychological impact, regardless of who the people are in a cultural sense. Segments of the population living in the inner city are easily identifiable because of the colour of their skin and perhaps because of their gender. Therefore, it is about power, which is often dictated by people in a more privileged position. There is a tendency to label and therefore misrepresent the diverse group of people who live within this locality.

Connell (1994), a professor of studies in sociology of education, observes that educational systems generally have been less than successful with many programs directed toward the poor. The deficit and compensatory nature of many programs do little other than reinforce the stereotypes held of the population. The issues facing members of this community are economic, political, cultural and, yes, social. The inequities that face people living in these environments are systemic – meaning they are ingrained structurally within society and therefore the issues that confront people in the inner cities belong to all of us. The statistics and demography in this province suggest that poverty is casting a wider net. To rectify the political, economic, cultural and social issues faced by people with little, if any, income requires us to examine not so much what is happening locally but what is happening globally. Connell observes that those likely to understand the issues – namely, the poor, and the teachers who work most directly with the children in the schools – are often objects of policy and decisions rather than their authors. To rethink what we do, Connell suggests that we begin with an examination of power that is evident in the politics of mass education, a hegemonic mainstream curriculum and the character of teachers' work. Secondly, he suggests that we accept the economics of poverty. Poverty is poverty; it implies a scarcity of resources. If we are to achieve social justice, it implies a higher level of funding for schools that serve communities that are poor. Until 1996, there had been no additional funding to community schools in Saskatchewan since 1982. According to one source, funds were frozen from 1983 to 1989. The increase of 3% in 1990 reflected money provided for special projects (Smadu, 1991). In educational terms, Connell (1994) argues for a shift in pedagogy and the way content is determined. Freire (1999) reinforces the importance of teachers respecting not only the knowledge of the popular classes, but also knowledge from communities that are often neglected by authorities.

The next consideration for understanding the locale of community schools is the infrastructure within which they currently operate. They exist within the context of a board of education that often serves a larger community, and, of course, the board itself operates within a provincial legislative and policy framework. It is perhaps the rigidity of this system that frustrates the work of those involved most directly and actively (Saskatchewan Education, 1984; Smadu, 1991). Achieving

social justice through education is not a neutral undertaking. Those who are committed to this goal come to understand that it usually requires flexibility within all the systems operating, whether they are boards of education, or provincial or national bodies. Addressing the social and psychological effects of poverty is not easy. Children do not learn when they are hungry, abused or angry. These are issues that cannot be ignored. Ask the teachers and the parents. Schools and teachers, alone, cannot address these issues, and technical educational solutions are not sufficient.

An earlier observation was made that large segments of the inner city population are Aboriginal people. The impact of colonization on Aboriginal people must be understood and confronted if we are to be successful in supporting the students in their education. It requires examination of the past and present conditions. History and context are critical elements for understanding the issues facing us. As Hampton (1993) has argued, we need a sense of history that does not avoid the hard facts. Unfortunately, we cannot say that we have entirely escaped the colonial relationship of the past. As teachers, we must balance this discussion by giving equal emphasis to an examination of a new relationship; to model it; to live it as we interact with each other and our students. Otherwise, the goals of equity and social justice are empty rhetoric. It is uncomfortable work, but necessary, if we are to confront the helplessness felt at an individual, and sometimes a collective, level. As Mary Marule, a community educator said at a MOKAKIT conference I attended in Calgary, Alberta, in 1995, "Aboriginal people need to develop political consciousness." When we attend to the education of Aboriginal children we cannot be unengaged politically; we must have a clear bias. Their education must be affirming physically, of who they are as a people, it must be intellectually engaging, spiritually embracing and emotionally supportive (Mello et al., 1994). The work of educators in community schools involves the real lives of children who are oppressed, poor and often disenfranchised. Those who work centrally within the larger infrastructure of the educational system have a duty to support and encourage the people who serve these communities, and to advocate for them.

Governments have an equally critical role to play. Their economic and social policy must work hand in hand with educational policy if the

goals for social justice and equity are to be achieved. The emphasis on deficits, the erosion of universal social programs and the ideology of "choice" where education is concerned put people experiencing poverty most at risk and ultimately does the same to everyone else as well (Sarlow and Robertson, 1994).

In this examination of the elements and relationships of the community school's locale, I have attempted to broaden the sphere, influence and impact. The temptation is to view locales narrowly. I have attempted to broaden this idea of community into a larger sphere focusing at the central point of planning and decision making in the education system and elsewhere, such as government. Perhaps I should have included "big business," since it has a major influence on the political agenda and therefore on public policy. What are the assumptions of the restructuring directed to so-called families and students at risk? I hope "Brighter Futures" and "Children First" are more than catchy policy titles and slogans. Will the programs prematurely stream so-called "children at risk" to jobs at the bottom end? What is the underlying economic policy? Does it view children as more than a supply of labour?

Despite my scepticism of provincial and federal policy, I am fully aware that when it comes to breathing life into these "targeted" programs, the unsung people at the front lines will make the difference as they have always done. From my vantage point, transcending the shortcomings of these types of programs has become an art, in and of itself. When there is no choice but to accept the terms and conditions of scarce money, individuals can turn the fish and loaves to feed six into enough to feed thousands. We do not celebrate these individuals often enough.

Critical policy decisions are often made far away from the point of impact. Therefore, it is important that when we begin to rewrite a vision of community schools we give equal attention to the complex elements of the physical locale and the central places where decisions are made. Disadvantage is an outcome of advantage. If we are really serious about the goals of equity and social justice, we will give equal attention to broader legislation and policy, ensuring that as a base it attends to people most in need of change, first. Indeed, I would suggest that the foundational premise of all public policy should begin with the people most in need, if governments are serious about the goals of equity and social

justice. In isolation, add-on targeted programs are at best a band-aid solution, with a tendency to subject their recipients to stigmatization and political hostility (Connell, 1994).

COMMUNICATING AND UNDERSTANDING THE COMMON PREMISE FOR CHOOSING TO LIVE IN A CERTAIN WAY

At a recent conference on Multicultural, Inter-cultural and Race Relations Education held in Vancouver in November 1993, I was invited along with two other Aboriginal educators to sit on a panel entitled "Focus on Empowerment Through Inclusion: First Nations People." I was asked to focus my comments on education for Aboriginal youth. I shared my own story, remembering my late grandfather's way of responding to important issues or questions. I analyzed the issues confronting youth and reflected on the strategies we employed in our communities and institutions based on hopes and dreams for my own son. I share a summary of my comments here, to begin a discussion about a common premise for education and for choosing to live in a certain way. There were two foundational premises to my proposal: first that our children are not our possessions, but extensions of our own human existence; secondly, as parents and adults, despite the different roles we fulfill in our lifetime, we are responsible for providing the pattern for behaviour that respects all life. We do so by employing various strategies; ritual and ceremony are traditional practices that remind us of our relationships to each other and this physical place that we understand sustains our life – all life. Lamonthe (1994) has identified other strategies we might employ, such as: physical demonstration and observation to develop skill; giving emphasis to what we eat – behaviour and diet are linked; providing occasion for sacrifice as preparation for the long journey; employing indirect strategies to show respect and to save face – anger and embarrassment lead to a closed mind; valuing mistakes as a valid premise for learning; teaching in isolation; using stories to guide development of young people; providing oral guidance and finally providing time for dreaming and fasting – reflective techniques that provide new insight and information. We also need to remember that example and nature teach.

I observed that many issues facing Aboriginal youth are symptoms of deeper needs that include identity and acceptance or belonging. I argued that tolerance, appreciation and liberal forms of inclusion were not acceptable. Aboriginal children, and for that matter all children, need nothing less than acceptance and love as a base to guide them in their learning and development. With respect to identity I argued for forms that were not fixed but fluid and multiple. What is needed is a strong cultural identity: strong identities as men and women, a national identity and a strong human identity.

In my examination of the strategies we employed to fulfill youth needs, I observed that the most innovative and critical strategies, those having a long-term effect, often placed trust in the youth to make responsible choices. In these instances, youth were given the opportunity to gain valuable knowledge, skills and ways of being – to choose a good path through guidance of a caring adult. Such programs required youth to think for themselves, to assume responsibility for their behaviour, now. Institutional response, on the other hand, employed "more of the same" over an extended period or employ controlling strategies.

This led me to conclude that we were compelled to examine, to develop and to support an education that had as its core: a conserving capacity that examines values, behaviour, roles and relationships based on hope and love for our children; a creative capacity that seeks changes for a better way to live engendered with responsibility and care; and last, a critical capacity that reads beyond the word to understand the basis and value of power through a person's own volition. I argued that education premised on ethnocentric views, on principles skewed toward competition, on ignorance and hate rather than on knowledge resonant with wisdom, compassion and a sense of an ethic, would not serve my son or future generations. The education I envisioned would place value on culture and language because it forms the initial map and basis for understanding who we are as people. Languages and cultures, contrary to what the literature might suggest, are not merely commodities or impediments. Languages and cultures form the basis of development for our intellects and the understanding of ourselves and the natural world. The meeting of cultures and the challenges we face collectively as human beings compel us to consider the type of education I have described. Our languages and cultures were the basis of our continuance

as tribal peoples. They continue to be the creative force for our future in this shared space (Bouvier 1993).

We need desperately to embrace a view of the world that creates a shift of thinking about our existence, so at the very least we can control the despair of our own making. The purpose of education, then, is to help us to live in this world with others and to live in a way that does not destroy it, but preserves it, for those who follow us. Cognizant of the challenges, we need to develop the gifts that each individual brings: linguistic abilities, cultural knowledge, affective development and creative action (Romero, 1994). As teachers, it means that we assume a participatory research stance in our work, that "we will make the road by walking" (Horton and Freire, 1990).

To develop the critical consciousness desired, we will need to situate our curriculum within the lived experiences of our students because it is affirming and validating. It means we are willing to critique the oppressiveness of being without work, the oppressiveness of colonization, the oppressiveness of experiencing racism, the oppressiveness of experiencing sexism and the oppressiveness of victimization.

PARTICIPANTS AND THEIR RELATIONSHIPS

The strong emotional tie we have to community schools comes from participants and their relationships to each other. In a context of underfunding, effects of rapid change, relationships appear strained everywhere I travel. Past evaluations of community schools suggest, above all, the need to define roles and responsibilities clearly (Saskatchewan Education, 1984).

A critical factor needing our attention in relationships is that of authenticity. Authenticity as a foundation in relationships should reflect the quality of our being, rather than just the position or role we might hold. As we work together toward the vision, the emphasis must be on strengths that individuals bring to the process. The process must recognize the important role and contribution of every person. Relationships must be nurtured through honest communication, co-operation in undertakings, and through workable processes for decision-making and for resolving conflict. Above all, community education development requires a willingness to accept change (Calliou, 1993).

This context, and contemporary understanding of knowledge and ways of knowing, requires each of us to be a teacher and a learner. The quality of this relationship should be family-like (Sergiovanni, 1993; Ramsankar and Hart, 1992). The core common human values we might promote are love, truthfulness, respect for life, wisdom, hospitality, sharing, generosity and peace (Kidder, 1994).

Children, parents and teachers must be involved in decision-making. As teachers, our work with the community and particularly parents must move beyond "public relations" to meaningful dialogue and involvement. It is also extremely important that the adults working close to the children reflect the make-up of the community. Imprinting is important. Because staffing turnover is likely a factor, the revisiting of core values and purpose cannot be overdone. While the literature does not provide a foolproof recipe for community development and education, a process of involvement and advocacy are critical underlying factors, as is the willing participation of all the participants. Studies in Saskatchewan have identified willing participation as an important factor, especially in the selection of teachers (Saskatchewan Education, 1984; Smadu, 1991).

Another factor that needs monitoring in relationships by all participants is the issue of dominance. Dominance by an individual or any group is not acceptable. Strong leadership to ensure that respect, democracy and fairness prevail is necessary. Both legally and socially sustained inequities in the end create injustice. We must be mindful that those most susceptible to a power imbalance are the people who are poor and the children themselves; it is important they have power and a voice.

The challenge issued in this section on participants and their relationships comes with an expanded definition of a locale. It includes people with central authority and decision-making power, along with the families and children who are the recipients of the program and the people who work in these communities. Where do the director of education, the trustees for a public board of education, the ministries of respective agencies who serve the people in the locale, the designated leaders in the education system, the minister of education and the premier of this province fit in this picture? What are their roles and responsibilities as legislators, as policy makers and as influential people with assigned authority?

Calliou (1993), challenges us to view participants and relationships beyond a human level, to include all life. I offer found words from the

World Indigenous Peoples' Conference on Education (1993), held in Wollongong, New South Wales, Australia. The South American delegates challenged us to make the connection to land in our discussion of education. The words are as follows in a poem I wrote (Bouvier, 1999).

land is power
land is transcendental
we cannot just talk
of land
we must reclaim it

land is a spiritual base
land is an economic base
we cannot just talk
of land
we must live on it
through our actions
we guarantee
an Indigenous education

the destruction of land
is the politic
we must address
to reclaim our knowing
to reclaim our cultures

education does not
have to be written
we must live it
it is community life
that nurtures
not government structures

land is the politic
we must address internationally
Aski oma
peyakwon kimamanow[1]

[1] Michif, meaning "the earth, it is like our mother."

RESULTS EXPECTED FOR LASTING CHANGE TO ACHIEVE SOCIAL JUSTICE

Connell's (1993) definition of social justice has been adopted for this section. Social justice is the benefit – social, cultural, economic and political – that we accrue individually and collectively to benefit our living. It means that every person and group has equal right to the most extensive liberties, within a context of balance, for a like liberty for all (Wren, 1977). It requires consciousness and a capacity to change the conditions of our living. Hampton's (1993) 12 standards for emerging theories in Indian education inform this discussion further. One standard argues for relentlessness in the battle for our children. The war, he claims, is "between that which honours life and that which does not." These results will require activism, based on knowledge and wisdom. Sharilyn Calliou (1993) adds other outcomes, which she broadly describes as a cohesive identity, self-determined change and community-based democracy. I have proposed that education fulfill a conserving capacity, a creative capacity and a critical capacity in a complex global community. To achieve these capacities, we will require a curriculum that is morally and culturally significant to a world community, with teaching centred on human imagination and story (Common, 1991).

Has our thinking about community schools changed? My exploration would suggest that I hope so. Relationships have evidently been fostered across cultural lines. We need to continue what we have started, to nurture it and to deepen it for all our children's sake. Education for social justice cannot be neutral, yet it must be just (Wren, 1971). My own experience suggests that shared power will not come easily or without pressure. Change to benefit people who are poor, a large segment of this population being Aboriginal people with a unique history and relationship to this land, will not be conflict-free.

I close with a story that involves the initial preparation of this work. The working title of this paper was "Good Community Schools Are Sites of Struggle." My choice of the word 'struggle' created a long discussion with a friend. My friend, a male, believed it had a negative quality that did not embody the essence of what community schools were about. I agreed that it was a strong word, but I also believed it had positive connotations; meaning one would proceed with great effort for the

educational needs and other needs of the community served by "community schools." Because I wanted the participants of the conference to listen to my message, I compromised. The original title was inspired by Herbert Kohl during a visit to Saskatoon promoting his book *I Won't Learn from You*. A man in our study circle shared his story of travelling world wide to find a good school; he had not found one. Wisely, Herbert Kohl responded with his own story to provide a good education for his children. He said, "What I did not understand then, is that there is no perfect school in an imperfect world. Today, I would look for the school where a struggle is taking place on behalf of the children."

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At The Hub Of It All: Knowledge Producing Schools as Sites For Educational and Social Innovation

LEONIE ROWAN AND CHRIS BIGUM

One of the potential shortcomings of the full-service model of schools as community hubs is the minimization or even neglect of the potential of community development and its presence in the school to animate and invigorate the school curriculum and vice versa. The history of progressive education is full of proponents of such efforts (Dewey, Freinet, Decroly, Ferrière, Makarenko, Freire, the Maitresse d'Ecole collective in Quebec). It is encouraging to see this returning in a contemporary setting in the work of Leonie Rowan and Chris Bigum in Australia. The following account of Knowledge Producing Schools gives one of the best recent accounts we have seen of the reciprocal value of children's learning and community engagement. Communities learn that they have a vital role in what goes in school and schoolchildren learn to "do life," as they say, and provide direct and tangible benefits to their communities, both within and beyond the school walls. It is here that the New Accountability can begin, freed from the tyranny of number games, phony statistics and meaningless exercises for an audience of one teacher and an Education Quality and Accountability Office.

INTRODUCTION

Few professions are subjected to the intense and relentless scrutiny so consistently directed at education. In a world characterized by rising public anxiety about a constantly changing present and a largely unpre-

dictable future, schools are regularly called upon to demonstrate that they are up to the challenge of preparing global citizens for whatever lies in their future. This article outlines one approach to conceptualizing the role of education in and for diverse possible futures. Reflecting upon both what has changed and what has not changed, for diverse students over the past 30 years, we put forward the concept of future proofing as a lens for reflecting upon the role, purpose and objectives of socially just, socially responsible public schooling. From this basis, the paper explores one framework for advancing a future proofing agenda: the work associated with a series of educational innovations known collectively as the Knowledge Producing Schools (KPS) project. After first outlining the kind of mindset that underpins KPS activities, we provide a range of examples of students in schools actively involved in knowledge production valued and valuable to their community. Our aim throughout is to emphasize the value of re-conceptualizing schools and communities, not as two worlds traveling parallel pathways destined never to meet, but as environments that, if brought together, have the potential to benefit all participants: including those who are historically most at risk of educational and social alienation.

The paper has four sections. In the first we look at the current context facing educators and the tension that is created by an awareness of both what has changed and what has not changed. In the second we outline what it is that the concept of 'future proofing' offers to those seeking to respond in genuinely innovative ways to both the new and the old in our education systems. In the third we explore the ways in which KPS agendas take up the future proofing challenge. And in the fourth and final section we provide examples of KPS in action.

THE MORE THINGS CHANGE....

Even the most cursory analysis of contemporary education debates reveals an immediate and powerful tension. On the one hand, an increasingly widespread acknowledgement that "human capital" plays a central role in the development of a competitive, productive national economy challenges educational policy makers, administrators and politicians to demonstrate that the educational systems they are responsible for are capable of producing the kinds of graduates able to con-

tribute to the social and economic well being of the nation. In the midst of recurring debates about "educational standards" and "global competitiveness", governments throughout the world have increasingly sought to identify the new basics, essential learnings or key competencies that will best prepare children to live in a world characterized by rapid flows of information, money and people. While some aspects of this debate have focused on attempting to define the core characteristics of a "millennial learner" (Godwin-Jones, 2005; Jonas-Dwyer & Pospisil, 2004) in order to ensure that curriculum and pedagogy is appropriate for a generation of "clickeratti", an even more powerful line of argument has stressed the need for schools to get back to basics: to standardized, high stakes testing against clearly articulated benchmarks.

At the same time as they are challenged to demonstrate their commitment to globally recognized measures of educational quality, policy makers are also faced with the stark reality that while much in the world has definitely changed, many other things remain stubbornly – depressingly – the same. The students who were most at risk of educational alienation and failure in the 1980s are the same children who are most at risk of educational alienation and failure today. Children from low socio-economic backgrounds, from cultural minorities, from Indigenous families and from rural, regional and isolated communities are over-represented amongst those groups of students who struggle to achieve the increasingly scrutinized national and international benchmarks for achievement in literacy, numeracy, science, and information technology. In Australia, for example, most recent data suggests that more than 10% of all primary school students fail to achieve literacy and numeracy benchmarks in Year Three (Gillard, 2009). This may seem a reasonable statistic, but rates of failure are dramatically worse for some students than others. Fifteen percent of children in remote areas, 22% of Australia's Indigenous children, 38% of children in very remote areas, and 38% of students from low-socio-economic families consistently fail to meet national and international literacy and numeracy benchmarks (MCEECDYA Senior Officials Committee, 2009).

The short and long term consequences of educational alienation and failure are, of course, well documented. Early educational success supports engagement, school attendance and the development of literacy and numeracy ability. This encourages retention at school, which then

facilitates successful transitions into higher and further education. Educational level is connected, in turn, to a range of income, health and well-being measures with students who complete secondary school and students who undertake further study consistently experiencing a better quality of life. On the other hand, the students who struggle early in their schooling generally continue to struggle as they move through the system. Many of these pay a lifelong price. Students who fail to complete year 12 have an increased risk of depression, anxiety and poor physical health. They experience longer and more frequent periods of unemployment, and greater rates of welfare dependence. They display higher rates of high-risk behaviour including drug-taking and teenage parenting and demonstrate a lower sense of social interconnectedness (Hudson, Price, & Gross, 2009, January; KPMG Foundation, 2006).

Thus, while much in the world may, indeed, look, sound and move quite differently to the way things were five years ago (before YouTube and Facebook), 10 years ago (before iPods) or 30 years ago (before cheap, accessible desktop computers) for the most at-risk groups or individuals who inhabit this changing world, far too many things remain fundamentally unchanged. Much is made of the gap that appears to exist between generations often labelled as baby-boomers, Gen X or Gen Y. But overly eager attempts to define the 'nature' of different generations can obscure the fact that the differences within a generation can often be as significant as any differences between generations. Indeed, a poor, Indigenous boy living in the rural parts of Western Australia in 2010 arguably has more in common with the poor boy who was his father than he does with a rich, city dwelling white boy who may share the same birth date. As William Gibson has noted so frequently "the future is here. It's just unevenly distributed."[1]

In other words, while focusing on all that has changed and all that continues to change, it is an obvious responsibility for those involved in the business of education to see to it that this focus does not obscure the equally important fact that not everyone inhabits the contemporary environment in the same way, or for the same reasons. All too often, discussions about education 'for the future' are hijacked either by debates about technology and its potential or by discussions of the need for a "globally competitive workforce." This leads to a situation where the real purpose of schooling – preparing kids to perform with confidence and flair in a

high-stakes world – is overrun by an obsession about preparing kids to perform compliantly and uniformly within a high-stakes testing regime.

FUTURE PROOFING IN EDUCATION: AN INSTANCE OF AUDACIOUS HOPE

Taken together, this awareness of what *has* changed, and what has not changed creates a very real challenge for educators and policy makers alike. It challenges us to identify the ways in which we can respond to new times without reproducing old patterns of educational success and failure, and it highlights the need for us to develop a both/and approach to educational reform: an approach that is able to combine a commitment to quality education with a commitment to equitable education. This challenge is well captured by Henry Giroux who explores the "audacity of educated hope": an agenda premised upon a commitment to interrogating the purposes and processes of public education:

> If formal education is to remain a site of critical thinking, collective work, and social struggle, public intellectuals and progressive social forces need to expand its meaning and purpose. That is, they need to define public and higher education as a resource vital to the moral life of the nation, open to working [with] people and communities whose resources, knowledge, and skills have often been viewed as marginal. The goal here is to redefine such knowledge and skills to more broadly reconstruct a tradition that links critical thought to collective action, human agency to social responsibility, and knowledge and power to a profound impatience with a status quo founded upon deep inequalities and injustices. (Giroux, 2009)

Giroux draws attention to the need for all educators to take up the challenges often assigned to those called public intellectuals and to work collectively to redefine what knowledge and skills are most likely to address deep seated social inequalities.

This, of course, is not a new struggle. Debates about the responsibilities and challenges, the opportunities and barriers associated with education for diverse students are long-standing and well-rehearsed and the

potential for schools to alienate particular children and families from the very earliest days of schooling is well-documented within social justice literature (Considine & Zappalà, 2002; Rowan, 2001; Rowan, Gauld, Cole-Adams, & Connolly, 2007; Sparkes, 1999, November;)(National Economic and Social Development Office, 2009). So, too, is the disturbing lack of progress that has occurred during the past 20 years (Harding, Lloyd, & Greenwell, 2001; Heymann, 2000; Kim, 2009).

But while the seemingly irresistible pressures of educational standardisation threatens to swamp educators throughout the world, there are many – like Giroux – who remain both passionately committed to the agendas of social justice and optimistic about the potential for change. Ten years into the twenty-first century, with its ever increasing emphasis on 'competition' and 'efficiency,' these educators have never been more challenged to identify frameworks for evaluating the extent to which their plans, projects and outcomes are contributing in any significant way to "future proofing" the individual – and diverse – students they are working for, and together with.

We use the term future proofing here, to signal, not any sort of belief in a simple, guaranteed or magic formula that can be used to ensure educational, economic and social success across the board, but rather, as a way of clearly and unashamedly signalling our own audacious hope: that schools committed to high standards and high aspirations can use this commitment to respond to the diverse needs of students and their teachers. This draws attention not only to academic success (as it is often defined in dominant discourses of schooling) but also to personal and social success in the diverse worlds that exist beyond the school walls.

We therefore define future proofing as a commitment to providing students with the kinds of robust and durable skills and dispositions that equip them to cope with increasing levels of change and uncertainty (as well as increasing political and ideological tension). Future proofing–as an educational vision–endorses attempts to provide all students with the opportunity to develop, rehearse and display:

- Strong literacy and numeracy skills.
- Excellent multi-literacy skills including high-level capacities in the 'new basics' of ICT.
- Operational, cultural, critical literacy.

- An understanding of what a changed and changing social and economic environment means for their present and their future (career, relationships, family and health).
- The ability to live harmoniously in a community characterised by social and cultural diversity.
- The potential to contribute to the social, emotional, intellectual and financial future of the nation.
- A strong sense of self, and a positive attitude towards change and life long/life wide learning.

This is an ambitious suite of claims, and one that is not dissimilar to the agenda-setting rhetoric of governments and educational agencies throughout the world: rhetoric which has, in the past decade, brought lots of 'change' into the lives of teachers but little actual innovation in terms of outcomes achieved. Here we are distinguishing between projects that can be identified as chronologically new – and thus, perhaps, an invention in the literal sense of the word – and those that can be characterized as intellectually and pedagogically innovative. The persistence of uneven outcomes from public education reminds us that there are important differences that exist between changing things, and changing outcomes. As Rowan (2007) has written elsewhere:

> the label 'innovative' might now be most meaningful to educators if it was applied to those processes, products or interventions that have changed in some way the precise 'things' that have historically proven most resistant to sustained, sustainable change. To be 'innovative', in this sense, would require not only (nor even) some of the more traditional hallmarks of innovation – chronological 'newness', the addition of technology, or the creation of new market opportunities – but rather some fundamental transformation, interrogation, or interruption of long standing patterns of educational access and success. (p. 128)

With an emphasis on the need for educational practices to take up the challenge of innovation in ways that address seemingly intractable problems relating to educational success and failure, our goal in the next sec-

tion of this paper is to outline one framework for educational innovation that has much to offer in this regard: knowledge producing schools.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCING SCHOOLS

The framework we are speaking of is known as the Knowledge Producing Schools – KPS – project. Growing out of the writings of Chris Bigum and the inspiration of a small number of school principals, the KPS agenda offers a practical way of implementing a future proofing agenda that responds to both what has changed, and what has not changed, in the contemporary educational landscape.

The key feature differentiating KPS projects from many other reforms is the emphasis on disrupting the traditional relationships that underpin so much of contemporary and past school practices. The traditional relationships between schools and knowledge, between schools and teachers, between teachers and students and between students and their community have produced a particular set of educational practices suited to those students who possess the cultural capital necessary for "doing school". Working to improve the outcomes of schooling more broadly requires attention to the ways in which we give students the opportunities to get good at "doing life".

Founder of the Knowledge Producing Schools framework, Chris Bigum, argues that the starting point for the knowledge producing school is the belief that one of the key ways in which educators can confront the challenges posed by unpredictable futures and changing context explored above is to look, as a beginning, at the ways in which schools' – and students'–relationships with knowledge has changed (Bigum, 2000, 2002a, 2002b). The emergence of a so-called knowledge economy means that students need to be actively involved in the production of knowledge about particular topics from the earliest possible age.

This is a key shift. Historically schools have been positioned largely as the consumers of knowledge produced by external experts. Thus we study biology through textbooks written by biologists, and literature by debating the writing within a 'canon' identified by other experts. This provides (at least some) students with excellent opportunities to demonstrate their ability to acquire knowledge but does not necessarily support the development of a positive relationship between these students and knowledge

production. It also has the potential to validate those students who are already familiar with the most routinely endorsed forms of knowledge providing a series of reminders about who does, and who does not, possess the cultural capital to do well within traditional school tasks.

In order to disrupt the traditional relationship between schools and knowledge it is necessary at the same time to make a shift from seeing students as the consumers of knowledge to representing them as the producers of knowledge. This, in turn, requires a fundamental re-thinking of the kind of work that students do within school contexts.

The KPS framework emphasizes the value of real world tasks (we define the concept of 'real world' below) for developing in students, not only the traditional capacity to collect and make sense of existing bodies of knowledge, nor even simply the capacity to take this knowledge and apply it to a new problem or project. Rather students are routinely positioned as the source of new knowledge: knowledge that has relevance to the students themselves. In other words, KPS projects do not limit themselves to providing students with opportunities to show that they can undertake research that, in reality, no one cares about. Instead, KPS projects go beyond these 'fridge door' tasks (with their audience of one or two parents and one or fewer teachers), to involve students in work on authentic tasks which have relevance and appeal to a wider community.

The starting point for the KPS agenda, then, is that students need to be involved in the *production* of knowledge about particular topics (not just in the consumption or reproduction of knowledge). This is achieved through work on authentic tasks relevant to the worlds inhabited by the students.

These real world activities are student-driven, but fundamentally connected to the diverse worlds that students inhabit. In other words, they are able to recognise and respond to the needs, desires and priorities of particular communities.

Involving students in the development of knowledge that is connected to various educational and social communities almost automatically provides them with an audience for their work beyond the artificial boundaries often drawn around schooling. Indeed, a hallmark of the KPS agenda is that students work on real world tasks with real world audiences. The responses they get to their knowledge work are provided by people with a genuine stake in the knowledge that is produced.

Clearly, managing this interacting between students and the 'real world' requires teachers who are able and willing to create substantial and ongoing partnerships with communities beyond the school. This is another key shift. In times of crisis and over-regulation, schools are often encouraged to turn inwards and to erect further barriers between what they are doing and the communities they are part of. The KPS framework, however, prioritises the establishment of relationships within and beyond traditional boundaries. Working on authentic tasks, connected to real world projects, requires access to expertise in the particular real world field of activity (to provide intellectual rigour and authentic feedback). Students are encouraged to bring the expertise they have access to in their families, neighbourhoods and other environments into their KPS projects.

There are clear resonances between the KPS agenda and the work of other educational leaders. Fred Newman and Gary Wehlage have outlined the value of "authentic tasks" and "authentic pedagogy" – providing students with the opportunity to work on projects "that are worthwhile, significant, and meaningful, such as those undertaken by successful adults" (Newman, 1996 p. 23). This work has had international impact and certainly shaped the productive pedagogies movement that was popular during the 2000s in Australia.

Of course, well before the work of Newman and Wehlage became popular, Célestin Freinet outlined an approach to pedagogy which was premised on similar principles. Freinet emphasised:

> The pedagogy of work wherein students were encouraged to learn by making products and providing services. He emphasized the value of enquiry-based and cooperative learning; taking children's interests and curiosity as the starting point for projects; the value of the "natural method" which involves authentic learning through real experiences and principles of democracy, as children learn to take responsibility for their work, and, indeed, for the community through processes of democratic government. (*History of Freinet Pedagogy*)

And of course, many progressive education projects throughout the world have sought to engage one or more of these agendas.

KPS projects do not seek to distinguish themselves from these important movements, nor to set the knowledge-producing agenda up as an entirely separate, stand-alone model. Rather, the KPS framework offers a new lens for conceptualising and reflecting upon transformative educational projects by paying consistent attention to five key questions:

- Are students positioned as the producers or the consumers of knowledge?
- Are students positioned as active or passive?
- Are students provided with a real world audience?
- Do all students and all forms of knowledge have a chance to be valued?
- Does this audience facilitate their connection to a broader community?

There are two further points to be made. KPS projects focus on the identification and response to real world challenges. As such, they generally involve students in the development of real world relationships and work on real world tasks. By extension, the work necessarily contains an element of uncertainty and risk. The certainty provided by 'schooled' versions of discovery – where teachers control not only what, but how and when children learn – is removed. The benefits, however, are that students learn to identify and negotiate far more meaningful and complicated environments. While the stakes are higher, the results – in terms of student engagement and transferable, lifelong skills – are much bigger.

Within these broad parameters schools implement KPS projects in a multiplicity of ways. This is an important point. Even within the most conceptually innovative framework, schools can fail to meet the needs of diverse learners by positioning them as a homogenous group who will all benefit from the same set of educational practices. To avoid this situation each KPS project needs to be based upon an analysis of where students are at: what their existing strengths and weaknesses are; what they are interested in and motivated by; and what kinds of community and other resources they have access to.

KNOWLEDGE PRODUCING SCHOOLS IN ACTION: STORIES FROM THE FIELD

While we can list characteristics and checklists for doing this kind of work, the bottom line is that it is more a matter of having a particular sensibility, a mindset towards kids and schooling that is probably best captured in some of the stories we offer below. In providing this small selection of examples drawn from a range of schools throughout Australia, we want to affirm that there is no one way to do this kind of work nor are there simple templates that one might adapt and adopt. The schools from which the examples are taken don't see their students as most schools do. They see their students as resources, as researchers, as knowledge workers. There are so many opportunities in schools in which students could be given so much more responsibility than they normally are. Here we don't mean the largely tokenistic practices in which students do things like conduct school assemblies or provide the labour for cleaning up school grounds. We mean taking each student as capable, talented and having much to offer in the day-to-day work of a school – and its community – as the following examples indicate.

Over a decade ago, our introduction to this approach to doing school differently occurred when Chris was invited to a professional development day by the principal of a primary school. The school had been given some funding to promote the use of IT in the classroom and with the funding a requirement to support local schools. Chris arrived at the school and was taken to a small room in which were located a set of tables arranged in a circle and on each table an iMac[2]. The room was full of principals from neighbouring schools. The principal of the school spoke briefly and welcomed them. The IT coordinator spoke briefly and introduced the professional development team. Into the room walked Year Four students. They ran the PD. Watching these young people patiently work with principals in suits as they sat on the floor and argued about the positioning of plasticine figures while producing their first claymation movie was simply inspirational. During the day the students taught movie making and sound editing: practices that had become routine in many of the classes in the school. Another example linked to this was that the principal was invited to give a presentation to a principals' conference about the IT in her school and locally. Her reaction to the

invitation was to take it to a Year Six class and explain what was required. The students shot video footage in this and nearby schools, edited the footage into a coherent story, burned the CD and gave the presentation at the conference.

Some years later, Chris was meeting with a principal of North Park PS in Victoria, Australia. She had been mentioned by a colleague who felt she might be interested in KPS ideas. He arrived at her office after school. It was still a busy time of the day for her. There were interruptions most of the time they talked. She was also busy preparing a presentation to a principal's conference about an innovative approach the school had developed about behaviour management. When Chris told her the story about the students making the presentation she leapt from her chair and gave him a big hug. Her problem was solved. Her students prepared the presentation and gave it at the principals' conference.

Some months later, the same school was invited, along with another school, to host a visit by OECD dignitaries. At the first school that was visited, the principal welcomed the delegation who then met with staff over a cup of tea and were subsequently shown around the school. When the bus carrying the delegation arrived at North Park, there was a line of Year Three students along the path into the school. As each member of the delegation alighted from the bus they were greeted individually by a student who escorted them inside, attended to their food, drink and bathroom needs and then gave them a personal tour of the school.

These examples point to a pervasive logic that you find in KPS schools – when there is knowledge work to be done, first consider whether kids can do it before taking the usual path and assigning a teacher to do the work. Once a school begins to think along the lines of encouraging and supporting students to perform serious work, work that they know matters to adults, then new kinds of relationships become possible with local communities.

In 2003, Year Six students in a regional area in Australia worked with the local cattle-sale yards to produce a documentary of the history of the sale yards. The product CD was used at two international beef festivals and by the local council to promote the region. In this type of work, expertise about cattle, even about making a good quality video about them, is usually not found in a school. The students planned and negotiated a series of interviews with cattle farmers and stock agents. They

conducted the interviews and negotiated access to film footage that the industry had produced to provide background images during some of the interviews.

In another project, a town with a gold-mining history sought and obtained funds to promote tourism in the town. They decided to produce touch screen tourist information kiosks. The local school was filled with poor, isolated and 'at risk' students. These students worked in consultation with a school that had been doing KPS work for many years and ultimately negotiated, scripted and carried out interviews with local "characters" of the town who knew a good deal about local history and events. The town was not confident that the student product would be good enough and so commissioned a commercial company to do the same work at the same time, in the belief that they would probably end up using the professional product for public display. But when you visit the town, it is the student work you see on the touch screens.

The logic underpinning this example is that students in poor, isolated or disadvantaged areas do not need to be conceptualised in terms of what they *don't* have. The students in this school *did* have plenty of skills: they had a connection to their town, and they produced an innovative product for a highly appreciative audience. Their skills were valued, they gained confidence as learners, and saw themselves no longer as the passive consumers of a curriculum written by 'experts' or people who knew better.

Another example illustrates the capacity of children to take the lead in identifying how to respond proactively to real world challenges. In response to a class incident, a group of Year Seven students designed and produced a PowerPoint-based CD to offer advice to students about bullying. They scripted, filmed and edited six scenarios each with three alternative outcomes to illustrate the consequences of what they labeled 'weak', 'aggressive', and 'cool' responses to a bully. They launched the interactive CD at a public meeting at the school and marketed the CD to other schools.

Recently, a KPS school whose history dates back to 1877, launched a History Tour. Carrying out work on their history is not uncommon in many schools. In this case, the history was researched, written and told by students. The project ran over three years and features an iPod tour, historical plaques, a guidebook and souvenirs. The students prepared

advertising flyers, met and made presentations to a range of local community groups seeking their support and sought local business support to fund the support materials of the tour. Students located and negotiated interview access to a number of elderly prior students of the school. They prepared the questions, conducted the interview and video-recorded it. The students designed a survey to gather information from past students. They used the information they received in preparing a guide book and for the audio scripts to be delivered via an iPod. Following the launch, the students made presentations to community groups and to the local historical society who, having seen the quality of their work, are planning to take up the iPod and plaque ideas in their work. The tour continues to run weekly on the school site.

In a KPS secondary school, Year Eight students had attended a local book launch about strange and unusual tales in the town where the school was located. The students began to work on a notion of a tour that would in some way pick up on and further develop some of the places identified in the book. They researched whether there would be demand for such a tour and what other sources of information were available. They met with an officer from the local council, the local council history library and the visitors' information centre for the town. They learned that, if they produced a tour, having a Japanese version would be important. The students began researching potential sites and settled on ten for which they researched and wrote stories about the ghosts and the history of the buildings in which they were said to reside. They learned GPS theory and built a GPS tour after coming up against the proprietary data formats employed by companies that sell GPS location devices. They rehearsed the tour with the town council's marketing and tourism officer (the author of the book that had prompted their interest) and members of the local historical society. They collected photographs, shot video footage of the locations as source material for a brochure to accompany the GPS tour and the MP3 accounts. The final product attracted local TV and radio coverage at its launch and is now a popular tourist attraction in the town. We include a short sample from the brochure:

> The home stands on the corner of Mary and Arthur Streets and has its own resident ghost, believed to be an old housekeeper who closes and locks all of the doors in the hallway.

> The mysterious dweller is said to wear a grey dress and carry a large set of keys on her leather belt. Each night after 10pm and until the early hours of the morning, she reportedly walks the wide elegant hallways.
>
> Staff members of the building deliberately leave doors open only to hear them being closed behind them.

In these examples, drawing in and on local expertise is an important characteristic. Project work is common enough in all schools but it typically enjoys a limited audience. We've coined the term 'fridge door assignments' to underline the difference between work that has an audience of two or three[3] and that which enjoys a much wider appeal. It can only enjoy a wider audience if students have access to mature insider forms of practice akin to the knowledge production practices of specialist communities identified by Moore (2001). Access to specialist communities for some knowledge has improved as a consequence of the very low cost of organising via the Internet (Shirky, 2008). Some teachers in KPS schools have joined online specialist communities, for instance astronomy, as a means of providing expertise to support projects in areas that students have wanted to pursue.

This is another important point. KPS projects are believed by their participants to improve both student engagement and student achievement. This is not because students are always working on what interests them the most, or because they get to play around with new technologies. There are plenty of instances where technologically mediated projects and so called "passion projects" result in students being bored, disengaged and turned off. The distinguishing feature of a KPS initiative is that, regardless of whether there is technology to be used, or an individual's passion to be responded to, all participants have sustained opportunities to develop and demonstrate expertise to real audiences.

Aspects of KPS work are familiar to most teachers. It is not difficult to find the ideas of thinkers such as Dewey's authentic, democratic pedagogy, Freire's praxis-oriented pedagogy and Freinet's pedagogy of work, in the pedagogy of KPS work. What we think is interesting about this work is the new relationships that students negotiate with specialist groups, local communities and their school in achieving outcomes that

can be seen to be significant and useful contributions to local community interests and needs.

CONCLUSION

The stories outlined above are not intended to speak to all of the challenges facing every educator everywhere throughout the world. Quite the contrary. The strength of the KPS mindset is that it allows educators to recognise and respond to the specific circumstances – the specific communities, experts, needs and desires – of their local environment. What binds the diverse activities that result together, however, is the unrelenting commitment to finding spaces to transform the relationships between children and teachers; children and knowledge; children and their community. And most important of all, between children and success. Within a knowledge-producing schools project children – all children – are not taught how to be good at 'doing school'. Rather, and most importantly of all, they learn and are supported, by the community they are so very much a part of, to be good at doing life.

ENDNOTES

[1] A variant of this was said by Gibson in an NPR interview on the 30th November 1999 (http://www.npr.org/templates/story/story.php?storyId=1067220).

[2] These were the fruit-coloured iMacs released in 1999.

[3] Typically care-givers and the classroom teacher.

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Green School Hubs for a Transition to Sustainability

ELISE HOUGHTON

A book like this could not end without giving space to an extensive account of how schools can act and are acting as community hubs in one particular domain. That is what Elise Houghton has provided with respect to environmental education. It is a perfect example of a curriculum that has grown from the contributions and insights of dedicated practitioners and thinkers, rather than from technocratic systems developers and scorecard keepers. Governments have lagged behind in Canada and although some progress has been made in getting environmental education into the Manitoba and Ontario curricula, anxieties in the multi-national world of resource extraction and agri-business are doubtless responsible for a muting of the urgent need to address climate stability, environmental resilience and sustainable energy in what Canada's future citizens learn daily. Enter the new relationship between local schools and local communities. It is here that the reciprocal school-community hub concept is beginning to take hold. This is often attributable to the efforts of a small dedicated group of educational leaders at the local level. In these efforts, Toronto may be leading the way in Canada with Richard Christie and the Eco-Schools at the TDSB and Green Teacher *magazine co-edited by Tim Grant and Gail Littlejohn. More often than not, change is coming from the interactions of schools and their neighbours setting up local sustainability projects without waiting for direction from distant bureaucrats, and making each project an integral part of what is learnt in school across the curriculum. The dream of transforming all*

our schools into places of green learning and practice may be gradually taking shape in reality; but full-service community schools will have to follow their example by rooting themselves in community interactions if they are to become genuine hubs for social development and the production of really useful knowledge.

INTRODUCTION

With even a brief look into our environmental predicament we find scientists, environmentalists and social commentators describing our record-size human population's 'ecological footprint' on the planet as nothing short of a crisis. How then, it would seem timely to ask, can schools contribute to involving kids in creative environmental problem solving?

In this article we will explore how local schools can – and indeed already do – play an emerging role in the transition to a healthy, sustainable future. We will highlight some of the many ways that schools – teachers, students and staff – are interacting with parents, community members, organizations and local culture to create "green community hubs." Through the introduction of environmental programs, projects – and more recently, more extensive partnership-based initiatives – schools are demonstrating their unique capacity to provide hands-on learning, new kinds of community interaction, and models of environmentally sustainable practice.

Environment-conscious actions do not stand alone. They are the product of a growing philosophy within education that healthy people need actively to learn how to maintain the health of the natural environment on which they depend. This philosophy animates the work of environmental educators across many different disciplines.

Before sampling the diverse range of activities that are helping schools become green learning hubs in communities, however, it is useful to have some background into the influences that both encourage and inhibit environmental learning. On one side are the evolving culture of environmental and sustainability education within mainstream public education, the work of educators and citizens calling for policy support and more coherence and status for this type of learning, and some official support in important places. On the other side is the tension between

the assumptions of education that prepares students to be participants and consumers in a global growth-based economy and the physical limits of the earth's resources and ecological tolerances. This tension is reinforced by an insufficient public understanding of the interplay among several large-scale issues of the day, including energy, climate change, economic uncertainty, and a global loss of biodiversity and ecosystem resilience.

Remarkably, green school hubs can address all of these critical issues. They can give students and communities a chance to participate in learning how we as a society can produce energy sustainably, mitigate climate change, become more locally self-sufficient, and protect the species and dynamic ecosystems on which we depend for life.

SCHOOLS AND OUR ENVIRONMENTAL FUTURE

The constituency for global change must be created in local communities, neighbourhoods, and households from people who have been taught to be faithful first in little things.

— David Orr

In his essay "The School as Community Hub," David Clandfield reminds us of the great value of local schools in enriching community life. He rightly emphasizes just how important these neighbourhood assets are to so many social and educational outcomes. The notion of schools as community hubs invites us to look at how they are functioning not only educationally and socially, but also environmentally – as *green* school hubs. The dynamic of educational "permeability" or flow between classroom and neighbourhood in environmental learning is becoming stronger. Partnerships among local groups, organizations, school boards, granting institutions, educators and individuals are resulting in ideas and resources for schools that stimulate exciting combinations of new thinking and hands-on learning. Thoughtfully constructed classroom projects are providing students with unique opportunities for "out of the box" learning that sends them out to learn – and teach – in their communities. More and more, educators are learning the value of integrating environmental perspectives into standard educational fare. But given the scientific news on the state of the environment, it is clear that education has the potential to play a far more effective role in creating new generations of environmentally conscious citizens.

Before we begin, however, readers less familiar with the field of environmental (and more recently sustainability) education may benefit from a brief introduction to its evolution.

Environmental education – some background

Environmental education (or "EE") has been a "non-mandatory" area within formal education for nearly half a century. It is a field, which emerged from the passions of individual educators for the natural world and a wish to help children understand, appreciate, enjoy and care for it. Without formal frameworks for delivery, the quality of environmental education in the classroom has been largely dependent on the knowledge of individual teachers.

Given the multi-faceted nature of human-environment relations, EE is inherently interdisciplinary. An environmental focus has proved to be an excellent way to teach everything from the "hard science" of how the Earth's biological and physical systems work, to research into environmental problems, to social skills required to negotiate environmental solutions. EE strives to connect children to "the world outside the school," both natural and built. It lets them explore species and ecosystems, water, energy and resource use, the wonders of nature's works, and the workings of human enterprise. Research has confirmed that environmental education is good education: a large-scale study done in the United States concluded that students who used the environment as a context for their learning performed better on standard tests across subjects than their peers.

By inviting the children of our technological age to assess human-nature relations in a wide range of contexts, EE can help them understand how their actions and choices have consequences for the future. By engaging them in critical, creative thinking and problem-solving, it can give them a opportunity to actually imagine and re-design a future that addresses trends that now appear to be unsustainable.

Lastly, environmental education is practical. It engages children in hands-on learning, applied knowledge, and real-world projects in school, school gardens and the community beyond.

EDUCATION VS. SUSTAINABILITY?

A great change in our stewardship of the earth and the life on it, is required, if vast human misery is to be avoided and our global home on this planet is not to be irretrievably mutilated.

— 1,700 Scientists in the Scientists' Warning to Humanity, 1992

The problem of unsustainability

As author and renowned environmental educator David Orr once began a commencement address:

> If today is a typical day on planet Earth, we will lose 116 square miles of rainforest, or about an acre a second. We will lose another 72 square miles to encroaching deserts, as a result of human mismanagement and overpopulation. We will lose 40 to 100 species, and no one knows whether the number is 40 or 100. Today the human population will increase by 250,000…and we will add 15 million tons of carbon to the atmosphere. Tonight the Earth will be a little hotter, its waters more acidic, and the fabric of life more threadbare.

It is now apparent that the world's most educated countries' consumption – of fossil fuels, resources and short-lived goods rapidly converted to waste and pollution – is undermining the integrity of our planet's life-support systems. World population is approaching 7 billion, up from 1.6 billion at the beginning of the last century. Our fossil-fuelled global economy has expanded by a factor of 30 over the last century. Humanity in its numbers and its perceived needs is pushing close to the tolerances of many of the earth's systems. Climate change is advancing more rapidly than many scientific experts predicted. In 1980 William Catton cautioned that our industrial society had already put our species into an ecological state known as "overshoot." We are overdrawing on nature's bank account. In his essay entitled "Fools' Paradise," author Ronald Wright advises us to take heed of the many historic civilizations that have become "victims of their own success after wearing out their

welcome from the natural world." In short, we have become unsustainable. We are consuming and polluting more than the earth can tolerate.

Our education systems are an essential ingredient of our economic system. They can provide young people with a background of knowledge and skills to participate in the global economy. They do not, however, provide more than a fragmentary investigation into the effects that our style and intensity of economic development has on the earth's natural systems. It is not unfair to say that the Ontario curriculum still largely educates for the realities and aspirations of the twentieth century. This is true despite all the scientific evidence of global environmental stresses on our planet's forests, oceans, soils, species, fresh water and particularly our atmosphere which regulates the climate.

The Ontario curriculum places a heavy emphasis on economic values and careers and the role of "consumers" in society; it takes a neutral position on the existence of global threats such as climate change and biodiversity loss. Effects of and possible remedial actions for environmental problems are considered: causes pointedly are not. In the Grade 10 science curriculum, climate change, arguably the biggest threat to the stability of the planetary equilibrium which supports life as we know it, is described as a phenomenon due to "the enhancement of the greenhouse effect." Students are invited to assess "both negative and positive effects of climate change on human activity and natural systems," to look into the increased number of smog days in Ontario due to climate change (a misleading distraction, given the far more serious repercussions such as violent weather, rising sea levels and desertification that merit attention), and how the melting poles might affect shipping (also presented as a potential positive rather than a dangerous climate-destabilizing factor).

The contribution of fossil fuel combustion to human-enhanced climate change is described as a "popular hypothesis," as is the notion that increased carbon dioxide in the atmosphere contributes to rising global temperatures and more violent weather. Students are invited to assess "the effectiveness of some current individual, regional, national and international initiatives that address the issue of climate change" including the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), whose pronouncements are not included as part of the description of this problem or portrayed in any way as a grave warning. Coal used for electricity

generation is described as "polluting" but not as contributing to climate change. Climate change is as problematic or as beneficial as any student's research might conclude. Education takes no moral position on helping students to see this issue as dangerous, urgent, and directly related to our assumptions about economic growth, globalism and consumption. Educational neutrality on environmental threats is an economically-influenced political decision of which we should be aware.

Another sample issue is biodiversity. Despite the fact that scientists observe a loss of biodiversity due to human activity on a scale they refer to as a "sixth extinction," we continue to educate about biodiversity as though it was important to "ecosystems," but not to anything more essential to life on a larger scale. Or to the "ecosystem services" of the planet on which human well-being depends. It is only mentioned four times in the grade 9-10 curriculum.

The Grade 11 science curriculum sticks with the outdated notion of "the diversity of living things," which tends to suggest biodiversity is more in the realm of a classification exercise rather than a dynamic interplay of life. The effects of human activity on biodiversity are investigated as equally beneficial or harmful with no weight on either side. Longer growing seasons caused by climate change are suggested as a possible benefit to both agriculture and to biodiversity. The curriculum also curiously mentions that "artificial selection technology" and "selective breeding" of agricultural crops have opponents who might see these age-old practices as harmful to biodiversity (as opposed to questioning the current practice of agriculture mono-cultures, or exploring the thinking of opponents to genetically-modified organisms).

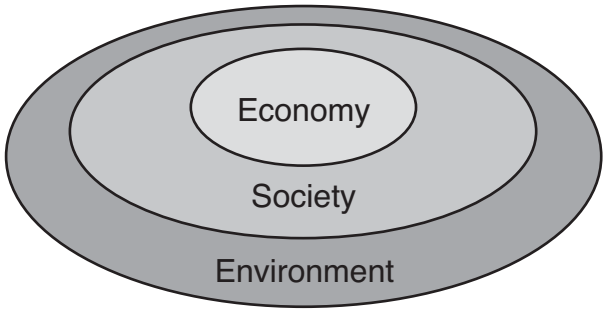
An in-depth analysis of the tone and approach of the curriculum in relation to environmental issues would take far more space than is available here. Nonetheless, the neutral curricular position taken on environmental issues is of grave concern: leaving conclusions regarding environmental impacts open to students' findings without inviting equal investigation into related causes, responsible parties, laws and policies, or economic assumptions including perpetual growth is negligent on our part as citizens. At some point we would do well to question the morality of this neutrality and ask if it serves the best interests of the students, of the economy they are being educated to join, or of the resilience of their future world.

What does sustainability mean?

Sustainability, in a way, is a straightforward concept. It means the capacity to endure, to be able to keep doing what one is doing without undermining the capacity to continue that activity. In a physical sense today, it is used to describe living within the carrying capacity of the earth's ecosystems that support all species, human society and the human economy. In more complex philosophical, political and social terms, however, it has come to include learning, deciding and acting on change, which would reduce humanity's "ecological footprint."

A first requirement of sustainability is an assessment of the state of the world's systems and species, identification of problems that affect them, and recommendations as to what would maintain their health and resilience.

Sustainability: Can Education Help Achieve It?



"Sustainability" is a frequently used word of late. It denotes a workable dynamic among three key factors: the wellbeing of people (society), the things they do to meet their wants and needs (economy), and the resilience of the Earth's systems as they support the current mix of species including humans (environment). Both society and economy are constrained by the environment. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sustainability)

Sustainability is a concept which has begun to appear in the latest versions of the Ontario curriculum, sometimes paired with the notion of 'stewardship."

The emphasis and teacher training devoted to sustainability within education will depend on the urgency with which messages are directed at policy-makers to support this goal.

We know from world scientists what factors make up our self-created environmental predicament. We also know, if we look, that we have choices among a wide variety of available solutions. Our options now are to educate ourselves and our younger generations to act towards becoming more sustainable – or to continue down the unsustainable path we are on.

If we insist on educating for the conditions and aspirations of the last century, it is not an exaggeration to say that we are pitting our education systems against future sustainability. Education that fails to provide a basis for human wisdom on a fragile, finite planet future amounts to education vs. sustainability.

THE 'BIG THREE' ENVIRONMENTAL CHALLENGES

To many of us as individuals or educators, the number and variety of today's environmental problems can seem somewhat daunting. Deciding which ones might make appropriate lesson material for young students, and how to teach them, is not always straightforward. One possible way of teaching young people about their environmental future is to prioritize "big picture" issues that both affect and are affected by everyone – and also have direct connections to one another. In this section we will discuss three particularly significant changes we see unfolding in this 21st century. They are intimately interconnected, and will affect humanity on a global scale as well as at the local level. Each of these issues is a result of the way we in the developed world live our day to day lives: by our intense resource use, our consumption habits, how much we drive, how we heat our homes, where our food comes from, how much we fly, how much we waste. These three issues are:

- climate change;
- record losses of global biodiversity;
- an expected decline in this century of the availability of cheap oil (also referred to as the halfway point of global supply, or "peak oil").

We need a stable climate to allow us a stable food supply and tolerable living conditions temperature-wise and weather-wise; we need bio-

diversity to provide us with the essential "ecosystem services" that keep our living planetary systems functioning; and we have become completely dependent on oil for the growth economy that provides most of the comforts and luxuries of our lives – and need to consider how we might live with less.

Because we have the ability to make a range of informed choices, we have the option of considering each of these issues as an opportunity for learning and change. What we choose to do and teach about them will affect the way our children's future unfolds along with this still-young century. One way of approaching challenging topics of this kind is to set them in a positive light as environmental goals to be achieved, and to consider within each of them the behaviours that would help achieve those goals of:

- Climate Stability.
- Ecosystem resilience and biodiversity.
- Sustainable energy and resources.

If we determined that these were essential areas of learning to address within formal education, we would need to understand the facts, the implications and the possibilities of sustainable change for each. Each has economic implications due to a need for both restraint in consumption and greenhouse-gas generation, and investment in new ways of doing things: this makes their teaching a matter of political will and policy change. Educating future students for sustainability will require new knowledge and a new stance in the curriculum.

Climate stability

Here are two statements from the Grade 9-10 Ontario Science Curriculum. Consider their language and placement:

- People have the responsibility to assess their impact on climate change and identify effective courses of action to reduce this impact. (p. 69 – This statement is listed as a "big idea" in the Grade 10 Academic Science course introduction, but is not borne out in any of the course learning expectations where students would actually be invited to do this.)

- Investigate a popular hypothesis on a cause-and-effect relationship having to do with climate change (e.g., the combustion of fossil fuels is responsible for rising global temperatures; the concentration of atmospheric CO^2 is responsible for rising global temperatures; global temperatures have been on the increase since the industrial revolution; the severity of cyclones, hurricanes, and tornadoes increases as atmospheric temperatures increase) (p. 77 – This is an actual learning expectation in Grade 10 Academic Science, of which climate change is the fourth strand. It refers to human impact on climate change as a "popular hypothesis" and not an issue of urgent concern identified by the majority of world climate experts.)

World oil demand for 2010 is estimated at close to 86 million barrels of oil every day. Ontarians alone consumed some 15 billion litres of gasoline in 2008. Canada has 375 fossil-fuelled power plants (http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/english/maps/economic/energy/GenerationStations). In simply considering these two sources of greenhouse gas emissions, it's difficult to imagine the total amount of fossil carbon that our ordinary behaviour pumps unceasingly into the atmosphere.

When the world conference on climate change met in Copenhagen in December 2009, they produced a no-targets draft Climate Accord that simply "recognized the scientific view that the rise in global temperature should be below two degrees Centigrade. (http://www.wbcsd.org/Plugins/DocSearch/details.asp?ObjectId=MzgxMjk)." Many climate watchers consider a further two-degree increase to be dangerously high, and insist on a target on or below one degree as essential. But there is heavy political resistance to committing to clear targets for greenhouse gas emissions reductions, even with a two-degree goal. The politics of economic growth restrains both the regulating of emissions and the teaching of new knowledge and behaviour that would reduce ecologically harmful consumption.

Climate change is now included in the Ontario curriculum as a neutral topic for students to discuss in relation to various scientific and technical processes (six mentions in the elementary science curriculum, 37 in the grade 10 science curriculum, where it is was recently added as a dedicated 'strand,' four mentions in grade 11-12 science).

Many schools are becoming engaged in actions being suggested to reduce greenhouse gas emissions. But, what is less likely to be offered for study in school is the carbon intensity of every aspect of the current economy: of globally-traded goods and food, short-lived consumer products, gasoline-powered cars, buildings with little insulation, air conditioning, travel and entertainment, industrial agriculture (pesticides, herbicides, fertilizers, fuel, processing, freezing), packaging and waste, oil extraction from the Alberta tar sands.

Climate change will be the focus issue of this century: universal education to decarbonize societies could make a major contribution to stabilizing the atmosphere and avoiding dangerous climate change and its consequences. While not the topic of this writing, it is worth mentioning in passing that climate change is now recognized by governments as a major security issue due to the disruptions it is expected to cause to global water supplies, soil and agriculture, sea levels, and habitability of many areas. Climate-induced human migration is expected to add to other present-day causes of social unrest. Meanwhile students are invited to draw their own conclusions from their research into this topic.

Environmental resilience and biodiversity

The term 'biodiversity" has been introduced into the Ontario curriculum over recent years, advancing learning somewhat towards the idea of interdependence of species as part of ecosystems rather than simply their classification.

Earlier in this decade, the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment (MA), the work of 1,360 experts world wide, assessed the consequences of ecosystem change for human well-being. The Assessment begins by reminding readers that ecosystems are not merely objects of scientific scrutiny but providers of dynamic life-sustaining functions for all species including humans, and that our modern life choices affect them profoundly:

- Everyone in the world depends completely on Earth's ecosystems and the services they provide, such as food, water, disease management, climate regulation, spiritual fulfilment, and aesthetic enjoyment. Over the past 50 years, humans have

changed these ecosystems more rapidly and extensively than in any comparable period of time in human history, largely to meet rapidly growing demands for food, fresh water, timber, fiber, and fuel. ("Summary for Decision Makers," p. 1)

- Approximately 60% (15 out of 24) of the ecosystem services examined during the Millennium Ecosystem Assessment are being degraded or used unsustainably, including fresh water, capture fisheries, air and water purification, and the regulation of regional and local climate, natural hazards, and pests.
- The challenge of reversing the degradation of ecosystems while meeting increasing demands for their services can be partially met under some scenarios that the MA has considered, but these involve significant changes in policies, institutions, and practices *that are not currently under way* (p. 1, author's italics).

In other words, we are not currently doing or educating for what we need to do to maintain and sustain the life systems on which our students' and children's future depends. Could this be enough to prompt a re-examination of some of the economic assumptions and learning expectations of public education?

Sustainable energy and resources

This category includes considerations of our industrial economy's current quest for maximizing economic growth through rapid consumption of such non-renewable resources as metals, as well as of carbon-releasing fossil fuels (coal, oil, gas) as principal energy sources. The scale, complexity and wealth of our current society is possible because of the vast amounts of fossil fuels, and in particular oil, that global society has consumed daily over the past century (estimated global oil consumption for 2010: 86.6 million barrels per day – IEA quoted in business.rediff.com/.../slide-show-1-worlds-10-biggest-oil-consumers.htm).

The energy content of one barrel of oil is equivalent to twelve years of adult labour at forty hours a week. It is easy to forget that it is the oil and energy we consume that allow us to educate our children for careers of non-manual labour – and indeed allow children to do no productive

work during the twelve years of their education. The global "information economy" for which we educate our young people is maintained by the daily pumping of vast quantities of carbon dioxide into the atmosphere. Accumulating since the dawn of the Industrial Revolution, atmospheric greenhouse gases are now higher than they have been in 650,000 years.

Can we imagine education that recognizes, as world energy experts now do, that the global supply of oil is likely to reach its half-way production point early in this century, and will decline in relation to still-growing industrial demand and population growth over the 21st century with foreseeable consequences? (For more on this topic, browse scientifically reliable sources on 'peak oil,' e.g., http://ngm.nationalgeographic.com/ngm/0406/feature5/).

GREENING EDUCATION, GREENING SCHOOLS: PUBLIC CALL – OFFICIAL SUPPORT

Until the 1990s in Ontario, there was little official support for EE other than that for outdoor education professionals who ran excellent, well-funded programs in centres around the province. Environmental education in school classrooms was largely an interest supported by self-selected teachers. Those who took a keen interest and wished to share it with others formed a teachers' association called the Ontario Society for Environmental Education (OSEE).

In the late 1980s the (then) Toronto Board of Education created a position of Environmental Education Officer. The presence of this one staff person enabled the growth of a network of teachers, parents and students who wished to be more consistently involved in environmental activity.

In the late 1990s, the newly-elected Ontario Conservative government made two major moves in formal education: they amalgamated provincial school boards into far larger ones, and they issued a complete new provincial curriculum. The high school Environmental Science course was eliminated, as was Media Literacy. Many teachers felt the overall environmental content of the curriculum had also been reduced in both quality and quantity. Enrolment in university programs in environmental studies quickly began to drop. Early in 2000, a group of educators and others concerned about environmental literacy gathered at

York University to discuss the creation of a network of environmental education supporters. This group became Environmental Education Ontario (EEON), a charitable non-profit dedicated to advancing the quality, scope and status of environmental learning in Ontario. After a consultation with 17 public sectors across the province, in 2003 EEON published in 2003 a "public strategic plan for environmental and sustainability education" entitled *Greening the Way Ontario Learns* (www.eeon.org). It laid out outcomes, needs and strategies for a wide range of actions, which would support and improve environmental literacy across society, including formal education. It was ultimately to influence provincial government support for EE in schools.

Another action that led to improved status for environmental learning was the formation in 1997 within the newly amalgamated Toronto District School Board of a group that called itself the Metro Working Group on Environmental Education and Practice. This group met for six months to formulate an environmental education policy framework. They presented it to the new school board and the provincial Local Education Improvement Committee (LEIC). It called for the creation of an environmental education policy and a new position or department that would support environmental learning in this much-expanded school board. In the spring of 1999 the newly designated Toronto District School Board (TDSB) announced the appointment of a new head of a department of Environmental Education. Over the past 11 years this department, under the exemplary direction of Richard Christie, has become a model of leadership in school board-based environmental and sustainability education. It has also been a key player in the development of two programs, the TDSB EcoSchools Program, and, with a group of partners and funding from the federal Climate Change Action Fund, the Ontario EcoSchools program. Today, as the TDSB Department of Ecological Literacy and Sustainable Development it boasts over 300 participating, certified EcoSchools, a partnership with Evergreen to transform schoolyards into greener, naturalized and sometimes even food-growing 'learning grounds,' and an impressive list of achievements in energy savings, green school design, climate change action planning, waste reduction, and a host of other green activities. It also remains the only dedicated environmental education department of its kind in a school board in Canada.

EEON, in the meantime, went to work at the provincial level to encourage the Ontario Ministry of Education to offer stronger support for environmental education. They distributed their plan widely, and met with decision-makers to discuss possible changes in support for EE. They became involved in the curriculum review process. In 2004 EEON supported a second application to bring the Ministry of Education under the purview of Ontario's unique Environmental Bill of Rights. They invited their networks to participate in a letter-writing campaign to support the application. Despite strong public support, the government refused the application. The Environmental Commissioner Gord Miller, in his 2006 annual report entitled *Neglecting Our Obligations*, described the refusal as "disappointing and perplexing." He wrote further, and forcefully, "Our informal and formal education systems and the values they promote are at the very heart of our unsustainable lifestyles and practices." He recommended increased accountability for public education under the Environmental Bill of Rights.

The following spring the Ministry of Education announced the establishment of a new Curriculum Council. The first topic they selected for review by the Council was environmental education. A Working Group on Environmental Education was set up under the leadership of former Canadian astronaut Dr. Roberta Bondar. The deliberations of this group resulted in a June 2007 report entitled *Shaping Our Schools, Shaping Our Future*, which laid out a set of 32 recommendations towards an "integrated approach to environmental education in Ontario." It was followed in February 2009 by a province-wide environmental education policy framework, entitled *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow* unveiled at a two-day Environmental Education Symposium offered in Toronto by the ministry. This policy "seeks to promote changes in personal behaviour and organizational practices that will allow us to minimize our ecological footprint, while also fostering greater community engagement in meeting that goal." Environmental Education thus became an official part of our provincial educational policy. A *Standards for Environmental Education in the Curriculum* document was drafted; every curriculum document is now to be reviewed for environmental content with every re-write. The Ministry hired EE staff, and made funding available for schools to engage in green initiatives.

A lack of in-depth teacher training in the areas of environment and sustainability remains a gap in the delivery of environmental literacy. In the section of the EE policy document, *Acting Today, Shaping Tomorrow*, related to teacher training, the ministry proposes resources, training opportunities and "encouragement" of education faculties in addressing EE in teacher-training curricula. It is worth watching to see how these commitments will ensure consistent teacher upgrading in the field. An inquiry made at the outset of researching this article to the Ministry of Education on how they plan to track and report on their EE policy commitments and "status indicators" did not receive a response by publishing date.

It is worth mentioning in passing that the period from 2005 to 2014 has been designated by the United Nations as the Decade of Education for Sustainable Development (DESD). During this decade, countries around the world are deliberating on how and to what extent they will review curricula and school programs to integrate environmental learning into formal education. It will be of interest to see if all of the Canadian provinces have official policy support in place for environmental and sustainability education by the end of this period. Only Ontario and Manitoba have official education ministry policy support to date.

SCHOOLS AS GREEN HUBS

Despite the disparity between the economic goals of education and the cautious progress of environmental learning, there are many schools, school boards, educators, parents, organizations, programs and communities that engage students in a wide variety of hope-inspiring environmental projects. These initiatives take place in classrooms, environment clubs, school gardens, and whole-school buildings. Some of them reach out into local school communities for new knowledge, guidance, financial and in-kind contributions, volunteers – and the satisfaction of working together on building a more sustainable future, piece by piece. This section will offer samples from a range of approaches to school-community interactions. Schools act as green learning hubs that both influence and are influenced by their surrounding communities. We will begin with whole-school projects, move on to larger-scale programs that

are the result of support from resources outside the school itself, and finish with classroom-inspired activities accessible to all teachers.

Toronto: Canada's greenest school board

As mentioned above, the Toronto District School Board established Canada's first and only Department of Ecological Literacy and Sustainable Development in 1999. In its 11 years, the department has become far more than a typical school board instructional program. Under the leadership of Richard Christie, it has evolved as a force for change in the entire school board, in policy, in programming, in facilities operations, and in partnerships with outside organizations. It is not an exaggeration to say that this department, by inviting the entire school board to become actively involved in hands-on greening initiatives, has made an enormous contribution to the creation of schools as "green hubs." Because of the work of this dedicated department, the Toronto District School Board has incontestably become Canada's greenest school board.

In its early days, the department collaboratively re-wrote the TDSB environmental policy. Since that time, their accomplishments are too numerous to cover in this piece, but the following highlights give an idea of the scope of their influence for change.

They began with the creation of an all-department Environmental Policy Implementation Team to ensure that the whole school board was involved in the future greening of every aspect of school board operations. They surveyed all the schools in the amalgamated school board and discovered that over 150 out of 550 were engaged in school gardening, unbeknownst to one another. They produced a beautiful book (*A Breath of Fresh Air: Celebrating Nature and School Gardens*) on school ground naturalization and gardening to showcase their own schools' diverse accomplishments. They commissioned an energy audit for the entire school board to provide a baseline for planning future energy-saving improvements, construction and conservation programs. They created a board-wide EcoSchools program, focused on energy conservation, waste minimization, school ground greening and ecological literacy. The program was introduced with a set of accompanying resources and a certification process (bronze, silver, gold levels) to make it

straightforward for all schools to become involved in environmentally oriented learning and behaviour. As of 2010, 330 of the TDSB's schools are certified EcoSchools. In 2009 the department added a platinum level of EcoSchools certification to keep up with progress in school greening.

The department established a partnership with Evergreen, a national organization that supports the creation of healthy, green, naturalized spaces in urban areas and schoolyards, and began a staff-sharing relationship in Toronto. They initiated, in partnership with a consortium of school boards, The Toronto Regional Conservation Authority (TRCA), York University and the federal Climate Change Action Fund, the creation of a provincial level EcoSchools program.

They have constructed two LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) schools – certified "high-performance" green schools – and a third will open in 2010.

A Go Green Plan (http://www.tdsb.on.ca/wwwdocuments/programs/ecoschools/docs/FINAL Go Green WEB – 2.pdf) issued by this ambitious department in 2010 will give an idea of their current position in making schools true educational hubs for environmental change. Its focus is on climate change, and its opening question is: "If climate change is one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, what does that mean for us? " The TDSB Go Green plan proposes ten actions to make board schools a positive force for mitigating contributions to climate change. The first three involve planning to reduce greenhouse gas emissions from buildings, vehicle fleets and other sources; "quick starts" include installing solar panels on schools, making schools into "green energy hubs," and developing school ground market gardens; the last two actions establish an Environmental Sustainability Community Advisory Committee and an annual Environmental Sustainability Report. All of these initiatives reach out to new sectors of the community and the city to involve them in learning that applies environmental principles to essential functions of education systems. In a true spirit of sustainability, TDSB schools educate by what they do as well as by what they teach. Their example to and involvement with communities in greening efforts are unique in Canada.

WHOLE SCHOOL COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

Whole-school environmental initiatives are great contributors to growing schools as green hubs. These can be roughly divided into projects generated internally in the school community itself, and projects or programs, which are coordinated or led by organizations outside the school.

A. School-led green initiatives

One of the best ways to turn a school into an environmentally friendly hub within a community is to engage everyone in activities that become established parts of school routines. Two Toronto public schools stand out as examples of creativity and commitment in carrying out green initiatives which involve both the students and the community: Maurice Cody and Jackman. Both of these schools have benefited greatly from the regular and well-informed involvement of parents.

Maurice Cody Public School

In the early 1990s, Maurice Cody established an Eco-Committee to plan and coordinate environmental education activities in the school. This school became an early leader in school garden design as parents worked with teachers, students and Ryerson University to create a series of Discovery Gardens. They planted a Carolinian Woodland Garden for native species, a Spiral Garden with plots for school classrooms, and Council Ring of trees with rocks for seating beneath them as a new gathering and learning place. All of these represented breakthroughs in opening up school grounds for new kinds of on-site interactive environmental learning. The gardens gave students hands-on experiences with plants, birds, insects and composting while connecting their learning in this naturalized area to the school curriculum. They also made the schoolyard a source of new interest and pleasure to the surrounding community.

With a sustainable environment as a whole-school priority, The Eco-Committee and school staff and teachers set out to develop a range of initiatives that would engage the school community in practising regular green behaviour. They established Walking Wednesdays to reduce car use, with each class monitoring participation that frequently reached 100%. They kept records of the impressive number of cumulative kilo-

metres they walked rather than drove to school (measured against a world map), and tracked their reductions of greenhouse gases. They energetically promoted litterless lunches, reusable mugs and drinking bottles, and a "Boomerang Lunch" program where students took all uneaten food and non-recyclable packaging materials home. They carried out whole-school waste audits, tree appreciation walks, and campaigns of student-produced public service announcements promoting environmentally friendly behaviour. A "Sacred Spaces" project invited students to get in touch with nature by choosing a special local place and photographing it from several perspectives.

Maurice Cody students have communicated with international negotiators about climate change. School staff have participated in the creation of a 'wiki' called *Welcome to Great Books for Teaching Kids In, About, and For the Environment*. They have also organized the Cody swap, a discussion group where parents, teachers and neighbours can post things to trade or give away, and to help reduce consumption. Maurice Cody students even participated with international recording artist Nelly Furtado in a musical public service announcement advising everyone to follow their energy conservation program example, and "Turn Out the Lights!" With the TDSB introduction of the EcoSchools program, this long-standing green school hub melded its guidelines with their own existing initiatives. In 2009 Maurice Cody became one of the first Platinum-level schools certified under the Toronto District School Board's EcoSchools program.

Jackman Avenue Public School

In 2003, Jackman Avenue Public School was designated a "super pollinator" school by the TDSB in recognition of its leadership in environmental programs and its capacity as a mentor school. Jackman parents and staff have worked with the students and community on the school grounds, and with external partners to garner support and funding for their award-winning projects. Their projects include an extensive greening of the school grounds (eight different gardens and the planting of large-calibre trees), a comprehensive recycling and composting program, and a litterless lunch program. In November of 2005, they began work on a green roof.

Taking advantage of the need for a partial roof change to address overheating classrooms, the Outdoor Environment Committee considered the best and greenest ways to address the heat problem using passive cooling strategies. In addition to solar blinds, newly-planted shade trees, and UV window films, the committee decided a green roof would be an ideal energy-saving and ambient cooling technology. It would also avoid the high-energy use of air-conditioning. In 2006 they held a grand celebration to launch their green roof. The roof functions as an insulating buffer to cool the classrooms below it, and features an "observation deck" for scientific study and curriculum-based eco-projects on its upper surface.

Through their many ongoing environmental initiatives both in the school and on the school grounds, Jackman is a beacon of green learning to their entire community. For all their efforts, they also have become a certified Platinum EcoSchool.

B. Community-led green school initiatives

Green thumbs growing kids

Winchester Public School, an inner city school in downtown east Toronto, acquired its first garden when school enrolment dropped and the portable classrooms on the school property were removed. Some school neighbours came together to re-landscape the exposed ground into a naturalized outdoor teaching space. The following year, Sunday Harrison, the founder of Green Thumbs Growing Kids (http://www.kidsgrowing.ca/wiki/wiki.php), who was running an after-school gardening program in a local park for children from Winchester and other local schools, had her program funding extended to include Winchester. This allowed Green Thumbs to lead the school in the creation of a new fruit and vegetable garden. Thanks to program support, Harrison and staff have been able to make both food and environmental literacy an important part of the Winchester school culture. Over ten years, their successful program has expanded to include three more neighbourhood schools.

The Toronto District School Board and the Toronto French School Board are Green Thumb's most important partners. They provide land, soil and mulch, access to water, and storage space. Another important partner is the City of Toronto Parks Forestry and Recreation Department,

which provides land in parks and greenhouse facilities where students can start food plants early in the spring. In addition to executive director Harrison, Green Thumbs currently has three part-time staff who work directly with students and teachers to plant and harvest the food gardens.

"To have a school as a hub with a garden," says Harrison, "you need a paid garden coordinator who's committed to making the effort to get the project started – but also to stay with it and keep it going. This could be a part-time position, or a garden coordinator could look after more than one school. The coordinator can organize volunteers and students and family and parks partners."

Green Thumbs is a program that involves a wide variety of people in a wide variety of activities. The program runs year round. Inside the school, Green Thumbs runs workshops for students and organizes indoor plant growing and composting. They also teach food preparation, using themes like "stone soup" to emphasize the idea of sharing food. They regret that most Ontario schools no longer have programs that teach students to cook.

For Green Thumbs, summer isn't time off; it's a season for expanded involvement. They hire local youth to help run summer day programs for visiting day camps. Activities include food production, harvesting, maintenance, food preparation and sharing of meals. "Our community hub is especially vibrant in the evenings when local families come to harvest and maintain the gardens," notes Harrison. "We occasionally prepare a meal together using barbecues, pot lucks, solar oven cooking or pizzas-making. We may have to supplement the produce from outside, but this is a chance for children to pick produce from the garden, and eat healthy food that they've grown. They bring their parents and family members to our school hub on summer evenings, and share recipes and growing tips. These cross-cultural exchanges create pleasant social times with neighbours."

Harrison, her staff, her students and her community grow food and environmental knowledge as they work together. "We believe that "re-skilling" around food production, food preparation, local food literacy are all part of an important transition in learning to reduce our carbon footprint and increase self-sufficiency," she remarks. "We believe that a post-oil economy will depend on urban agriculture skills and knowledge and a return to local food production."

Food provides a real draw to this school hub. Parents come. Neighbours come. And sometimes homeless people come, who may have a gardening or farming background, and wish to share their own experiences – and some of the food. The garden is the community's garden. Everyone learns and everyone shares.

Another school food and gardening program in Toronto that operates on principles similar to Green Thumbs' is that of Foodshare, which has partnered with three school boards in Toronto to develop eleven of its famous Footprint gardens and a further 14 similar projects. "They are literally shaped like feet, with the "toes" representing organic gardening, trees, local food, water conservation and composting. Teachers discuss the "toes" plus everything from food security and biodiversity to endangered species, eating and cooking." (For more visit http://www.foodshare.net, from which this was retrieved on May 3, 2010.)

Solar schools

The TDSB has 558 schools. This number of school roofs offers a sizable surface area for collecting the sun's energy to produce clean renewable energy. It also offers a uniquely visible opportunity to educate school communities through the example set with green environmental practices. The Toronto District School Board recognized this opportunity in its 2010 *Go Green: Climate Action Plan*. The plan includes the installation of 20 solar photovoltaic (PV) systems on schools per year, subject to access to the provincial Feed-in Tariff (FIT) that would pay premiums for the power generated by these systems.

To augment this already-ambitious target of green energy production, the Harbord Village Residents' Association in conjunction with SolarShare (an initiative of the Toronto Renewable Energy Cooperative – TREC) has made a proposal to the TDSB. They envision expanding renewable energy generation on schools by inviting local residents to form a coop that would invest in a solar PV system installed on a school roof. They recognized that adding an electricity-generating function to a school building also increased the value of the school as an "energy hub."

The Residents' Association proposes forming a coop and raising the necessary funding. The co-op would pay rent to the school for the use

of roof space, and contract with TREC/SolarShare to purchase the solar equipment from suitable vendors, deal with the installation, do the maintenance, and send out cheques to investors for the power generated. Power generated by the system would be fed into the Ontario power grid. Investors would earn the 80.2-cent per kilowatt hour (kwh) rate that the current Ontario Feed-in-Tariff premium offers for renewable energy generation. This kind of arrangement allows for economies of scale: many community shareholders can invest in the generation of local renewable energy without bearing the full costs of a private solar system on their own home. Their participation provides some new income to their local school. They gain ownership of a good investment in clean renewable energy. And they can feel pride in partnership with a sustainable school-community project that advocates for the advantages of renewable energy.

The Toronto Renewable Energy Cooperative (TREC) operates on a philosophy of community shared energy generation. They sell shares in wind and solar projects to people who wish to be investors and shareholders in local renewable energy generation. Their first project was the windmill that stands prominently on Toronto's shoreline near the Exhibition. An important part of TREC's work is energy education. They yearly offer workshops to nearly 10,000 kids, and provide activities and curriculum guides for schools. With the introduction of the SolarShare initiative, they add a new way to enable schools to become partners in renewable energy production, and let students learn about renewable energy right where they are. When solar panels are installed on the roof, a digital system monitor installed in the school hallway lets students read out the amount of electricity produced. This allows them to compare the amount of renewable energy generated by a sizable solar system to the daily requirements of a school building – and realize just how much conventional energy the school uses. This type of real numerical comparison makes it easier to recognize how high "ordinary" energy consumption actually is, and how far we are from living at a sustainable, renewable level of consumption.

In a late development, April 2010 saw Kew Beach Public School in the east end of Toronto become one of seven TDSB schools to receive Ministry approval for a photovoltaic energy project. It stands out as the first joint parent council-board project to achieve that recognition.

CLASSROOM-COMMUNITY ACTIVITIES

This section outlines some classroom projects that create links with community in their execution and/or in their results. By both drawing from and giving back to local people, these projects embody the kind of "permeability" that green school hubs exemplify. Not all of these projects are Toronto-based: *Green Teacher* magazine editor Tim Grant kindly provided some examples from his wide knowledge of environmental programs from across North America. (*Green Teacher* magazine, a Canadian publication documenting both Canadian and American work in environmental education, has for many years provided a treasure-trove of information to educators on green school activities. It has also helped many teachers, often sole environmental pioneers in their schools, to share in a common quest to grow a green culture within the busy requirements of their school days.)

Green mapping: the many things "green" means here

One way for students to learn to 'think green' is to discover what actually already is green in their own communities. Green Maps have grown to become popular graphic representations of the environmentally friendly features of a community or city or town. Teachers, supported by resources from 'official' green mapping organizations, are discovering the unique educational potential that local community mapping can offer students. Sending clipboard-armed students out into their communities, teachers report that some at first are skeptical of making green discoveries, but quickly become excited as they get to know their own local eco-amenities. Tracking down such features as natural spots, green buildings, community gardens, green roofs, cycling and hiking paths, farmers' markets, and wetlands, students' perspectives on friendly human-environmental relations begin to evolve. Recording the presence and locations of renewable energy (solar, wind, water, geothermal) projects, green businesses, rental and repair outlets, reuse and fair trade products, organic and local food purveyors, eco-product shops, they discover the many meanings of green as they get to know who in their community is making it happen.

Once their exploring is done, students return to render their findings into maps of their own styling: including hand-drawn, mosaics, or computerized ones using icons provided by greenmap.org. This organization has grown into a strong resource and network for green mappers. The growing popularity of green mapping and the green maps produced has led them to establish "hubs" internationally to assist mappers worldwide with mentoring, training, exchanges, and even collaborative projects.

Local residents, businesses and groups can become involved with students' efforts at locating suitable amenities to include. Green mapping schools turn students into community educators as they share their completed findings back into the community, adding a new kind of coherent message of successful sustainable development that is going on around them. Green mapping improves community environmental networks, renders the best green initiatives in a form that can be easily and widely shared – and helps make students aware of green choices they don't yet have available, enabling them to create their own visions for a healthy, sustainable future. Schools have also used green maps in conjunction with the Safe Routes to School program, mapping best routes for students to walk or cycle through their neighbourhoods to school. Another useful aspect of green maps is their value as communication and planning tools within and beyond the school, and even with local decision-makers. A Youth Green Map Resource Kit is available at www.greenmap.com/greenhouse/files/gms/YGMS_Table_of_Contents.pdf.

Teaming with nature

What can you learn from the one square kilometre around you? Place-based education lets students find out by taking an interdisciplinary approach to doing local research, using skills from across the curriculum. Environmental educators call it developing a "sense of place." The Roger Tory Peterson Institute developed the "Teaming With Nature" program to let teachers use their home ground to carry out outdoor-based, hands-on learning in a one square kilometre area around their own school. Using a team-based approach, the program principles guide student activities in taking stock of the makeup of their school surroundings, and in assessing what they know and what they'd like to know more about. The students render their observations as a map,

applying geography skills to their own unique view of their place. Teachers provide focus questions to help frame students' research process, and create coherent units of place-based study through the use of concept maps and curriculum grids.

This program works well as a "green school hub" activity, ideally drawing on the involvement of parents and community members able to enrich student explorations with their own knowledge and appreciation of local places. From a focused examination and recording of the details of a familiar home space, students learn to value their local environment in new ways, as well as exercise a set of integrated research tools. Another benefit of this kind of exploration is its suitability for repetition from year to year so students can become intensely engaged not only with their local place, but with change over time in the both the natural (wildlife, ecosystems) and built (roads, new construction) aspects of it.

The Roger Tory Peterson Institute also offers a Sense of Place mapping seminar that trains teachers to create programs of teaching and learning focused on local community. Student-created "sense of place" maps render a bird's-eye-view of their own place, not as a navigation aid, but rather as a visual story of the interrelated features that make it unique. Sense of place maps invite the use of layers of information, from scale to topography, hydrology, biodiversity, history, and cultural features. Like green mapping, sense of place mapping turns student researchers into teachers, enriching the local community with their findings and visual renderings. Information on teacher seminars in these methods is available at http://www.rtpi.org/teaming-with-nature-teacher.html.

School communities for monarchs

The Monarch butterfly is a "species of special concern" in Ontario. As such, it offers schools and communities a unique opportunity to learn more about its needs, and to provide hands-on support in creating local habitat for this beautiful species. Victory School in Parry Sound, Ontario became a true community hub of collaboration for nature protection with the design of a butterfly garden at their school. Inspired by a briefing on the status of the Monarch from a representative of the Georgian Bay Biosphere Reserve, the students established a partnership with the

Parry Sound Horticultural Society to work out design and construction details for a butterfly garden of their own. They conducted research to learn which plants would provide the best food and habitat for Monarch caterpillars and butterflies, and drew up a list of required plant material. They then went to work to fundraise for their project. The students organized a dance, a hockey game and a letter-writing campaign to ask local companies and organizations for donations. The Town of Parry Sound and local businesses contributed to their project. With help from local volunteers the students laid out their garden, arranging their chosen plants among the rocks and trees that they and Horticultural Society members had first put in place.

Another volunteer assisted the students in the planting of sacred medicinal plants – sweetgrass, sage, white cedar and tobacco – in support of the school's Anishnabe Club, adding the teachings of the Medicine Wheel to the new butterfly sanctuary.

Butterfly gardens can transform a part of a school's grounds by lending new diversity, colour and miniature wild habitat space to a former traditional schoolyard space. Such a perennial patch of naturalized area also offers a living 'learning grounds' where students and community members can study from close-up the life cycle of a species whose well-being their care helps to promote.

Modelling local watersheds

The importance of clean water to both human communities and local ecosystems is the kind of valuable environmental lesson that can vividly be taught in relation to local waterways. By building scale models of their own watershed, students can acquire an understanding of the dynamics of water flow through the landforms that make up their own natural environment with first-hand observation and topographical maps, students have built three-dimensional models of local watershed features, exaggerating the elevations to help them study the movement of runoff water as well as of pollution that affects their watershed. Their plaster-coated Styrofoam model landscapes, complete with miniature houses and factories, are used to demonstrate the flow of water – and also of pollutants, demonstrated with dyed water – through the watershed.

Students have brought these models to public meetings and events in their communities, and demonstrated what they learned about water runoff and pollutants travelling into local streams and the sea near where they lived. Through this sharing of their observations, knowledge and concern about real local environmental issues, students and community grow together in awareness of potential watershed problems as well as their own readiness to become a part of new solutions.

Studying real-world environmental hazards: tsunami coast

Real-world learning is memorable and can be also be highly valuable to local community, as a Seaside, Oregon class discovered. When their grade 11 math teacher learned that their town lacked sufficient funds to complete a tsunami research project, she volunteered her class to help with the data collection. Waiving the set curriculum, 30 young people with trigonometry skills went to work side by side with engineers on a city-led environmental study on the potential impacts on coastal buildings from Pacific waves. Their data proved to be so solid that the city manager came to appreciate students as a real asset in conducting local research. After the data gathering, the class went on to investigate the history of local tsunamis. They then put their communication skills to work to present an argument to the town council and property owners for public signage to warn of possible rogue waves.

Letting community needs drive curriculum can open up valuable applied learning experiences for students. Equally importantly, it can turn student work into a tangible benefit to the well being of the community.

Place-based education: Project CO-SEED

For many environmental educators, the goal of creating an environmentally literate society is one that's best begun at home, in the local community. "Place-based education" connects students with local people, local places and real local issues. It teaches taking advantage of resources that can be found right near the school. Antioch University New England has created a place-based education program called CO-SEED to get teachers and students involved in this kind of real-world

learning. The program engages young students in everything from local history and community problem-solving to planning, environmental management and recycling. Students are given opportunities to play an active role as valued partners in community service.

The CO-SEED program began in 1997, and has worked to cultivate partnerships between schools, with local community organizations, and with institutions of higher learning. Program director David Sober visits local schools to get kids started on thinking about what's in their community – and what's needed. He invites them to brainstorm on what they'd do and what they'd change, generating a free-flow of ideas, not all practical, but all creative and aimed at letting students get used to grappling with real situations. In Littleton, New Hampshire the CO-SEED program works out of an outdoor centre that was the brainchild of a student. Many projects later, the Littleton town manager has come to think of the kids as a real community resource; he's keen to see their involvement in age-appropriate projects, applying age-appropriate skills. The notion of "community driven curriculum" is a powerful one here, reinforcing the sustainable goal of developing practical place-based knowledge and experience. CO-SEED builds community ties, appreciation for the natural world, and good, involved citizens. http://www.antiochne.edu/anei/programs/coseed/programfeatures.cfm

CONCLUSION

Conceptualizing our schools as green hubs is a timely project. A culture of sustainability is evolving in higher education, in public policy, in business planning, and in public consciousness. At the grassroots level, a Transition Town movement is spreading internationally, with a focus on the building of local community resilience in the face of rising energy prices and expected oil declines in this century. A related field of Sustainability Literacy is also taking shape, a new educational direction whose range of "skills for a changing world" mesh well with those of green school hub activities. (The contents page of the *Handbook of Sustainability Literacy* http://www.sustainability-literacy.org/contents.html lays these out succinctly.)

Schools, as we can see from the examples shown here, offer a unique potential in the diverse roles they can play in the transition to sustain-

ability, making environmental learning a central part of community life. Addressing climate change is now widely considered to be the most urgent issue confronting all of humanity. Today's young people deserve an education that allows them access to the knowledge and skills to become both economically and environmentally wise in the face of change. Transforming our schools into centres of green learning and practice is a way of offering today's young people a new promise for the future.

Contributors

CHRIS BIGUM began his academic career as a trainee teacher at the University of Melbourne, Australia, in 1965. He was the first of his family to pursue university study. He completed an Honours degree in science and then a PhD in physical organic chemistry. He finished his teacher training and then worked in a high school and a teacher's college during which time he further developed his interest in computing and related technologies and their growing relationship to educational practice. He took up an appointment at Deakin University in the mid 1980's and was fortunate to work with a number of influential thinkers in education in a range of different research projects. It was during this time that his intellectual agenda developed considerably, first through a sociological perspective and later through actor-network ideas, which remain a primary focus. He then took up an appointment at Central Queensland University, where his early thinking about schools as sites of serious knowledge production began to grow through working with a primary school principal which then grew to include another five or six schools over time. He returned to Deakin and carried out a number of management roles in the Faculty before retiring in 2007 in order to have more time for reading, writing and thinking. He is currently an Adjunct Professor at the Griffith Institute for Educational Research in Queensland. In his unretirement he continues to work on theories of educational innovation and change, schools as knowledge producers, trends in digital technologies and their impact on social institutions, knowledge production in the petabyte age, scenario planning in education, and genomic literacy. (cbigum@gmail.com)

RITA BOUVIER, a Métis teacher, was born and raised in Ile a la Crosse by her grandparents, Flora and Joseph Bouvier. She has served in various leadership roles in education at home and abroad. Most recently, she served as a Coordinator for the Aboriginal Learning Knowledge Centre of the Canadian Council on Learning based at the University of Saskatchewan. She was awarded an Eagle Feather by the AWASIS Council and the Arbos Award by the Saskatchewan Teachers' Federation for service to teachers and public education. Her lifelong interest in issues of social justice spilled over to community and consultancy work (local and global) with the Saskatchewan's Northern Governance Task Force, Gabriel Dumont Institute of Native Studies and Applied Research, the Independent Oversight Committee on Métis Elections Saskatchewan and *Iskwewuk E-wichiwitochik* – Women Working Together (formerly Missing Aboriginal Woman), Education International to name a few. Rita Bouvier writes essays and poetry in her spare time. Publications include: two books of poetry, *Blueberry Clouds* (1999) and *pâpiyâtak* (2004), which was nominated for Saskatchewan's book of the year; a book co-edited with Angela Ward, *Resting Lightly on Mother Earth* (2001) highlighting educational experiences of Aboriginal people in urban environments; and finally, *Better That Way*, a collaborative work with Sherry Farrell-Racette and Margaret Gardiner. She is currently enrolled in Ryerson's publishing program and freelances on various research and facilitation-mediation projects. She holds a Masters degree from the University of Saskatchewan. (rita.bouvier@usask.ca)

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RICHARD HATCHER is professor of education at Birmingham City University in England. He has taught in primary schools and in further education. He has written widely on aspects of education policy with particular reference to social justice issues. Most of his recent publications are critiques of the school education policies of the Labour government: in particular, privatisation and the various forms it takes, but also managerialism in education and issues of social class inequality. Richard Hatcher is an active member of the National Union of Teachers (the largest teachers union in England and Wales) and a member of the executive committee of its Birmingham branch. He is a founder member of the Socialist Teachers Alliance, set up in 1976 and now the principal left grouping within the NUT. He has also been active in the education network of the European Social Forum and in sessions on education at the Forums in Florence (2002), Paris (2003), London 2004) and Athens (2006). Richard has been an invited speaker at numerous education events, both academic and political, including meetings organized by teachers' unions in France and Spain. He is currently involved in campaigns against Academies in Birmingham and nationally as both a researcher and a campaign activist. He is a co-author of the recent *Schooling in Western Europe: The New Order and Its Adversaries*. (Richard.Hatcher@bcu.ac.uk)

ELISE HOUGHTON is an environmental and sustainability education consultant and writer. She is a founding member, former president, and communications chair of Environmental Education Ontario (EEON), a non-profit organization working to advance the quality, scope and status of environmental literacy across public sectors in the province. She holds a masters degree in environmental studies from York University, with a focus on mainstreaming and accountability in environmental education. After years in advertising in Paris and Toronto, Elise began in the early 1990s to work with other Toronto parents to strengthen support for environmental learning and activity in school settings. She has written and produced environmental videos, newsletters, articles, curriculum reviews, classroom educational materials, advocacy campaigns, and policy assessments. In collaboration with the Toronto District School Board, she authored a book on school gardening and environmental learning, entitled *A Breath of Fresh Air: Celebrating Nature and School Gardens*. She is the editor/publisher of *Greening the Way Ontario Learns: A Public Strategic Plan for Environmental and Sustainability Education*, (www.eeon.org) a document widely distributed to Ontario policy makers to invite their support for environmental literacy. She is a board member of Green Thumbs Growing Kids, manages a listserv for Environmental Education Ontario, and teaches Environmental Citizenship at Algonquin College. She lives on a farm, grows vegetables, and has two daughters, which is why she does this work. (eshoughton@eol.ca)

MICHAEL LECLAIRE has been involved in education for over 37 years. He has served youth and their families in the capacities of teacher, counselor, principal, provincial consultant for Integrated School-Linked Services, and lastly as Director of Education for the Office of the Treaty Commissioner. Michael served as a Task Force Member on the Role of the School Task Force and was the Principal of Nutana Collegiate, the first School^{PLUS} inner-city high school in the province of Saskatchewan. Nutana Collegiate went from a school of approximately 550 students per year (1995) to a School^{PLUS} school of 1705 students per year (2001). As a Provincial Consultant, Michael worked with communities to help to develop and institute Integrated School-Linked Services throughout many schools in the province. Michael has spoken on the vision and intricacies associated with the vision of School^{PLUS} at national and international conferences. As a Director of Education, he coordinated and helped to develop a process to build better relations between First Nations and non-First Nations in Saskatchewan. His team used the Treaties for this purpose. Currently he is teaching and lecturing at the University of Saskatchewan on community development theory and practice. He remains committed to the vision of working together so that community members gain that sense of ownership, belonging and empowerment. Presently, as a Rotarian, he is working alongside many com-

munity and government partners on developing a Restorative Justice Program in high schools. (leclairem@sasktel.net)

GEORGE MARTELL has taught at the Faculty of Education and the Atkinson School of Social Sciences at York University. He was a founder of Point Blank School (an alternative school in Toronto's inner city), a founding editor of *This Magazine Is About Schools* and *Our Schools/Our Selves*, and the author of *The Politics of the Canadian Public School* and *A New Education Politics: Bob Rae's Legacy and the Response of the Ontario Secondary School Teachers' Federation*. An activist in community and parent education politics, George Martell served as an NDP trustee on the City of Toronto Board of Education and then as non-voting chair of the Board's NDP caucus. Later he acted as a senior education policy advisor to the provincial NDP prior to the party winning the 1990 Ontario election and its subsequent abandonment of its educational reform project. Since that time he has worked to help bring together Ontario teachers, school-board workers, parents, students and union and community activists into one broad education coalition. He chaired the Ontario Education Alliance and was the research coordinator for the Toronto Education Assembly, out of which the present Campaign for Public Education in Toronto emerged. Currently, he is working with Toronto's Somali community on educational issues and co-chairs Education Action: Toronto and Everybody's Schools: An Education Policy Institute. (gmartell@yorku.ca)

LEONIE ROWAN is a Senior Lecturer in the School of Education and Professional Studies at Griffith University in Queensland, Australia. Her research interests relate to the broad fields of equity and social justice and she is particularly interested in the concept of relationship-centred schooling as a framework for disrupting traditional patterns of success and failure in diverse educational and cultural sites. She has long worked to draw attention to the multiple ways in which schools – through their partnerships with caregivers, children and members of their community – can either reproduce and naturalise or contest and transform dominant understandings of what it means to be a 'good student', a "good learner' a 'good parent' and a 'good citizen.' Leonie Rowan specialises in working with pre-service and in-service teachers to problematise the taken for granted practices of schooling that have for so long produced uneven educational outcomes and works to identify productive, do-able ways for real teachers in the real world to work towards social justice in their communities on a daily basis. With an interest in the theoretical resources provided by feminist post-structuralism and actor-network theory, she has published in areas such as early childhood education, new literacies/new technologies, and values education, and is currently working on projects focused on home/school

partnerships. Her most passionate belief is that schools CAN make a difference to the lives of diverse kids, provided we are all willing to look at the relationships we build, in our day to day activities, with kids, parents and caregivers. (l.rowan@griffith.edu.au)

CAROL ANNE SPREEN is an Assistant Professor in the Department of Leadership, Foundations and Policy at the University of Virginia and a Visiting Professor at the University of Johannesburg. Carol Anne's teaching and academic experience is in the field of comparative and international education policy, with an emphasis on education rights and teaching for equity, diversity, social justice. Her research focuses on globalization and educational policy borrowing; teachers as agents of change; school/community partnerships; and comparative multiculturalism/anti-racist teaching. Over the last two decades she has participated in numerous urban education reform and diversity initiatives in New York, Los Angeles, Chicago and Washington DC. Since 1997, Carol Anne has been working in South Africa as an affiliate of the Universities of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg and Venda, and has been actively involved in teacher professional development and curriculum policy reforms there. She holds an MEd from the University of Illinois in Chicago where she was a Chicago public school teacher. She has a PhD from Columbia University in New York, where she developed outreach programs on immigration and identity and helped create an alternative community-service public high school in the South Bronx. (spreen@virginia.edu)

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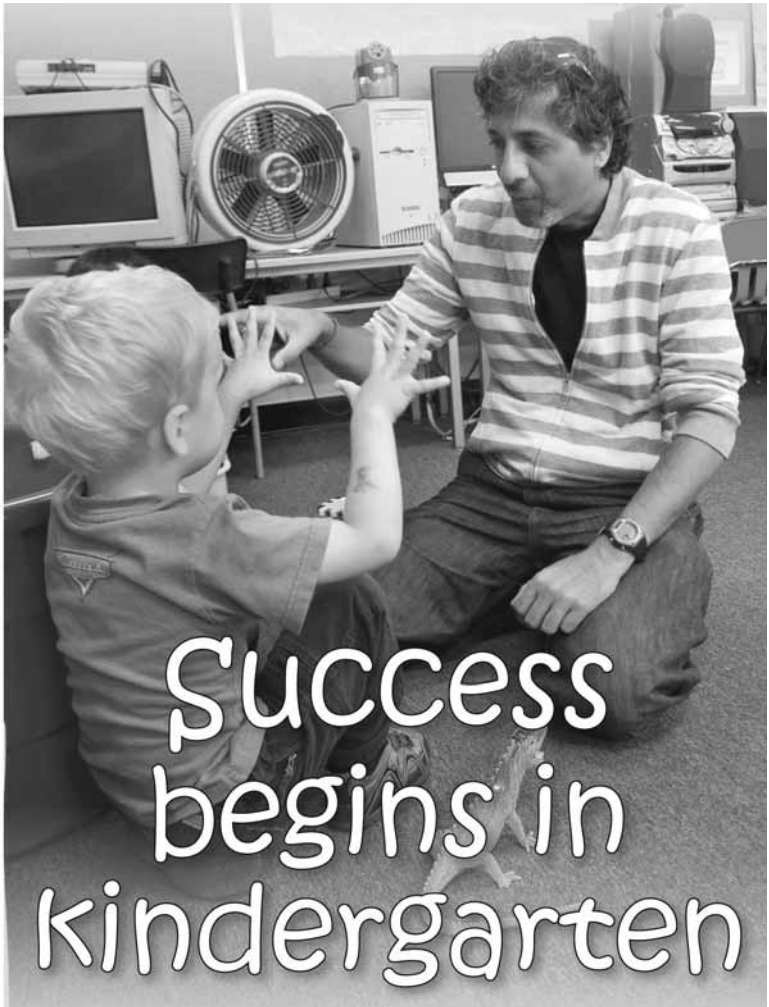

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Are you okay? You seem worried.

Why don't you tell me a little bit about it? I may not be able to make it go away, but I can listen.

Your friends, family and teachers are here to support you.

Together we can make living with anxiety so much easier.

Healthy minds. Bright futures

The Alberta Teachers' Association

CANADIAN MENTAL HEALTH ASSOCIATION
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE POUR LA SANTÉ MENTALE

Global

www.canwetalk.ca

Another day, another generation cared for.

The Alberta Union of Provincial Employees – Alberta's largest union – represents more than 8,000 employees of post-secondary institutions and school boards province wide.

These dedicated education support workers include custodial staff, administrative and clerical employees, technical staff, librarians and many others working hard to make students' education a success.

Throughout Alberta, AUPE represents more than 75,000 employees of the government, health care providers, educational institutions, and boards, agencies and local governments.

AUPE
Alberta Union of Provincial Employees

Alberta Union of Provincial Employees. Your working people.
1-800-232-7284 www.aupe.org

growingminds

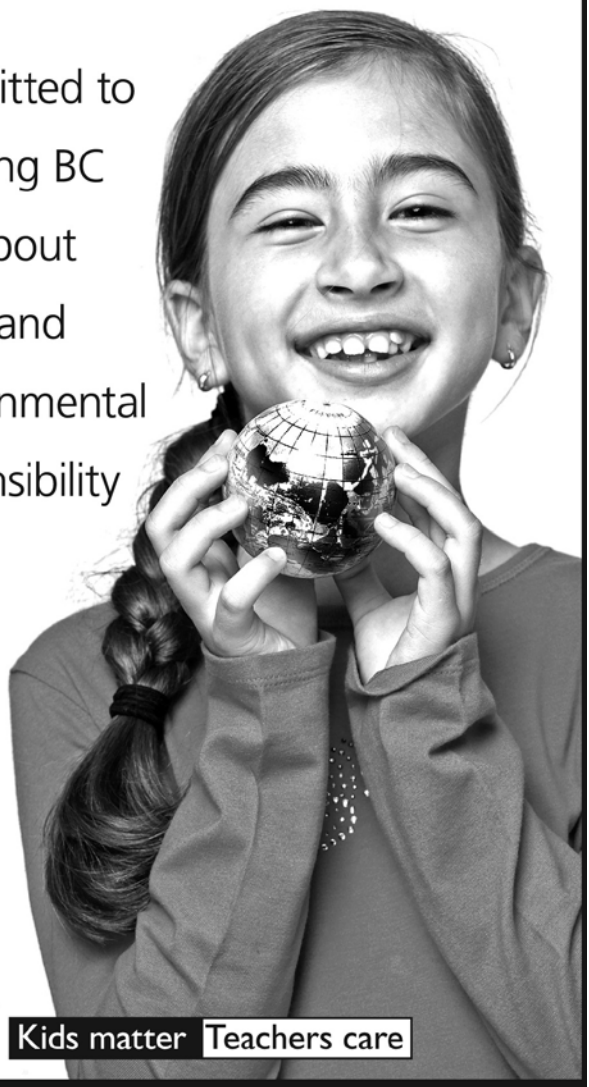
The Power of Learning

The Manitoba Teachers' Society

mbteach.org

The BCTF...

committed to teaching BC kids about social and environmental responsibility



Kids matter Teachers care

British Columbia Teachers' Federation
www.bctf.ca

Build a respectful workplace

Speak out with one voice

against racism, harrassment and prejudice

Make a real difference at work. Make a real difference in the world!

CAW TCA
CANADA
www.caw.ca

It takes leadership to nurture tomorrow's community leaders

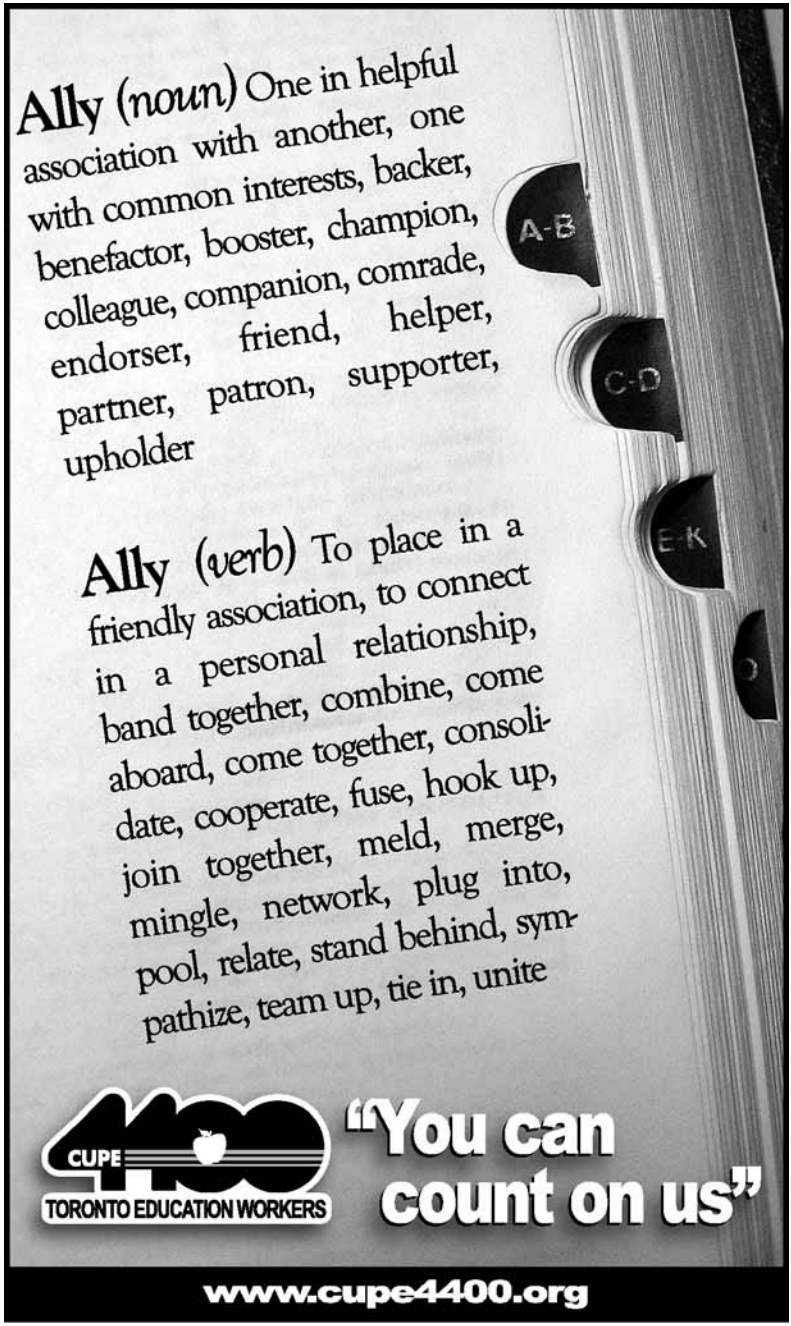
Each school forms a unique community, and like any community has its own distinct culture, needs and assets.

We know it takes effort from all citizens for a healthy community to thrive. It takes leadership, engagement and resources.

We all want our children's schools to be healthy, nurturing and caring communities. The contributions of parents, administrators, teachers, school staff and the community at large create a partnership that ensures our students receive both the best school experience and educational opportunities possible.

The Nova Scotia Teachers Union salutes the leaders of our province's public schools. Their tireless efforts guide both the human development and education of our future leaders.

Nova Scotia Teachers Union



Ally (*noun*) One in helpful association with another, one with common interests, backer, benefactor, booster, champion, colleague, companion, comrade, endorser, friend, helper, partner, patron, supporter, upholder

Ally (*verb*) To place in a friendly association, to connect in a personal relationship, band together, combine, come aboard, come together, consolidate, cooperate, fuse, hook up, join together, meld, merge, mingle, network, plug into, pool, relate, stand behind, sympathize, team up, tie in, unite

CUPE 4400
TORONTO EDUCATION WORKERS

"You can count on us"

www.cupe4400.org

Poverty starves young minds

ONTARIO ENGLISH
Catholic
Teachers
ASSOCIATION