Celebrating School Change Projects in Rural Minnesota,
with Strategies for School Reformers

Vicki Nelson and Terri Anderson
The Center for School Change
Schools and Communities Working Together

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How to Use this Book

Copy pages from it.
Write in the margins.
Tape lesson plans to the cover.
Share it with your friends.
Show it to a new parent.

_Schools and Communities Working Together_ was created with care so that it can stand lots of use.

See the spiral binding on the outside? We asked the printer to put it there so the book will always lie flat. Set _Schools and Communities Working Together_ down while you go for a snack; it will not turn its own pages while you’re away. Try it out on a copy machine. The copies will be clear all across the page because the book will not bump the copier lid open to let in light.

**Chapter by Chapter**

There is no need to read _Schools and Communities Working Together_ from cover to cover. If you’re busy, start with the chapters that seem most useful. Here are some hints.

Chapters One and Two provide a look at the concept of schools and communities working together including the benefits for all parties involved. In Chapter Three, you will find our ideas for things that make school change projects strong.

Chapter Four introduces the twenty schools that were at the core of Center for School Change work in rural Minnesota between 1996 and 2001. There is a description of the key components of each school as well as information for readers who would like to learn more. If you have questions, check out the Web pages or give a contact person a call — the folks at the sites are real school change experts. We also include a list of schools and communities that worked with CSC up through 1995.
Many of the schools agreed to help us write this book by sharing rubrics or samples of the kinds of activities they have found successful. Contributions from Center for School Change sites are grouped into topics such as service-learning and parent involvement in Chapter Five, but many could fit into several categories. Watch for the letter “E” at the top of the page if you’re looking for something that has been used with elementary students, or for “S” if you are interested in items designed with secondary students in mind.

Chapters Six through Eight contain how to advice based on the collective work of the sites and CSC staff members. Topics include planning, communications and assessment — three issues we have found critical to creating strong school change projects.

Finally...

At the conclusion of Schools and Communities Working Together we mention friendly organizations and individuals who have assisted CSC in the adventure of promoting school change in rural Minnesota. There are many. For folks who may not read all the way to the end of the book, however, we wish to be clear at the beginning. Without all of the wonderful educators, community members, parents and kids who invested dreams and energy to improve the schools in their own communities, there would be no book. Along with other Center for School Change staff members, past and present, we are grateful for the opportunity to have witnessed the fine work of so many people.

Vicki Nelson and Terri Anderson
Chapter One

The Center for School Change

“The Center for School Change is a unique organization. It is a valuable and timely instrument for constructive change and improvement in public education. Its focus is on children and learning, but it seeks also through its support of local school projects to involve citizens and parents with teachers and administrators in discovering and implementing more effective ways of teaching and learning.”

Dr. John B. Davis, former superintendent of Minneapolis Public Schools and former president of Macalester College

Created by a grant from the Blandin Foundation in October 1990, the Center for School Change has spent many years working in the field of school reform. With staff members based at the University of Minnesota’s Hubert H. Humphrey Institute of Public Affairs, as well as in outreach offices around Minnesota, the Center has helped to create model sites, shared information through conferences and publications and offered opinions on matters of education policy. Primary funding has come from the Blandin and Annenberg Foundations and the University of Minnesota.
A Model for Change

The Center for School Change has worked with educators, parents, students, community representatives, policy makers and other concerned individuals to:

- Increase student achievement;
- Raise graduation rates;
- Improve student attitudes toward learning, their schools and their communities; and
- Strengthen communities by building stronger working relationships among educators, parents, students and other community members.

To reach these goals three basic strategies have been used. The strategies, intended to reinforce each other, seek to:

- Help create new and more effective models of education;
- Increase knowledge of and support for educational reform; and
- Stimulate change in local, state and federal institutions.

Strategy One: Creating More Effective Models of Education

Between 1991 and 1995, the Center for School Change provided grants and technical assistance to 49 Phase I communities in rural Minnesota. During Phase II from 1996 to 2002, 20 more schools in greater Minnesota received similar support. This book is a celebration of the hard work and accomplishments of schools and communities from all across the state. Most of the material in this book is based on the Phase II sites, but there are contributions from Phase I sites as well.

As seasons have passed, the school sites have seen changes in focus, staff and funding. Many projects remain strong within the niches they created. Some continue to grow. A few have disappeared. Whatever the current status of their projects, participants have collectively made a long-term difference in education. Long after the rigors of project planning and the excitement of implementation have passed, they continue to hold high expectations for themselves and for the young people in their communities.
Strategy Two: Increasing Knowledge and Support for Education Reform

Over a hundred community meetings have been convened around Minnesota on the subject of school reform. Center staff members and individuals from CSC projects have spoken at numerous state and national conferences. The Center has convened over 30 statewide conferences on topics supporting reform efforts. Conference themes include: innovative ways to improve student achievement, how to focus on assessment and accountability, sharing facilities to better serve youth and families, student entrepreneurship, ways to increase parent involvement, community and educator partnerships and implementing the Minnesota Graduation Rule through community-based learning.

The Center for School Change also provides a voice for school improvement through information supplied by staff members during guest spots for radio and television audiences and contributions to state and national publications. Over 35 rural and urban newspapers regularly publish columns written by CSC staff members, and Fine Print, the Center’s newsletter, has been available for free to all interested groups and people within the state of Minnesota. CSC sponsored research and released publications in many areas including family involvement, charter schools, teacher preparation, attracting and retaining high quality teachers, assessment and accountability and the benefits of small schools.

Strategy Three: Stimulating Change in Local, State and Federal Institutions

The Center for School Change attempts to help policy-makers at the local, state and federal levels understand the importance of school change projects and the initiatives addressed in the Center’s research and conferences. For example, as a result of CSC staff members, students and teachers sharing their work and research, legislators provided funding for new teacher support activities and school-based entrepreneurship. National Collegiate Athletic Association policies that were not supportive of innovative programs were changed. Forced consolidation of school districts was opposed by legislators, and charter school legislation continues to evolve favorably.
Within the broader framework of the Center for School Change, a set of guiding principles has been established to guide project development and implementation. These principles ensure that the work of the Center contributes to the social and economic vitality of the community, provides choices among schools and programs for families, students, and educators, involves a broad-based team of educators, students, and community representatives, and promotes greater autonomy for those directly involved in implementing the project. In addition, they emphasize strong parent-educator-community partnerships, the utilization of the community as a classroom, cross-age, interdisciplinary learning opportunities, a focus on key academic skills and graduation based on demonstrated skills and knowledge, greater community use of school facilities and equipment, and individualized or personalized learning plans for students.

The Heartland Center, in collaboration with the Center for School Change, offers several how-to resources on their website. These resources aim to build stronger schools and communities through collaboration.

[Web Site] The Heartland Center has several how-to resources to build stronger schools and communities through collaboration. www.heartlandcenter.org
Chapter Two

Benefits of School Change

Developing new and better ways to help children learn takes hard work, yet many reformers say the benefits are well worth their time and effort. Here are some things that faculty members, students, parents, community organizers and supporters from Center for School Change sites all over Minnesota say they value most about their school change projects.

**Improves Students’ Academic Skills**
CSC sites reported improvements in students’ academic skills. In many cases, as measured by standardized tests, academic achievement increased in the areas of reading, writing and math. Performance-based assessments revealed improvements in areas such as public speaking, use of technology and writing. And students involved in entrepreneurship projects self-reported that hands-on opportunities helped them understand concepts introduced in business and accounting classes.

Independent evaluators were hired to measure academic growth based on the analysis of data from CSC sites. They found that active, hands-on learning provides many benefits for students, including improved test scores. Dr. Ron Newell, formerly clinical experiences director in the St. Cloud State University Department of Education, examined

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**Some people wonder if**
schools must sacrifice academic achievement for the social benefits of combining classroom work with community research and service. The answer from CSC sites is “NO!” CSC sites show that well-designed programs improve students’ attitudes, help them learn how to be effective citizens and increase the kind of academic skills measured by both applied writing assessments and standardized tests.

Joe Nathan
Director
Center for School Change
"I believe that many students learn skills they could not have learned in traditional classes. Students problem solve and work on time management, along with content curriculum. Test scores have improved. Public speaking comfort has greatly risen."

Teacher
Together for the Future
Perham, Minn.

students’ scores on Minnesota’s statewide assessments and nationally normed tests. He concluded, “Where there is longitudinal data, CSC sites showed better than average growth in basic skills.”1

David Evertz, another independent evaluator, looked at writing samples from three schools. He found “significant improvement” by students at each site, and “strong evidence of positive student writing outcomes.”2

Builds Students’ Interpersonal Skills
Survey results from students, teachers and parents on the subject of students’ attitudes toward school reported a high level of interpersonal skill development. Participants reported improvements in problem-solving, the ability to work productively with others and emerging leadership skills. Activities rooted in real and relevant situations motivated purposeful engagement and gave students an increased excitement for learning.

Engages Students in Active Citizenship
When students understand their community’s culture, economy, history and environment, they become more invested and more likely to find ways to contribute — especially if they know their contributions are valued.

Using the community as a focus for study gives students a chance to apply skills in an authentic context. Community issues and needs offer many opportunities for students to solve actual problems. Producing real products, meeting community needs and doing things that are useful and noticed by an audience beyond the classroom helps students experience feelings of responsibility and satisfaction that come with active citizenship.

As a social benefit and from a human capital perspective, when students

Students from Perham, Minnesota’s Together for the Future program test water quality at Toad River.
learn about their community’s valuable qualities and opportunities, they may be inspired to stay or to return and contribute as adults. Wherever they choose to live, they will be better prepared to participate in community life.

**Increases Family Involvement**

Parents and extended families were involved with CSC projects in many kinds of ways. As valued team members, their ideas, resources and support were critical in the early stages of planning. Once projects were up and running, many parents took on advisory roles to guide sustainability efforts. School personnel took the feedback from parents seriously, and often used their suggestions to make modifications and set new goals.

Teachers reported great appreciation and surprise at the amount of support from parents. “All we have to do is ask, and there they are — ready to help,” was a frequent kind of survey response. In several cases, groups of parents planned school-community celebrations and events. They provided resources both in and outside of school to support student learning. Many volunteered in whatever ways were needed. All it took was for someone to ask.

**Strengthens Schools and Communities Through Collaboration**

Rainbow Research, a Minneapolis-based research and evaluation firm, was hired to evaluate the effectiveness of school-community partnerships in Center for School Change sites. After a three-year study, evaluators concluded that “carefully developed collaborative efforts can achieve meaningful benefits for students, schools and the broader community.”³

Those benefits include:
- Bringing community resources into schools;
- Connecting students and schools to their communities;
- Building community pride in students and communities alike;
- Making school facilities more accessible to community use; and
- Pooling resources to create facilities and programs that benefit both schools and communities.⁴

**“Being involved in the School For All Seasons Advisory Council has been an exhilarating experience. I have always wanted to be part of our children’s education. The School For All Seasons Advisory Council not only welcomes, it also encourages parent input.”**

Jackie Heinen
SFAS Parent
Isanti, Minn.

**Recommended Reading**

Clues to Rural Community Survival, Vicki Luther and Milan Wall, Heartland Center for Leadership Development, Lincoln, Neb., 1998.

Schools and Communities Working Together

In rural communities it is especially important to figure out how to do more with fewer resources. One way is to share what does exist. Schools and communities can form mutually beneficial partnerships.

One of a community’s greatest assets is its youth. Communities can tap into the energy and creativity of their young people. When students use the community as a focus for study, they can play a meaningful part in community development and improvement. Likewise, the community offers a wealth of resources to support student learning.

In addition to utilizing the skills and talents of students and staff members, communities often benefit from the use of school buildings. In rural communities the school becomes a social center, a place where people of all ages come together to learn new things, enjoy activities and support one another. Attending extracurricular functions, academic activities, performances and assemblies is an important part of community life. School events show support for young people and bring local residents together to experience a sense of belonging, responsibility, pride and hope for the future.

Schools can also support economic development efforts by providing entrepreneurial opportunities for students. In many rural communities, young people are starting new businesses or helping established businesses improve.

Students are nurturing old, young and frail members of their communities; cleaning up parks, trails, sidewalks; collecting and distributing food, clothing and shelter for families in need. They are developing profiles of their community, in both print and online formats, useful for recruiting businesses, residents, visitors and outside funding. They are generating data on local water quality useful for planning drinking water supplies and guiding public, corporate and private environmental policies. They are producing research on significant local people, places, events, institutions and issues relevant for museums, historical societies and local identity. Businesses, government agencies, faith-based and community organizations are receiving technology systems analyses from students and Internet Web pages so they are visible on the information superhighway. Communities have computer labs, wellness centers, convenience stores, bike shops, printing shops and multipurpose trails thanks to the efforts of schools and students in partnership with the community.5

Rainbow Research, 2001

“The number of learning resources is phenomenal. Ask for help in any area and instantly there are people there to help.”

Teacher
Miltona Science Magnet
Miltona, Minn.
Often the largest employer in town, the school system is an integral part of the life and culture of a community. Schools should not be viewed as separate institutions, but rather as accessible resources for all citizens. Schools are strengthened through public input and engagement. Schools and communities can work together to realize dreams and improve the local quality of life.

**Improves Teaching Practices**

Another notable benefit is the change in teachers’ approaches and attitudes toward their work. Surveyed teachers frequently expressed expanded professional growth, renewed enthusiasm for their jobs and personal pride in their accomplishments.

In some cases differences between the first year of project implementation and the most recent reveal a pattern. Teachers move from feeling stress related to getting changes underway to delight and pride in the final results. With each year of implementation, respondents were more positive, confident, reflective and deliberate about goals and plans for the future.

A common thread throughout the responses was a gratitude for working with other team members who shared the same dreams, expectations and determination. The teamwork aspect of successful school change seemed to shift the teaching onus from a solitary experience to one that is collaborative.

Educators involved in school change projects say their teaching practices have changed forever. Mary Hayes, Bagley, Minn., a teacher from one of the Center’s first projects, sums up her experience: “I have realized that even if we don’t change the world, we have changed the school experience for hundreds of students, changed our teaching lives so we can never go back, and made lots of people think and make important decisions. I can live with that.”

“Every child, parent, community member I am exposed to has the potential to make me a better teacher. I can learn something from each one of them.”

Teacher
Mississippi Horizons
Middle School
Brainerd, Minn.

“The community has been so generous. [People] provide expertise and experiences that can’t be found in the classroom. In lesson planning, I always try to add the community dimension.”

Teacher
Mississippi Horizons
Middle School
Brainerd, Minn.

2Ibid., p. 4.
3Ibid., p. 1.
When my daughter Kali reached school age, having a small elementary school just two miles up the road from our home seemed convenient. No long bus rides for Kali (or, in time, for her younger brother), and the thought of having a school so close in case of injury or sickness was comforting.

The fact that I was self-employed, worked out of my house and had a fairly flexible work schedule soon became common knowledge. Before long I found myself participating in school field trips and volunteering for an occasional special activity in the classroom. One day while at school, I was approached about getting involved in a new project the school had undertaken. Parents and teachers, working together, had applied for a Center for School Change grant. Would I be interested in helping out with the project?

Little did I know then what that commitment would entail. Yet, few other decisions in my life have had such rewarding consequences. Becoming involved with CSC not only changed the direction of our school, but gave our community — from school age to elders — a focus that has brought us together in ways we never thought of. I am not sure I had ever really grasped what true community was all about. After all, we had moved to this area seeking independence, isolation and, to some degree, anonymity.

In 2000, just as our official involvement with CSC was phasing out, we came face to face with the near certain closing of our school. The school district had determined it would be best if our kids were transported to a different school located in town, a bus drive for some of more than an hour. As a community we were devastated, yet we were also determined that we not let such a decision go unchallenged. The foundation laid by our involvement with CSC made us believe that we had a right to be a part of our own future.

After months of negotiations, meetings, collaborative efforts and countless hours of work, we have met with success. In September 2002, North Shore Community School will become a charter school. It will certainly be a celebratory day for all of us, yet for me the greatest achievement has already taken place. We have become community. More important, in a very deep and visceral sense, I now understand fully what that means.

Rich Sill, parent, rural Duluth, Minn.
Chapter Three

Lessons from the Work

Sustaining Change
Projects that received grant funds from the Center for School Change shared several characteristics — innovative plans, people willing to work hard and an intention to help students understand that there is much to learn within the places where they live. Nonetheless, some sites proved stronger than others. While much of the work remains intact, several groups met obstacles along the way. Some projects developed in new directions, and a few have been abandoned.

Too frequently, grant sites went through changes in building or district leadership. At times, a new administrator’s priorities or a need to reallocate funds put an existing program in jeopardy. In other cases, negative attitudes of teachers outside a project caused too much discomfort for those within. Retirements or reassignments of key individuals also affected the stability of some school change efforts.

While it is impossible to control all factors that affect the success and longevity of a project, Center for School Change staff members learned through experience that some things contribute to sustainability in positive ways.

Dreams and Ideas
School change projects are most likely to succeed if they are created by a group of people who want something significantly different in the form of
school choice. School reform should be fired by dreams and ideas, not just dissatisfaction with what already exists. The result should be a clear, cohesive curriculum that all planners are willing to support.

**Committed Teachers**

In a group discussion during a CSC workshop, someone started to complain about the difficulty of making things happen. "It will be a lot easier," the individual said, "when some of the old teachers retire and we hire younger people who are ready to try new ideas."

The comment brought an immediate response from an over-50 member of one of the school teams. The very reason she was investing energy in a school improvement project, she said, was that she wanted to accomplish something meaningful for kids before she retired.

Changing schools is painstaking work. In most instances, teachers who have been part of Center for School Change projects have spent time planning and doing research while keeping up with full-time teaching duties. Once the planning phase is over, there's still a lot of hard work ahead.

**Saved by the BELL,** there's no other way to put it. From our fledgling idea ten years ago of getting more science equipment to yesterday's team discussion on keeping BELL on the cutting edge, my teaching has been rejuvenated every day.

Being part of Bagley Environmental Learning Link’s team, which is committed to working together for kids, has given me energy, hope for the future and a strong sense of direction. Sharing ideas and doing projects together has given me many ideas. I enjoy the fun. It makes me enthusiastic.

The hidden benefits of BELL for me as a teacher have included my becoming a much stronger spokesperson for change as a key to improving education. BELL has made me more focused on my own community and appreciative of all it has to offer. I have learned to see the silver lining in the clouds that used to upset me — classroom mess, working late, children learning things that I didn’t plan and fellow teachers who don’t see things my way. I believe that, best of all, BELL has opened my eyes to the need to seek new ways to help every student feel successful and important.

Mary Hayes, teacher, Bagley, Minn.
Teachers who have been effective catalysts for school change have demonstrated most of the following characteristics:

- They have been willing to involve parents, community members and other teachers to help with both planning and implementation. School change is not a selfish endeavor. Without genuine participation from a number of individuals, good ideas fall flat.

- Often, they are experienced individuals who want to do something different, try out ideas and make a worthy contribution to children and their profession before they retire.

- They are not part of a project because an administrator said they must be; they choose to be there.

- They want to develop a positive relationship with the local community.

- They are willing to work closely with other teachers, and other teachers are willing to work with them. Teamwork is an essential and welcome element of school change projects.

- They are willing to put in time beyond the contract — often meeting before school, after school and on weekends. First years of programs, as well as planning, often require extra work.

**Helpful Principals and Superintendents**

School administrators must be willing to support and lead, but not dominate, a project. An effective administrator will provide good information and participate in project development. He or she will truly understand the elements of the project, will value participants’ time and will always communicate honestly with planners. An administrator who steps aside in order to give teachers room to create a program on their own is not adequate.

Projects benefit from the help of a superintendent who is willing to lead change and support the new program with both words and action, as well as a school board that knows about and endorses the program.
Creating Strong School-Community Collaborations


- **Time and patience are required** to build the relationships necessary for strong school-community collaboration. Projects typically underestimated the amount of time and attention required to build strong ownership, trust and participation by diverse stakeholders.

- **Innovation and collaboration live in creative tension** in these projects. The best projects allowed creative innovators to put new ideas into action quickly and build broader ownership and stability through appropriate oversight, governance and ongoing information sharing. Typically, this meant forming a broad-based steering committee and giving core teachers freedom to innovate.

- **Strong, supportive leadership** by principals and superintendents contributes to success. Determined teachers and citizens made progress without supportive school administrators in some sites, but had more difficulty. The most effective administrators played roles far more active than simply getting out of the way of innovative teachers and community members. [Administrators] can make valuable contributions by running interference with resistant individuals and policies within the school system, brokering connections and boosting understanding of the new approach in the community, providing professional validation to the frontline innovative teachers.

- **Starting small**, with a single school or *school-within-a-school*, may be best for generating momentum for school-community collaboration. Focusing on one or a few doable collaborative projects can make the most of limited initial energy. ... Some of the strongest projects had a single school, or a program within a school that involved a handful of teachers, at their core. Even successful K–12 ventures had a few *flagship* community partnership projects.

- **Communities possess deep resources** for leadership and teaching; the challenge is on educators to connect with these. Projects thrived when they had active community leadership that provided vision to persevere through the practical and bureaucratic difficulties, and when they enlivened students’ learning experiences through involvement of knowledgeable community members and topics. Teachers and administrators, as the people with day-to-day responsibility for guiding student learning, have the most power to tap or block these community resources.\(^1\)
While administrative support is critical to school reform projects, push and shove from above will not be effective unless teachers, parents and students really want to make changes.

CSC projects are indicative of what’s happening in many places. Capable administrators are in demand and often move from one district to another. If change is to last beyond one principal or superintendent, it must have a firm footing in the community.

Well-Informed Parents
Involved and supportive parents who take part in planning are assets to school change projects. Parents must also be able to make well-informed choices when it comes to enrolling their children in programs.

An Advisory Group
Advisory groups made up of parents, community members and — where appropriate — students create a wealth of talents and ideas. They can also be great places for reality checks. Effective advisory groups have real work to do, and strong projects will maintain advisory groups after programs are up and running.

In Buffalo, Minn., for example, the planning group was retired and an advisory team established soon after the implementation grant was awarded. Makeup of the group included four parents, two teachers, a community member, one person from the support staff and the school administrator. Bylaws were established, and the group set up a regular meeting schedule. Responsibilities include overseeing requirements established by grants, ensuring that the Discovery Elementary philosophy remains intact, facilitating communication among committees and dealing with issues as they arise.

Decision-Making Power
Autonomy to make most major decisions, including hiring, spending and determining the nature of the program, is valuable. Autonomy contributes a feeling of ownership which is critical for participants in school change projects. At the same time, it is important that individuals acquire the skills to make good decisions. A measure of financial expertise is
important, for example, when a project has control of spending.

**Adequate Information**
Positive public relations and marketing are critical, but programs should not be expected to go head-to-head with other district programs in order to exist. Sometimes teachers are afraid to get too much publicity for fear of provoking anger or jealousy among their co-workers. In the best situations, districts provide adequate information about all options available to students and their families.

**Collective Bargaining Peace**
Teachers should be free from pressures applied by other teachers. Sometimes large teacher unions and master agreements get in the way of change. *Last hired, first fired* policies, for example, should not be used to break up project teams. It is critical that individuals involved in choice programs are there because they share a philosophy, not because they were *bumped* there by staff changes within a school district.

**Funding**
Start-up money from an outside source, as well as from local funds, may be critical. While many school change projects depend on grants or incentives to get started, however, once they are up and running they should receive a fair share of maintenance funding from the district. Programs should also have adequate support in the form of staff development opportunities. Allowing time and money for curriculum writing and staff development activities is an indication that a school system values the individuals who will be doing the work.

**Evaluation is Essential**
Commitment to evaluation is essential. Reflection on project goals, as well as students’ successes, should become a habit. Measures should be varied to assess community impact along with academic achievement. It is not enough to simply collect the surveys or administer the tests. Results should be carefully considered — at least on an annual basis — by the advisory group and others interested in the program. Results should inform future fine tuning.
Lessons from the Work

**Flexibility**
When things do not go as expected, effective planners will regroup and create new strategies. They will recognize obstacles and work diligently to get past them, but will also notice and take advantage of unforeseen opportunities that pop up along the way.

**Look Outside**
Exchanges with other schools and communities serve two purposes. First, they provide planners with fresh ideas and the benefit of others’ experience. If a group considers creating a multiage configuration in an elementary school, for example, it helps to visit several schools that are already mixing students across traditional grade levels.

Over the long run, like-minded friends from other places also provide a wonderful network of support for folks who operate one-of-a-kind projects within their own school systems.

**Trust the Community**
One final factor affects sustainability. School change planners need to trust the communities they serve. Programs created by educators who say they have all the answers and refuse to give consideration to students, parents and people on the street have very little chance of succeeding.

**Appreciation for Small Schools**
In addition to lessons about sustaining projects, years of field experience provided Center for School Change staff members with an appreciation for the value of small schools.

Several Center for School Change projects were created as schools-within-schools or as small independent schools. In fact, over half of the Phase II projects enrolled 175 or fewer students.

While reasons for planning small varied from place to place, the benefits showed up time after time in surveys and evaluations. A key factor in the success of small schools, according to teachers and parents in CSC sites, is the sense of community that develops when teachers and students all know one another by name.
In 2001, CSC Director Joe Nathan and graduate student Karen Febey completed a report about small schools throughout the nation, *Smaller, Safer, Saner Successful Schools*. Prepared in cooperation with the National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities, the report provides evidence that supports trends observed in several CSC sites — smaller schools can provide:

- safer places for students,
- positive, challenging learning environments,
- higher student achievement,
- higher graduation rates,
- fewer discipline problems, and
- much greater satisfaction for families, students and teachers.\(^2\)

In an era when many rural districts face declining enrollment, the idea that small schools can be very good places for students provides one strong argument against the push to consolidate.

\(^1\)David M. Scheie and T. Williams, *Strengthening Schools and Communities through Collaboration* (Minneapolis, 2001), pp. 33-34.

From rolling hills to woodland lakes, and across flat, fertile farmland to the rocky Lake Superior shore, the twenty locations included in the second phase of Center for School Change grants (1996–2001) reflect the diversity of the rural Minnesota landscape.

Some of the projects bear the names of two or three communities, while others stand alone. The sites include college towns, farm towns, towns in recreation areas, towns where manufacturing is a major employer and one place that has no town at all.

While the scenery varies, all of the projects share one natural resource — caring, committed people willing to invest their time and ideas in improving learning opportunities for children within the places where they live.

**Good Things Happen**

Good things happen when schools and communities work together — which is not to say that the same things happen in each place. Although all grant sites operated under one set of guidelines, projects varied as much as topography.

Some schools helped students create entrepreneurial adventures — businesses that fit special needs within the community. In Okabena, a small town in southwest Minnesota, one can stop by the fitness center at the school for exercise and then pick up a quart of milk at the school store on the way home.
Clear across the state, in Warren, local sports fans buy athletic wear at the WAO Wearhouse, a student-managed business.

In other places, students immersed themselves in the past. At North Shore Elementary near Duluth, students helped parents and community members write a book about local history that is now used as a text in their classrooms. In Goodhue, kids from the high school worked alongside community members to plan restoration of an old train depot.

Agriculture and environmental studies have been topics for some schools. Students have tested water, worked in school greenhouses and helped create a variety of nature study areas and hiking trails that are used by community members as well as folks at the schools.
Introducing the Schools

Features of Center for School Change Projects

As part of a 1999 evaluation of the Center for School Change, John Davis visited school projects in several communities. These are some of the conditions he found:

- Teachers happy because their recommendations for educational change had been accepted;
- Citizens using school computers during the school day;
- Parents involved as teacher aides and tutors;
- Students working at the local newspaper office, producing their own school paper;
- A school store under the direct control of high school students and operating to the advantage of the community;
- Teams of parents, teachers and citizens working cooperatively in all of the communities visited; and
- Students in all communities given the opportunity to participate in the planning of school and community activities.

The Grant Process

Application for Center for School Change planning grants was a thoughtful process that required groups to put together committees of community people, educators, parents and — in projects involving secondary schools — students. Required elements of proposals included a curriculum that encourages students to use the community as a place of study and effort to expand use of school facilities and the expertise of educators.

Proposals were read by Center for School Change staff members as well as a number of educators and other interested individuals throughout Minnesota. Based on the recommendations of readers, finalists were chosen and site visits were made by Center for School Change staff members and representatives of regional Initiative Funds. Site visits were an important final part of the application process, providing opportunities to measure the commitment and participation of planners.

One element that has been key to most projects is family involvement. At Discovery Elementary in Buffalo, Minn., not only parents but also younger siblings are often seen at school. One mom developed a challenging spelling program, and other parents have helped with enrichment activities or created school newsletters and information materials.
For successful groups, planning grants of $5,000 — usually a combination of Center for School Change and Initiative Fund money — were awarded, with a requirement that grant funds be matched dollar for dollar at the local level.

As plans were completed, sites received an additional $35,000 — also matched locally — for implementation purposes. Many sites used money to buy equipment or provide staff development for teachers. While some Center for School Change funds paid for extra time teachers invested in developing curriculum materials, CSC guidelines did not allow sites to use grant money for salaries. This requirement was based on the assumption that projects would suffer if staff members left when money to pay their salaries ran out.

Expansion grants of $10,000, a third step of the funding process, were granted to sites that developed significant program changes or reached out to include considerably more teachers and students than in their original plans.

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Center for School Change Help
In addition to grant funds, the Center for School Change provided support through twice-yearly workshops for planning teams. Workshops often included nationally recognized presenters, but were organized, as well, to provide opportunities for participants to spend time with people from other sites. Many good ideas were shared in workshop settings, and several planners made trips to learn more by visiting other Center for School Change sites.

Outreach coordinators based in rural Minnesota also joined site teams for planning meetings, helped to locate information and tried to tailor assistance to the needs of each place.

A Bit About Charter Schools
Three of the Phase II Center for School Change sites described in the following pages operate as charter schools, and one more, North Shore Elementary, will be reorganized as a charter by the time copies of this book are distributed. For readers who may not be familiar with the charter concept, here is a little background.

“The professional development opportunities made available to me through CSC ... have allowed me] to hear national educational experts. I also have had the time to share and reflect with fellow educators throughout the state, country and the world. These experiences are valuable opportunities that help us learn how to prepare students for today's world — both the work force and their everyday lives.”

Jim Schneider
Southwest Star Concept School
Okabena, Minn.
Minnesota passed the nation’s first charter school law in 1991, and over the years 37 other states have approved similar legislation. In Minnesota alone, approximately 10,000 students are enrolled in charters.

Public schools that operate independently of traditional school districts, charters are managed by boards of directors elected by teachers and the parents of children enrolled. Unless a Minnesota charter school has a waiver, over half of its board members are required to be teachers who work within the school.

Charter schools must be nonsectarian, and they may not administer admissions tests or charge tuition. Like other public schools, charters are expected to meet all state and federal health and safety guidelines; and, in Minnesota, charter schools are also required to fulfill the requirements of the Minnesota Graduation Rule. Funding for charter schools is based on the average state allocation per pupil. In cases where the state provides extra money for students from low-income families or for students with disabilities, those funds also follow enrolled students.

All charter schools share two fundamental likenesses. First, they are schools of choice. Students attend charter schools because they choose to, and teachers work in them because they want to. Second, all charters schools are accountable for the goals they have outlined to the state. If boards of

**Web Sites**
For general information about charter schools in Minnesota, visit the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning’s charter site. [http://cfl.state.mn.us/charter/](http://cfl.state.mn.us/charter/)

Additional sites with information of national interest include the U.S. Dept. of Education charter site [www.uscharterschools.org](http://www.uscharterschools.org) and the Center for Education Reform [www.edreform.com](http://www.edreform.com)
directors do not operate in fiscally responsible ways, or if students fail to meet academic standards, charter schools can be closed.

**Introducing the Sites**

The kinds of projects developed at each of the Center for School Change sites reflect the priorities of the individuals who carefully created and implemented the plans. Since change is a continuous process, teachers, parents and community members continue to fine tune their efforts. The descriptions that begin on the following page are portraits of the 20 projects as they existed in the 2001–02 school year.

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**Recommended Reading**

Mississippi Horizons Middle School

Located in a building that was once part of Brainerd Community College, Mississippi Horizons Middle School opened in 1996.

Defining features include:

- Sharing technology and technological expertise with the community and other schools, including video production equipment, video conferencing and a weather station;

- Partnerships with area businesses and organizations such as InFisherman, Russell and Herder Public Relations Firm, Brainerd Hospital, Universal Pensions Inc. and University of Minnesota’s Extension Office. One partner equipped a computer lab in exchange for using the site as a training center for employees;

- An active steering committee composed of students, teachers, parents and community members who determine and monitor annual goals;

- Back-to-school conferences held in August to set individual achievement goals with students and their parents;

- Over 250 parents and community members who volunteer their time and resources each year, including some who are trained to score students’ multimedia presentations;

- An annual River Celebration that draws 1,000 guests who watch students share their projects and performances;

- A peer mentoring program between middle school and elementary students and between sixth and ninth graders that builds assets in youth; and

- A shared facility with district offices and the Apple Cafe where students participate in all aspects of the restaurant business.
Discovery Elementary School

An option for Buffalo, Minn. students in grades K–5, Discovery Elementary opened in September 1997. The school was created in space left over after secondary students moved to different buildings, and was planned by teachers, parents and community members after Superintendent Tom Nelson and the Buffalo School Board invited ideas for a school of choice.

One key element in Discovery’s success has been active parent involvement on many levels including planning, decision making and work with children both in school and at home. In 2001, Discovery was one of three schools throughout the nation recognized by the Boyer Center for best practices, Parents as Partners – Building Community in the Elementary School.

Features of the school include:

- Small size – around 150 students;
- Multiage classes with kindergarten through second grade and third through fifth grade groupings;
- Looping – Students have the same teacher for more than one year to promote personalized learning;
- Homerooms which combine students in kindergarten through grade five and include siblings;
- Community partnerships to enhance learning;
- Parent involvement which encourages ongoing participation in a child’s education;
- Enrichments for all students; and
- A sense of community – so all students feel safe, respected and valued.

Discovery Elementary is guided by an advisory group that includes teachers, parents, community members and the school’s coordinator.
The School for All Seasons

The School for All Seasons is an option for Cambridge-Isanti students in grades K–4. Located for the time being at the Isanti Elementary School site, SFAS includes three classrooms inside the building and two more in a close-by portable building rented to accommodate the program.

As the school’s name suggests, SFAS follows a year-round schedule. The school calendar includes four sessions approximately nine weeks in length. Between sessions, most students and teachers take a three-week break (five weeks in the summer), but a few spend one week of the break on remediation and enrichment activities at the school. Teachers say the schedule is comfortable for both students and staff members, and they feel that shorter breaks provide more continuous learning and less need for time spent on review.

SFAS works closely with the Minnesota Center, a year-round middle school program located approximately five miles away in Cambridge. The two schools follow the same schedule and work together on back-to-school picnics and year-round planning.

Features of the School for All Seasons include:

- Year-round calendar;
- Multiage homerooms that span grades K–4, as well as skill level groupings for math and reading-language arts; and
- Emphasis on creating a caring school community. Teachers have created a buddy system for students, and schoolwide recess time and meetings encourage children to get to know all of the other students and teachers in the program well.

School for All Seasons Facts

Location... Isanti, Minn.
Grade levels... K-4
Number of students... 140
Focus... year-round schedule, creating a multiage learning community
Address... 301 W. County Rd. 5
Isanti, MN
55040
Phone... 763-444-5551
Contact... Jill Anderson
Web page... www.cambridge.k12.mn.us

For more about the School for All Seasons see:
- Kids’ Club – Page 94
- Peace Song – Page 95
- VIP of the Week – Pages 96 – 97
North Shore Elementary School

In a place with no town at its center — not even a gas station — North Shore Elementary School is the heart of a lively multigenerational community.

North Shore sits on 40 acres just off the intersection of two county roads. Grounds include a tree nursery, an A-frame greenhouse and access to a school nature trail. Outside school hours, the building and outdoor areas are used by both children and adults for a variety of educational and recreational activities such as scouts, soccer and basketball.

Teachers, parents and community members have worked together to develop an educational program enriched by local history as well as the local environment.

Features include:

- Use of Environment as an Integrated Context for Learning in all grade levels as a means of incorporating study of the environment across the curriculum. Each grade level has one central question to study all year long;

- Commitment to setting goals and seeking improvements through the Minnesota School of Excellence program;

- Focus on community history through use of history trunks, special lesson plans and *Roots in the Past – Seeds for the Future*, a local history compiled with help from the school staff, parents, community members and students; and

- Development of a school-community fund in cooperation with the Duluth-Superior Area Community Foundation. Interest generated by money placed in an endowment will support future school-community education projects.

Following the 2001–2002 school year, North Shore Elementary School will take on charter school status and be renamed North Shore Community School.
Emily Charter School

Multiage classrooms provide the core for a program that centers around individual students’ needs rather than grade level expectations at Emily Charter School. Instruction goes hand-in-hand with the school’s motto: Every Child Soars.

The first state-sponsored charter in Minnesota, Emily Charter School opened in September 1994. Once a part of the Crosby-Ironton School District, the school building is now owned by the city of Emily and leased to the charter school.

Special features of the Emily program include:

- Multiage classrooms that mix students in spans of two or three grade levels, including a section of pre-K and kindergarten students, as well as frequently scheduled activities in which students of all grade levels work together;

- A literature-based reading program supplemented by instruction in phonics;

- Small school and small class sizes – fewer than 20 students per class;

- Regularly scheduled after school activities such as dance classes;

- Use of technology in classrooms; and

- Actively involved parents and community members. The school also sponsors several family fun nights throughout the year.

Emily Charter School Facts

Location... Emily, Minn.
Grade levels... Pre-K-6
Number of students... 99
Focus... multiage instruction, parent involvement, use of technology
Address... P.O. Box 40
Emily, MN 56447
Phone... 218-763-3401
Contact... Kristen Lindemann

For more about Emily Charter School see:
- Creating a Respectful Environment - Page 100
A small school district willing to seek new opportunities, Fertile-Beltrami is located in the northwest part of Minnesota.

With prairie and the Sandhill River on one side, and bluffs and sand hills on the other, this school district was the first in the region to break geographic barriers by coordinating a technology network.

A key element of Fertile-Beltrami’s work with the Center for School Change was an all school district retreat (including certified and non-certified staff members and school board members) to determine the district’s vision, mission, obstacles and opportunities.

Highlights of student and family-centered programs in the Fertile-Beltrami School District include:

- All students in grades 10–12 are assigned laptop computers for the year;
- All families can check out laptops and dial up for Internet service from home;
- High school students create and maintain Web sites for local businesses;
- Students teach computer classes to the public, and a computer buddy program gives elementary students a chance to learn computer skills from high school students; and
- Elementary students used the Internet to survey statewide superintendents about school stores. Based on their research, they created and operate a school store.
Goodhue Public Schools

Extensive public meetings in the mid-1990s — including representatives from a number of civic organizations and public agencies — resulted in formation of the Goodhue Forever Coalition. An organization with a great deal of community spirit, the coalition sought to create an atmosphere that would attract new residents and businesses to Goodhue. Coalition members decided to incorporate school change in their plans, envisioning shared facilities, school-based entrepreneurship and other hands-on and community service options in its K–12 curriculum.

During the 1997–98 school year, an historical research class was offered in cooperation with the Goodhue Area Historical Society. The results of the class were incorporated in the historical study collection. A computer simulation class also worked with a local business to provide “real life” experiences for students while helping the business improve its operation.

Students at Goodhue High School continue to be involved with real-world learning. Specific projects include:

- A computer-aided embroidery business, Depot Designs, where students do custom embroidery. Projects include adding school logos to sportswear and doing work for outside clients;

- G.O.A.L.S., a project-based multi-disciplinary course through which students follow an area of personal interest. Skills developed include planning, communication, problem-solving, working independently, working with others, time management and self-evaluation; and

- After helping others in the community develop a local hiking trail, students at all grade levels help maintain the trail area.

Goodhue Schools Facts

Location... Goodhue, Minn.

Grade levels... K-12, but G.O.A.L.S. is a secondary program

Number of students in G.O.A.L.S.... 28

Focus... community involvement, project-based learning

Address... 510 Third Ave. Goodhue, MN 55027

Phone... 651-923-4447

Contact... Joe Sand

Web page... www.goodhue.net

For more about Goodhue Schools see:
- Off-Site Experience Form - Page 56
- Journal Assignment for Community Projects - Page 57
Building and rebuilding community is a priority for the Yellow Medicine East School District. Several towns in southwest Minnesota are part of the consolidated school district that survived devastating floods in 1997 and 2000 and a category F-4 tornado in 2001. Left homeless were 170 students and staff members.

During the floods, students and staff members worked side by side at sandbag sites. Those with physical restrictions helped in other ways by making and serving food and providing day care for the children of sandbag volunteers. Granite Falls mayor Dave Smiglewski said, “Without the students of YME, our town wouldn’t have made it.”

Determined staff members have tried new approaches to best meet the needs of students. During the 1998–2000 school years, Bridges, a multi-graded 9–12 interdisciplinary option was implemented. Project planners set out to create a place in which “... all students will find at least one bridge that will successfully take them into the future.” Project activities included service learning and apprenticeship experiences to help develop life skills.

As a result of several district staff changes over time, Bridges evolved into two new programs:

- A service learning class called Bio-Comm (Biology and Communications) that is team taught and has a character education component. As part of the Bio-Comm curriculum, students restored and maintain the Prairie Smoke environmental site; and

- A wood furniture construction business called Wood Buy. Students are involved in all aspects of the business they developed based on research to identify community needs.

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Yellow Medicine East High School

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- A wood furniture construction business called Wood Buy. Students are involved in all aspects of the business they developed based on research to identify community needs.
Hanska Community Charter School

Like many small elementary schools across southern Minnesota, Hanska Elementary was part of a school district made up of several towns. When the district’s administration threatened to close the school due to declining enrollment, staff and community members joined together to save their school.

After a year and a half of planning, Hanska Elementary received charter sponsorship from the New Ulm School Board and unanimous approval from the State Board of Education. The school opened as Hanska Community Charter School in 1999.

Planners and staff members are proud of a high tech arts curriculum and thankful that their community school still exists.

Features of the school include:

- An annual *Syttende Mai* Norwegian festival hosted at the school. People from all over the region participate;
- A music lab with interactive computerized electronic keyboards;
- Success Maker software used to address individualized skill building;
- A community volunteer program that provides tutoring in reading; and
- A preschool housed in the school building.

### Hanska Community Charter School Facts

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Location</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Grade level</td>
<td>K-5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of students</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Focus</td>
<td>arts and technology, multiage instruction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Address</td>
<td>Box 47, Hanska, MN 56041</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Phone</td>
<td>507-439-6225</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Contact</td>
<td>Dan Ragen</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
When they learned that their pairing arrangement with another area school would dissolve at the end of the 1996-97 school year, Heron Lake and Okabena parents, educators and other local residents came together to redesign — and save — local K-12 schools.

Today, the school district includes a K-6 school in Heron Lake and a secondary school in nearby Okabena. The Star Concept School offers a variety of program choices at the secondary level, with traditional methods of teaching and learning modified to create effective opportunities for all students.

At the secondary level, the program includes:

- Eighty-five minute class periods that allow project-oriented field work;
- Multiage elective courses;
- Community-based “out of school” experiences; and
- Attention to community needs. A $4 million addition to the Okabena site, completed in 1999, includes a school-community store and a wellness center used by area residents. A school greenhouse also raises plants for a local nursery.

The elementary program includes an environmental focus developed with help from the School Nature Area Project. Students and teachers have created a small prairie restoration site that is used for study. Other features are:

- Active community volunteers who come to school weekly to help children with reading;
- Intergenerational activities with local senior citizens; and
- Site-based management – a team of teachers elected each year handles administrative tasks.
Introducing the Schools

Houston Secondary School

Located on the Root River in southeast Minnesota bluff country, Houston is surrounded by hills and valleys and a mix of forested land, farms and pastures. One of the highways that runs through town has been designated a scenic byway, and the nearby Root River State Trail brings visitors who are interested in bicycling, in-line skating, hiking and cross country skiing.

The Houston Community Schools Project began in the 1997-98 school year with a focus on helping the school become a community institution.

An early component of the program was an advanced research and communication class through which students explored individually designed course projects and developed presentations based on their research. That class continues to be offered in alternate years. Other current projects include:

- ClassCycle Bikes, a student-run bicycle sales and repair business that provides bike rentals and other supplies to users of the local Root River State Trail;

- PrintWorks, a student-based printing business that provides a full line of printing services for clients within the school, community and county; and

- Opportunities for students to participate in community service, job shadowing or job mentorship programs.

Houston Secondary School has been very successful at developing businesses which run as independent nonprofit organizations. Both ClassCycle Bikes and PrintWorks are managed by boards of directors made up of teachers, students and community members who share an interest in supporting much needed businesses and opportunities for students to learn.

Houston Secondary School Facts

Location... Houston, Minn.
Grade levels... 7-12
Number of students... 250
Focus... entrepreneurship, connecting with the local community
Address... 306 W. Elm St.
Houston, MN
55943
Phone... 507-896-3618
Contact... Steve Kerska
Web site... www.tvsw.org/winona/houston/

For more about Houston Secondary School see:
Entrepreneurship Story - Page 83
Multi-Age Classroom (MAC)

The Multi-Age Classroom at Falls Elementary School, began with combined third and fourth grade classes in the 1996–97 school year and expanded to grades 3–6 in fall 1997. MAC is a school-within-a-school option at Falls Elementary that serves approximately 100 students.

MAC students have opportunities to work together across grade levels on a variety of lessons and activities. The program emphasizes the local community as a focus for learning. Parents and other community resource people work with children both in and outside the classroom, and teachers have attempted to expand multiage to include senior citizens as classroom volunteers.

During the 1998–99 school year, MAC teachers began using Responsive Classroom methods as a way of building upon students’ sense of being in a caring classroom community. Grants from the Center for Reducing Rural Violence and the Northland Foundation have since helped over 40 International Falls teachers complete Responsive Classroom training.

Core ingredients of the MAC program include:

- Team teaching;
- Community partnerships that enhance learning;
- Parent involvement — in and out of the classroom;
- Enrichments for all children — encouraging diverse activities and areas of study; and
- Maintaining a learning community in which all students feel safe, respected and valued.

For more about the Multi-Age Classroom see:

- Community Celebration Song – Page 65
- Celebrating the Olympics – Page 101
- Student Behavior Survey – Pages 102 – 103
- Elementary Writing Rubric – Page 114
Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Elementary School

The staff and students at J-W-P Elementary School are as welcoming as the cheerfully renovated building in which they work and learn. Brightly colored walls with lots of natural light provide a backdrop for inspiring student work.

A positive atmosphere is modeled by staff members, emulated by students and grounded in J-W-P’s mission to always strive for excellence.

Program highlights include:

- Use of the Responsive Classroom model as a way to create a caring school community. Classes begin each day with morning meetings;

- A staff that has committed much time and development to a unified push for excellence;

- Parent involvement that is deepened with back to school conferences, an annual carnival, an interest expo and family breakfasts;

- The development of students’ entrepreneurial skills through the operation of the Bulldog School Store;

- An in-house preschool, Kids’ Korner, that shares resources with the elementary school; and

- A shared facility with J-W-P High School.

As part of the effort to create a school which is a caring community, teachers and students strive to be honest, dependable, self-controlled, respectful, kind, compassionate, accepting, responsible, helpful and persevering.
Agriculture, Science and Technology Integrated Curriculum – Kenyon-Wanamingo High School

Implemented in the 1997–98 school year, the Kenyon-Wanamingo Agriculture, Science and Technology Magnet was created as a school-within-a-school option. It drew on the resources of an established agriculture program to provide experience-based learning for students in grades 9–12.

The magnet school offered an integrated curriculum which included agriculture, industrial technology, English, social studies and science. Some work was done in outdoor classroom settings, and community organizations and businesses were resources for students’ work.

Planners felt that a magnet school had the potential to re-energize the community — building on the area’s rich agricultural heritage and providing opportunities for future generations. They hoped that students who chose the program would thrive in a curriculum centered around agriculture.

While the magnet school is no longer operating, Kenyon-Wanamingo continues to offer two integrated agriculture, science and technology classes for students interested in centering their studies around agriculture and the environment.

Open to students in grades 11 and 12, the classes include:

- Extended learning periods;
- Team teaching; and
- Extended field trips and opportunities for students to work with local businesses and professionals.

Students may receive credit in three of four subject areas — English, agriculture, science or social studies — depending on the coursework they select.
Bridges School – Mankato School District

Bridges Community School is located in a former storefront in downtown Mankato. The community just outside its doors is both a classroom in which students learn and an integral part of the Bridges curriculum.

At Bridges students are encouraged to succeed in school and as engaged citizens through:

- Daily participation in mixed K–6 grade community groups to develop life skills and service learning projects;
- Daily enrichment activities and project blocks of time that focus on a schoolwide theme. Five themes are studied per year;
- Weekly All-School Meetings that give students a chance to reflect on the positive, share talents with one another and solve real problems together;
- Delivery of the Integrated Thematic Instruction model that supports a brain-compatible learning environment;
- High personal and academic standards in an open, ungraded, multiage setting;
- Individual learning plans designed for each student;
- Linking the classroom with the community through project-based learning; and
- Involvement in a safe, family-like atmosphere where everyone knows one another well.

To learn more about the three main components of the Integrated Thematic Instruction model, the six principles of how the brain learns best and the nine body-brain compatible learning environment elements, visit Susan Kovalik's Web site at www.kovalik.com.
Surrounded by lakes and woods in central Minnesota and within walking distance of a thriving downtown area, Miltona students use the best of both worlds for hands-on learning.

Features that attract many families to the school include:

- An interpretive trail created by students, staff and community members with learning stations throughout the school forest;
- Student entrepreneurial projects in partnership with area businesses. For example building and raffling a fish house and creating new kinds of sausages;
- Family learning nights for students and their families. Hands-on exploration in the areas of math and science is usually the focus;
- Multiage configurations that are team taught;
- A family carnival and picnic, organized by parent volunteers, every spring;
- Building relationships with senior citizens. Every Friday students take turns eating lunch downtown with their elders. Throughout the year senior citizens are invited to the school to play games and teach students different hobbies such as quilting;
- Collaborative art projects. Students, staff members and parents worked with a local artist to create a community school mural in the entrance of the school. The mural depicts the Miltona community and its many assets; and
- A student-created town newspaper. Costs are covered by selling advertising to local businesses.
Eci Nompa Woonspe (The Learning Center)

The Eci Nompa Woonspe site is located at the top of a bluff with a grand view. A huge historic building houses the Learning Center, along with an antique store.

Also on the property is a Dakota Heritage Garden and frequented sweat lodge. Both are indicators of the culture-based curriculum created for students who come from several neighboring towns and communities.

Program offerings include:

- A curriculum that focuses on students’ interests, Dakota language, culture and the arts;
- A year-round schedule with quarter breaks that allow for seasonal activities such as caring for the Dakota Heritage Garden, dancers and drummers participating in pow wows, harvesting sweet grass and berries and other environmental and cultural education activities;
- An academic contract and learning plan developed for every student each quarter;
- Multiage groupings of students who work together on projects in small groups;
- A small restaurant business that serves breakfast and snacks; and
- Shared building space that students manage with other renters. Outside groups rent office space, use of the gymnasium and storefront space for the antique store.
Together for the Future students contribute to their community in meaningful ways, making their home town a better place for everyone to live. Through their service experiences they also gain important research, problem solving, writing, communication, collaboration, leadership and public speaking skills in preparation for future pursuits.

Features of Together for the Future include:

- An interdisciplinary class that integrates science, English, communications and technology to create a community and project-based approach to learning. Students work in the community two days a week and in the school setting the other three days;

- Student-proposed projects based on real needs in the community. Projects range from testing the water quality of local lakes to providing program activities for senior citizens to helping out at the hospital and vet clinic;

- A model for simultaneously working on multiple performance-based graduation standards;

- Student entrepreneurial projects, including a used CD store, generate revenue for funding other student projects;

- The Perham Technology Center, a shared facility and partnership between the city and school district, located in the middle of town. Once a bank, then a funeral home, half of the renovated space is now used three days a week by students. The rest of the building is shared with several other organizations and businesses, including the Northwest Technical College; and

- The Toad River Environmental Site that is used and maintained by TFTF and is shared with other classes and programs.
Introducing the Schools

Practical Education Projects — Kelley High School

A large high school built at a time when the mining industry along Lake Superior’s North Shore was booming, Silver Bay’s Kelley High School has had several unused classrooms in recent years. Through Practical Education Projects (PEP), teachers and community members set out to increase use of the facility and to provide projects which encourage students to learn problem solving and decision-making skills.

The cornerstone effort, to date, is the Galley, a short order food counter and recreation area located near the gym entrance to the high school. Work on the project began in the 1997-98 school year, and doors opened for business in May 2000. Students were actively involved in all phases of planning and construction of the 40’ x 90’ addition to the high school that houses the Galley, and now a management class oversees operation of the business.

In addition to serving as a student union during the day, the Galley has summer hours and is open after school and on weekends. It provides concessions for events held in the school, and offers a selection of school supplies. The Galley provides five part-time jobs for students.

Kelley High School students also take part in several schoolwide enrichment opportunities during the year. Monthly PEP Days, planned by teachers and carried out with the help of local residents, include a variety of presentations and activities built around a central topic. Basic elements of Kelley High School’s PEP program include:

- Project-based learning; and

- Involving members of the community – both as customers and as local experts who share skills with students.

Practical Education Projects Facts

Location... Silver Bay, Minn.
Grade levels... 7-12
Number of students... 303
Focus... project-based work around development of a student business, thematic instruction days
Address... 137 Banks Blvd.
Silver Bay, MN
55614
Phone... 218-226-4437
Contact... Roger Koster or George Starkovich
Web page... www.isd381.k12.mn.us

For more about Kelley High School see:
- Speech and Presentation Rubric – Page 115
Warren-Alvarado-Oslo High School

At Warren-Alvarado-Oslo High School, students in the ACES (Academics + Community = Success) project learn the kinds of skills needed to create their own businesses.

This fertile farm region in the northwest part of the state is challenged by declining population and shifting economics. Sharing entrepreneurial and collaborative opportunities with young people is key for a viable future.

Project features include:

- Teachers who have been trained in and who use the REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning) curriculum;
- A school store, WAO Wearhouse, designed, built and managed by students. Students also designed and constructed a vendor cart for use at extracurricular events;
- Student researched marketing plans and businesses based on the results of supply and demand;
- Student proposed and implemented service learning projects designed to strengthen the community;
- Applied journalism skills in a student created school newsletter; and
- A girls' leadership component, designed to give girls the skills and confidence they need for future economic success.

For more about Warren-Alvarado-Oslo High School see: Starting and Managing a School Store – Page 88

To learn more about REAL’s experiential curriculum methods, training and technical assistance, visit the Web site at www.realenterprises.org.
Expansion Grants

North Shore Elementary – With a match from sales of a community history book as well as past and future contributions from community members, North Shore Elementary planners used expansion funds to help create a school foundation. Interest from the endowment will be used to support future place-based study opportunities at the school.

Year-Round Programs, Cambridge-Isanti School District – A Phase II site, the School for All Seasons, and a Phase I site, the Minnesota Center, received an expansion grant to allow teachers in the two schools to work together to create common goals and improve students’ transitions from the elementary to the middle school program. Additional funds supported a community study related to options for year-round education.

Discovery Elementary – Expansion funds were used to implement an innovative staff development plan that will help future staff members come on board more easily while providing “a scaffold of support” for current teachers as well. The plan provides ways for individual teachers to share interests and expertise with others on staff.

International Falls Transition Plan – A group of planners, including parents, administrators and teachers from Falls Elementary and Falls High School, worked to create a supportive environment for seventh and eighth grade students within a 7-12 school. Ideas generated include creating seventh and eighth grade areas within the building, providing common planning time for teachers of seventh and eighth grades, developing an advisor-advisee curriculum, expanding communication between the school and families and improving connections between sixth and seventh grade teachers.
**Together for the Future** - With a focus on sharing and expanding their service learning project throughout the state, student planners from Perham, Minn. used expansion funds to purchase sophisticated kinds of technology for presentations, publications and promotional tools. Funds were also used to expand from the integration of four subject areas to six.

**Miltona Science Magnet** - Students, teachers and community volunteers used grant money to develop trails, construct stations and design identification markers throughout their school forest. Students created hands-on materials that are included in an activity box at each station. Funds were also used to purchase science equipment and to mentor teachers at neighboring schools.

**Fertile-Beltrami Schools** - Funds were used to expand technology opportunities to the community. Notebook computers were purchased and equipped with software for Internet access. Community members can check out the notebooks, and the school covers the access charges. Students teach after school and evening computer classes to get citizens up to speed.

**Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Middle School** - Expansion funds were used to further develop a multiage advisor-advisee program called SOS (Strengthening Our Students) and to expand the Bulldog Press, a student publishing venture.

**Lincoln Elementary School** - A partnership with Mississippi Horizons Middle School made expansion funds available to nearby Lincoln Elementary School. Funds were used to set up technology and peer mentorship programs between middle school and elementary students. The two schools also share technological resources, including a weather station.

**Houston Secondary School** - Three initiatives received funding through an expansion grant. PrintWorks, a printing business operated by students, purchased equipment and supplies; funds were used for staff training and to purchase materials related to Core Knowledge Curriculum; and
additional money helped support a new project called ISD Wired which will give parents in the community access to school information such as class assignments, students’ grades and a calendar of school events.

**Eci Nompe Woonspe** – To enhance Dakota culture and language instruction, team members used expansion funds to develop curriculum related to wellness, computer technology and project-based learning. Students attended educational camps that blended several of the charter school’s Feathers and Wings goals.

**Goodhue Public Schools** – Expansion funds were used to further develop the Goodhue Trail, create promotional materials for the Goodhue Depot project and purchase a computer-aided design and drafting system.

**Southwest Star Concept School** – An expansion grant was used to fund a mini course program for high school students, a community history program for elementary students and staffing of after school technology labs for use by students and community members.

**Bridges Community School** – Staff members used an expansion grant to add kindergarten programming, conduct monthly education forums for educators, parents and community members, fund shared staff meetings over ITV with a peer-school partner and support community-based field trips.

**Hanska Community Charter School** – A group of staff members and parents used expansion funds to plan the conversion of the Hanska Elementary School, formerly part of the New Ulm School District, to the Hanska Community Charter School. Funds were also used to buy arts and technology resources to enhance learning programs.
Phase I Grant Sites
1991-1995

Implementation Grants
Bagley Elementary School
Blackduck Elementary School
Cambridge Middle School – The Minnesota Center
Cannon Falls Public Schools
Crookston High School
Cyrus Math, Science and Technology Elementary and Morris Elementary
Delavan Agri-Science Elementary School
East Grand Forks Central Middle School
Elk River – Handke Elementary School
Esko High School
Fairmont Area Schools
Grand Rapids High School
Isanti Middle School
Le Sueur – Minnesota New Country School
Little Falls High School
Monticello High School
Morris Elementary School
Nerstrand Elementary School
Proctor High School
Randall – Knight Elementary School
Rice Elementary School
The City of Rollingstone
Rothsay Public Schools
Thief River Falls Magnet Arts School
Toivola-Meadowlands Charter School
Virginia Public Schools
Westbrook-Walnut Grove Arts Magnet School

Planning Grant Communities
Alexandria
Bemidji
Brainerd
Braham
Cass Lake
Detroit Lakes
Fulda
Granite Falls-Clarkfield-Echo Schools
Hanska
Hendricks-Ivanhoe
International Falls
Kenyon-Wannamingo
Mankato
Morton
Ortonville
Remer
St. Peter
Silver Bay
Sleepy Eye
Staples
Wadena
Winnebago
**Schools as Caring Communities**

Results of spring 2000 surveys completed by students in the School for All Seasons, Isanti, Minn., indicated that children were just as likely to identify their school-within-a-school as community as they were the town in which their school sits. Little wonder. Planners were especially careful to create an environment that replicates the best of what a community has to offer, a place where individuals feel connected to one another and safe.

Many Center for School Change projects have worked hard to develop the school as a caring community concept — the idea that kindness, fairness and responsibility have places in the classroom alongside language arts, math and social studies.

Approaches have included multiage configurations that mix students across two or more age levels, homerooms that include students in kindergarten through grade five, all-school meetings and clubs, advisory groups and lessons designed to help children develop self-control and empathy for one another.

Teachers at several Center for School Change sites have taken training in The Responsive Classroom™, a social curriculum developed by the Northeast Foundation for Children. In International Falls, supplemental grants from the Center for Reducing Rural Violence and the Northland Foundation provided training opportunities for teachers in all four of the community’s schools, including a parochial school; and both International Falls and Janesville were sights for week-long Responsive Classroom training sessions. Implementation of Responsive Classroom methods varies from place to place, but in most cases includes daily classroom meetings held in circles.
The concept of the circle has also been used by students and teachers at Mississippi Horizons Middle School, Brainerd, Minn. All sixth graders learn to use a circle process at the beginning of their first year in the school (see pages 104 – 105), and the school counselor, dean and principal use circles with students in a variety of situations. Sometimes students request circles, and sometimes circles are called as part of the discipline process to deal with restitution.

Trudi Storbakken, a counselor at Mississippi Horizons, said circles create a safe environment for conflict resolution and provide a positive learning experience for everyone involved. At times peer mediators sit in on circles to add an older student’s voice, and the process has been used to help students and parents talk with one another.

Benefits for Students
While Center for School Change sites can provide no conclusive data about a connection between caring classrooms and academic growth, there are indicators that it helps. Good attendance is one. When children like to come to school and enjoy being in class, they are more likely to be there every day.

An article published in the fall 1995 National Center for Restructuring Education, Schools and Teaching newsletter identified several benefits for children who are parts of caring communities. A few of them include: greater enjoyment of class, greater concern for others, less feeling of loneliness in school, less use of tobacco, alcohol and marijuana and more sophisticated conflict resolution skills.¹

Bonnie Jean Flom, former principal at Nerstrand Elementary, a CSC Phase I project, tells a story about retiring the school’s peer mediation program. Like many other schools, Nerstrand had a well-trained group of peer mediators who wore special vests and carried clipboards on the playground so that other students who needed help would be able to find them. Sooner or later, teachers realized that the peer mediators had gone months without having to deal with problems. The staff felt that day to day life at the school, multiage groupings and the fact that the children knew one another well contributed

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**Recommended Reading**


to their ability to get along. The mediators were retired with a big celebration.

**Caring Community Strategies**

Strategies on the following pages represent the kinds of steps some Center for School Change sites have taken to help children feel safe and welcome at school. The ideas presented here are just a few of many fine things teachers and parents are doing to help children feel they *belong* in their classrooms.

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All-School Meeting

Once a week students and staff members gather together for an All-School Meeting that takes approximately 30 minutes. The purpose of the meeting is to promote positive behavior, build confidence through performance opportunities and problem solve as a team. Teachers take turns facilitating the meetings at the beginning of the year. Student leaders eventually assume the responsibility.

The three areas recognized during the meeting are:
1. Put Ups – Students and staff members share positive behaviors, efforts and accomplishments they have seen throughout the week;
2. Performances – Individual students, groups of students or entire classes sign up in advance to share some kind of performance with the group. Possibilities are endless and might include poetry recitation, singing a song or sharing a story; and
3. Problem solving – Throughout the week students anonymously write down problems they observe or personally experience and place them in a problem box that is centrally located in the school. During the meeting problems are drawn from the box and discussed. Students share possible solutions with one another.

Minutes from each meeting are recorded, posted and referred to during the following week. Teachers believe the All-School Meeting contributes greatly to the respectful and family-like atmosphere of the school community. The time taken to meet, they say, is well spent.

Contributed by Bridges Community School, Mankato, Minnesota.

Kids’ Club

Kids’ Club is a weekly get together of all students who attend the School for All Seasons, a year-round school-within-a-school in Isanti, Minnesota. The gathering is used for:
• celebrations
• music – everyone sings together, such as the Peace Song
• themes – reinforcing monthly study topics
• lessons related to topics everyone needs to know – fire safety, etc.

Teachers say Kids’ Club builds school spirit and increases opportunities for students and teachers throughout the school to get to know one another. Responsibility for organizing Kids’ Club rotates on an annual basis with two teachers sharing the work at one time.

Kids’ Club contributed by School for All Seasons, Isanti, Minnesota.
PEACE SONG
Sung to the tune *If You’re Happy and You Know It*

If you’re angry and you know it, PAUSE AND BREATHE.
If you’re angry and you know it, PAUSE AND BREATHE.
If you’re angry and you know it, you don’t really need to blow it.
If you’re angry and you know it PAUSE AND BREATHE.

After you pause and breathe, then please EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.
After you pause and breathe, then please EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.
When people know why you’re upset, then your needs can often be met.
After you pause and breathe, then please EXPRESS YOUR FEELINGS.

Just express yourself ... then ACTIVATE YOUR BRAIN.
Just express yourself ... then ACTIVATE YOUR BRAIN.
Find solutions that will work ... that way you won’t go BERSERK!
Just express yourself ... then ACTIVATE YOUR BRAIN.

You activate your brain and CHOOSE AND DO.
You activate your brain and CHOOSE AND DO.
Make the choice that works for all ... you will feel fifteen feet tall.
You activate your brain and CHOOSE AND DO.

Now EVALUATE AND CELEBRATE your choices ... (Hooray!)
Now EVALUATE AND CELEBRATE your choices ... (Hooray!)
Look, all the steps are done. Now it’s time to have some fun!
Let’s EVALUATE AND CELEBRATE your choices ... (Hooray!)

Written and contributed by Jill Anderson, School for All Seasons, Isanti, Minnesota.
Very Important Person of the Week

Dear Parent,

Your child, ____________________________, will be our “Very Important Person of the Week” next week. Help us celebrate your special child by providing the items listed to our class next Monday. Please include ...

- The completed sheet attached to this note
- Five to ten pictures that are your child’s favorites
- A favorite book

If you can visit for lunch during the week, it would be a special treat for your child! Our lunch is from ___ to ___. I appreciate your help in making next week special for your child! Please let me know which day you will be joining your child and me for lunch.

Thank you.

(Teacher’s signature)

Note: Please see the question sheet on the following page.
V. I. P. of the Week
All About Me

1. My favorite color is ______________________
2. My favorite book is ______________________
3. My favorite movie is ______________________
4. My favorite sport is ______________________
5. When I grow up, I want to be ______________
6. I’m special because ______________________
7. I was born in the state of __________________
8. My favorite food is ______________________
9. I have a pet _____________________________
10. The person I most admire is ______________
11. My favorite school subject is ______________

Contributed by School for All Seasons, Isanti, Minnesota.
**Nerstrand Elementary School’s Building Behavior Plan**

First developed by students, staff members and parents at Nerstrand Elementary School in 1994, the Nerstrand Building Behavior Plan has been revised and updated over the years. A copy of the plan is sent home each fall with a request that at least one adult in each family, as well as all of the family’s children who attend Nerstrand Elementary, read and discuss the plan together before signing a paper that is returned to the school.

The family information sheet says, “The Nerstrand Behavior Plan is a strong contributing factor to the positive climate established at Nerstrand School. The reduction of negative behaviors is important to academic success.” The school has two basic rules: 1. Treat yourself, others and property with respect; and 2. Work to the best of your ability.

**I Got Caught Slips**

Nerstrand Elementary students are recognized for exemplary behavior with *I Got Caught* slips.

Staff members are on the lookout for students who show courtesy and respect. When a student receives a slip, he or she signs the tear-off portion at the bottom and puts it in a homeroom collection box. The top of the slip is taken home to share with parents. Weekly drawings are held in each homeroom. The child whose name is drawn receives a pencil as a prize.

**Problem Solving Plan or PSP**

The school also has a consequence form that is used for serious or recurring problem behaviors — the kinds of things that are likely to interfere with the safety or learning of other students or the student who commits them.

As a rule, the first time a problem occurs, the student is given a warning. The second time, the student receives a warning along with some “thinking time.” If the student commits a third offense, he or she must fill out a problem solving plan (see opposite page), and then take the sheet home to complete a final section with parents. If an offense is extreme, a student is asked to fill out the form without receiving preliminary warnings. The Nerstrand Elementary staff believes the PSP “provides for meaningful opportunities for home and school to work together in creating positive behavior changes.”
Nerstrand Elementary Problem Solving Plan

Name ______________________________ Date of Incident ___________

Classroom Teacher ________________ Homeroom Teacher ________________

Number of PSPs received this year ________ Date of Initial PSP ________

1. Tell specifically who was involved and what happened.

2. How did it affect you? How did it affect those around you?

3. Think about the incident described above. How does the behavior you chose fit with our school’s behavior objectives? (Please be specific.)

4. What “fix it” plan would help to correct what happened?

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Staff Member Signature  Student Signature

Parent and Student: Please talk about this PSP and complete the plan which would help to avoid this situation in the future or fix what happened. Recess privileges will be reinstated when this form is returned and the following section is completed and signed.

My Plan:

_________________________________________  ____________________________
Student Signature and Date  Parent Signature and Date

Contributed by Nerstrand Elementary School, Nerstrand, Minnesota.
Culture-Based Curriculum

When students use their culture as a context for learning, self-identity is nurtured and a safe place for learning is created. At Eci Nompa Woonspe in Morten, Minn., individualized learning plans are based on student interests that integrate Dakota cultural perspectives, language, history and the arts. Students help determine specific achievement goals that become part of their academic contract.

Students research the language, history and present practices of their culture by beginning at the local level. Interviews with family members, elders and other area residents provide a good way to learn about one’s culture and to build community relationships. Experiential activities can be incorporated based on seasonal opportunities and local resource accessibility.

Specific culture-based curriculum ideas at Eci Nompa Woonspe include: a Dakota Heritage Garden, regular sweat lodge ceremonies, a daily flag song, a dance and drum group, teepee design and construction and sweet grass gathering.

Contributed by Eci Nompa Woonspe (The Learning Center), Morten, Minnesota.

Buddies Programs

Several Center for School Change projects have developed buddies programs that match every child in the school with a buddy — someone older or younger who is available for special activities, or to share a snack during a break or walk with on the way to the bus.

In most cases, buddies are selected by teachers, though some programs allow students to pick their own buddies late in the school year. Buddies within multiage homerooms are especially helpful when children are new to a school. The olders often help the youngers put things away in lockers or learn the lunchroom routine.

Creating a Respectful Environment

Emily Charter School takes its multiage program across all grade levels twice a month for CARE — Creating a Respectful Environment. Groups of ten children — mixtures of students in grades K–6 — meet to participate in team building activities such as games and making pies together.

As an expansion of CARE, the school holds family fun nights which are open to parents and community members. Examples of events held during the 2001–02 school year included a pie social where apple pies made in CARE groups were served, a soft drinks and popcorn thank you party for parents and a musical performance of children singing and dancing.

Contributed by Emily Charter School, Emily, Minnesota.
Celebrating the Olympics

Students and teachers in the Multiage Classroom at Falls Elementary enjoy celebrating Olympic-style games both indoors and out. Games give the students opportunities to work in groups that include children in grades three through six, and provide fun along with some challenges. In order to compete, students need to work and problem solve together.

Outdoors
During years when winter Olympic games are held, the MAC classes stretch their own Olympics over a two-week period. Students are placed in teams by their teachers — each team including an equal mix of students from all four grade levels. Teams are given the name of an actual country participating in the real Olympics.

Games are held one per day, and include such things as:

- **Hypothermia** – Teams compete to see how many members can get across imaginary icy waters without falling in. If one member touches the “water” the entire team must start over. The team that gets the most members across wins.
- **Boot Hockey** – Played like floor hockey, but outside. All team members must play. If there is a tie after ten minutes of play, each team picks two players to shoot penalty shots at the other team’s goalie. If there is still a tie after the initial penalty shots, each team selects another shooter. A team member cannot shoot two penalty shots until everyone on the team has tried.
- **Snowshoe and Backpack Relay** – Each team is given two sets of snowshoes and one weighted backpack. All eight members carry the backpack through a designated course while wearing snowshoes. Each carries the pack and hands it to the next team member who already has snowshoes on and is ready to go. The team that completes the relay in the fastest time wins.
- **Winter Bowling** – The goal of the game is to knock over as many pins as possible, using a snowball as a bowling ball. Each player rolls the snowball twice. If the first roll knocks all five pins down, the pins are reset for a second shot. Winners are members of the team that knocks down the most pins.

Indoors
Parent volunteers are in charge of several stations set up around the school gym, and multiage teams are made up of equal numbers of students. If a team is a member short, one person does a task twice. Students spend six minutes at a station and then have a minute to rotate to the next challenge. The goal is to use teamwork to achieve the most points possible.

Indoor games may be very creative. MAC students try things like dropping clothespins into a bottle, hitting a golf ball into a can, tossing jar rings onto a funnel, sending toy cars into holes in a box, sailing paper plates and tossing badminton birdies so that they ring a bell suspended from a hoop.

Contributed by the MAC Program, Falls Elementary, International Falls, Minnesota.
Schools and Communities Working Together

Student Behavior Survey

Please circle your answer for each statement.

1. I feel safe in school.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

2. I know what the rules are in the school.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

3. I know what happens if I make the choice to break the rules.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

4. When someone else tells my class about themselves, I listen.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

5. In the classroom, I tell classmates about myself.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

6. In the classroom, when my teacher is teaching a lesson, I listen.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

7. When a classmate asks a question, I listen.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

8. In class when I’m doing my schoolwork, I use an inside voice.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

9. When I’m in the hallway, I keep my hands and feet to myself.
   Always     Some of the time     Never

10. When I’m in the hallway, I walk.
    Always     Some of the time     Never

11. When I’m in the hallway, I use an inside voice.
    Always     Some of the time     Never

12. When I’m in the lunch line, I make good choices that do not hurt others with words.
    Always     Some of the time     Never

13. When I’m in the lunch line, I keep my hands and feet to myself.
    Always     Some of the time     Never

14. When I’m on the playground, I know what the rules are.
    Always     Some of the time     Never

15. When I’m on the playground, I ask others to play with me and my friends.
    Always     Some of the time     Never
16. When I’m on the playground, I make good choices that do not hurt others with words.
   Always  Some of the time  Never

17. When I’m on the playground, I make good choices that do not hurt others with actions.
   Always  Some of the time  Never

18. When I’m on the bus, I make good choices about the words I use.
   Always  Some of the time  Never

19. When I’m on the bus, I keep my hands and feet to myself.
   Always  Some of the time  Never

For items 20 – 24, please circle all that apply.

20. In the last week, someone ...
   Picked up my books  Loaned me a pencil/paper
   Opened a door for me  Complimented me
   Included me in games  Became a new friend
   ... New ate lunch with me

21. In the last week, I ...
   Picked up someone’s books  Loaned pencil or paper
   Opened a door for someone  Complimented someone
   Included others in games  Made a new friend
   Ate lunch with someone new

22. In the last week, these have happened to me ...
   Shoving  Hitting  Kicking  Biting  Teasing
   Budging  Name Calling  Tripping  Tackling  Pinching
   Objects thrown  Obscene gesture  Other

23. In the last week, I have done the following ...
   Shoving  Hitting  Kicking  Biting  Teasing
   Budging  Name Calling  Tripping  Tackling  Pinching
   Objects thrown  Obscene gesture  Other

24. Since the last time you completed this survey, have you seen guns or knives at school or on the bus?
   Yes  No
   If “yes,” why do you think these items were brought to school or on the bus?
   Just to show  To defend self  To hurt someone

25. What would you like to see happen to make your school a safe place to learn and play?

Contributed by Multiage Classroom (MAC), International Falls, Minnesota
John Dewey asserted that the primary role of the school is to develop democratic citizens. Therefore, if we want to maintain our democratic way of life, our schools must prepare democratic citizens. In order to accomplish this, we provide our students learning environments that support their:

- right to speak their views and to be heard
- responsibility to listen to views of others
- right and responsibility to make positive decisions for themselves
- right and responsibility to make positive decisions with others

Restorative measures is a shift from traditional models of control through external means such as threats, coercion, rewards and punishments to the use of inner controls: students thinking and making decisions for self-control in community.

Consistent use of restorative measures represents a philosophical shift. For some this may be a shift from perceiving some students as a problem to actually being able to identify their strengths and potential for success. For others it may be a change in how behavioral problems are handled. Expanding or beginning restorative measures means getting everyone to agree with the idea of restoration rather than punishment or control models of behavioral management. Restorative measures also means respecting that all affected parties have the ability to contribute to the solution. Once people are informed and understand the guiding principles, they can begin to think of a myriad of applications.

*Restorative Measures, Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning*

When conflicts and problems occur or harm is done, all those affected can become part of the process in restoring relationships in community: the person(s) who was harmed, the person(s) who did the harm and the community. Talk it through; identify solutions; restore order.

The circle process is one method that provides all an opportunity to speak, to listen and to make decisions in learning, problem-solving and/or resolving conflict. The circle process must be part of the culture — a way of living on a daily basis. If this is not accomplished, the circle process can become viewed only as a punishment when something has gone wrong.

In order to integrate the circle into the daily life of the school, it may be used to open the day. In this respect it is similar to the Responsive Classroom™ morning meeting, although it is not the same. The circle process is not prescriptive — there is no predetermined routine, content or time. The circle provides only the structure and process. The participants determine the purpose, content and time.
The circle may also be used to make decisions or solve problems. In this respect, it is similar to Judicious Discipline Democratic Class Meetings that can be called at any time, by anyone, for any purpose. Class meetings can be done in circle to insure that all have the opportunity to speak, to listen and to make decisions.

Beyond opening the day, solving problems or making decisions, the circle can be used as a learning method. For example, a creative thinking exercise can be done with an object passed from person to person, as each states how the object could be used; a study on World War II can include a circle where each participant explains their view on a selected issue, situation or theme; an American Literature session can include a circle where each explains how they relate to a specific character or situation in the work; values for the group can be identified by each offering a value for consideration with explanation.

**Circle structure and process is simple.** Participants sit in a circle. The circle is opened and closed by a circle keeper who opens the circle by stating the purpose and guiding the process to closure. A talking piece (any meaningful object that can be hand held) is passed clockwise (in harmony with nature) from person to person. The participant with the talking piece is the only one who has the right to speak with no interruption — verbal or nonverbal — of any kind from anyone. Participants may choose not to speak when given the talking piece; they may pass, and passing the talking piece is a reminder that the circle cannot function without their taking the piece from the participant on the right and passing it to the left. All are important in circle.

**The guidelines for circles** are simple but necessary for a respectful experience.
1. Use and respect a talking piece:
   - Share ideas when the talking piece is in your hand.
   - Listen when it is in another person’s hands.
   - You may pass and not speak when the talking piece is in your hand.
   - Pass the talking piece when you are finished to the person on your left.
2. Everyone has an equal opportunity to speak; be brief and to the point.
3. Speak from the heart; be honest, saying what you mean and meaning what you say.
4. Speak in a good way; be respectful. No putdowns, name calling, swearing.
5. Remain in circle, though breaks may be taken if the circle goes for a long period.
6. Maintain safety; circles are open and confidential. What is said stays in circle. You may ask permission to share information and stories outside the circle.

   Klea Brewton-Fitzgerald, Riverbend Academy, Mankato

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**We make our decisions by passing the talking stick.**
**We all have the right to speak, including children.**

Shawnee Indian
Creating a Good Elementary School to Secondary School Transition

Faced with the idea that many students were having a hard time making a transition from being the oldest kids at the elementary school to the youngest at a grades 7–12 secondary school, representatives of the International Falls sixth, seventh and eighth grade teaching staffs met, did research and discussed ideas over a period of several months. They were not able to implement all of their ideas due to budget shortfalls and changes in assignments. Here, however, are some of the strategies they adopted.

- Better communication between middle school teachers and sixth grade teachers has come about because of opportunities to meet together. As a result, secondary teachers are more aware of what happens in sixth grade and elementary teachers are more aware of expectations seventh graders will be expected to meet. Teachers plan to continue meetings between sixth and seventh grade teachers.

- Groups of sixth grade students spend a full day at the secondary school in the spring. Teachers meet ahead of time to pair sixth graders with seventh graders, so each incoming student has a one-on-one introduction to using the lunch room, meeting teachers and following a secondary school schedule.

- Seventh grade teachers prepare a materials list so incoming students will know what kinds of supplies they need.

- A Meet the Teacher Night is scheduled before school opens each year.

- Each new student is assigned an advisor — a teacher who is available to talk over concerns or provide help. Some advisors plan extra activities to provide fun times outside class to meet with their advisee groups.

- A display case has been set aside to feature activities and events for seventh and eighth grade students.

- Most teachers post grades on Edline, a feature of the school district’s Web site. This allows parents to follow students’ grades online.

- Teachers assist with mailing students’ progress reports to parents at midterm. This helps both students and parents understand how students are doing.

- Several teachers have taken middle school level Responsive Classroom™ training. Methods help teachers and students create caring communities within classrooms.

Contributed by  Deana Lorenson, Falls High School, International Falls, Minnesota.
**Parent Involvement**

Most parents want their children to succeed in school and are willing to help them in as many ways as possible.

At the same time, most educators know that parent involvement can be a big factor in increasing student achievement and decreasing behavior problems at school. Unfortunately, teachers sometimes have a hard time figuring out how to connect with parents in meaningful ways.

Because of parents’ work schedules, outside commitments and individual preferences, it helps to give parents choices in how they can be involved. Some may like helping out in the classroom, sharing a talent or skill, organizing special events or tutoring. Others might appreciate ideas for helping their children with homework at home or other ways to support learning outside of school. Some may want to serve on a school improvement committee or in other decision-making and advisory capacities.

Extended family members such as grandparents, aunts and uncles are another resource and can substitute for parents who aren’t available — so can any other caring adults who want to share their time and resources to make a difference in the lives of young people.

Parents and extended families contributed to both the development and maintenance of CSC projects by working on planning and advisory committees, creating information materials and preparing classrooms for use. Parents scraped paint, helped build greenhouses, and put together gatherings ranging from coffee parties to all-community barbecues. In classrooms at many CSC sites, parents are welcomed as regular volunteers or as experts who teach enrichment lessons. In other places, parents share information about careers or invite students to...
visit their workplaces. Parents have raised money to support activities, and spent many after-school hours helping their children with homework and projects.

**How to get started...**

1. Create a list of concrete ways parents can be involved in their child’s education.
2. Let parents know what choices exist.
3. Invite parent participation.
4. Thank parents for their involvement.

It is especially important to get information to all families — not just those who attend PTA meetings or school carnivals. Make sure letters and notes to parents are clear, and consider the needs of parents who do not read well or possibly do not understand English.

Schools need to reach out to parents in as many different ways as possible. When parents feel welcome and valued they become real partners in their children’s learning.

**Six Kinds of Involvement**

In her book, *School, Family and Community Partnerships, Your Handbook for Action*, Joyce Epstein recommends six major types of parent involvement for schools to promote. Categories include:

1. **Parenting**
   Help families with parenting skills by providing information about children’s developmental stages and home environment considerations that support children as students.

2. **Communicating**
   Communicate effectively with families about student progress, school services and programs, and also provide opportunities for parents to communicate with the school.

3. **Volunteering**
   Find ways to recruit and train volunteers for the school and classroom. Try to accommodate parents’ schedules to maximize support for students and programs. This category also includes opportunities for parents to attend events.
at school in which their children participate.

4. Learning at Home
Share ideas with families to improve students’ homework strategies and other kinds of at-home learning, and provide information about the kinds of skills students are required to learn.

5. Decision Making
Include families as partners in school decisions. Recruit members for school organizations, advisory groups and committees.

6. Collaborating with the Community
Create two-way connections between the school and community that encourage businesses and other groups to take an interest in schools and offer students and their families ways to contribute to the well-being of the community.

The Center for School Change included Joyce Epstein’s six types of parent involvement in annual surveys of parents whose children were involved in projects that received CSC funding. A sample survey is included in Chapter 8.


Web Sites
The Minnesota Parent Center, a project of the Parent Advocacy Coalition for Educational Rights (PACER) Center, provides free training, individual assistance, information and publications to families and educators. Services are designed to help families and schools build stronger ties for the benefit of students.

www.pacer.org

The National Network of Partnering Schools shares information about developing and maintaining school-family-community partnerships.

http://www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000/default.htm

Search Institute promotes 40 developmental assets that young people need to make healthy, caring and responsible choices.

www.searchinstitute.org
Parent and Community Involvement Opportunities

Caring adults do make a difference in the lives of young people! The help of parents, grandparents, neighbors and friends is needed. We appreciate you sharing your time and talent with our school. Please check any of the areas in which you can help. Please complete this form and bring it to your child’s back-to-school conference.

Your Name __________________________________________________________
Address _______________________________________________________________________
Telephone Number (Home) _____________________________ (Work) ___________________________

Name(s) and grade(s) of students attending our school
______________________________________________________________________________
______________________________________________________________________________

Assist at School

___ 1. Share information with a student or class about a hobby
   Hobby
___ 2. Share information with a student or class about a career.
   Career
___ 3. Share information with students about a country in which you have lived or visited. Country
___ 4. Help with school mailings.
___ 5. Demonstrate cooking from a particular country or culture to students.
   Country or culture
___ 6. Help coach students for academic competitions.
___ 7. Serve as a volunteer coordinator – calling to arrange for volunteers.
___ 8. Help organize students on picture days.
___ 9. Serve as a grade level volunteer. Grade level
___ 11. Proofread student writing.
Extend Learning by Helping to Arrange Experiences in the Community

___12. Host a one-day *shadowing* experience at your place of work for one or more students. Name of business
___13. Go on a field trip with a teacher and a group of students.

Serve on an Advisory or Decision-Making Committee

___14. Serve on the school’s steering committee (parents, teachers, students, community representatives – meets five times per year.)
___15. Serve as an officer for the school’s Parent/Community Organization.

Please add other ideas you may have.
Before-School Conferences

Several Center for School Change sites give parents and students an opportunity to meet with teachers before school opens each year. Generally, before-school conferences are scheduled in late August for about 15 minutes — just enough time for teachers to learn a bit about children and their families, to understand families’ priorities and to set academic goals for the year with parents and children.

In addition to providing an opportunity to set goals, before-school conferences help reduce back to school jitters by giving students a chance to meet their teachers and visit their classrooms. For parents and teachers, the conferences help build good working together relationships that carry over into the school year.

Conferences are made comfortable by encouraging all participants to sit together — either around a table or in chairs placed near one another. The experience should help students and parents feel welcome in the classroom.

To help families prepare, many schools send lists of questions to families ahead of before-school conferences. Whether questions are sent ahead of time or not, here are some good topics for before-school conferences involving teachers, parents or guardians and students.

1. What are the student’s interests, skills or favorite activities?
2. What interesting, fun or exciting things did the student and his or her family do over the summer?
3. What priorities do students and parents have for the coming school year?
4. The teacher will share ways the school will assess and report student progress to parents and students.
5. What are one or two things the parent is willing to do to help out during the school year? The school may provide a list of activities such as the one prepared by Mississippi Horizons Middle School on the previous pages.
6. Finally, do parents and students have questions for the teacher? What would they like to know about the year ahead?
Assessment Tools

Some people measure student success only by standardized test results. This is a disservice to students when there are so many important skills that can be learned but not measured by a written test.

The classic example of the driver’s license test illustrates the value of multiple ways to assess what a person knows. Part of a driver’s examination is a paper and pencil test that assesses memory retention of basic driving facts. The other part of the test is performance-based in nature, giving drivers a chance to show whether or not they actually know how to drive.

Using a variety of assessment tools, both standardized and performance-based, gives students, parents and educators a more complete picture of students’ knowledge and skills.

When students are engaged in hands-on, project-based kinds of learning activities, it is all the more important to give them various ways to show what they know.

For this reason, several Center for School Change sites created their own assessment tools and rubrics to measure such areas as speech and presentation, use of media and writing skills. A few of those tools are included here.

Recommended Reading


Web Site

The National Center for Research on Evaluation Web site includes reports, newsletters and policy briefs related to assessment. [www.cse.ucla.edu](http://www.cse.ucla.edu)
Elementary Writing Rubric
Grades 3 through 6

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category and Score</th>
<th>Novice (1)</th>
<th>Apprentice (2)</th>
<th>Practitioner (3)</th>
<th>Expert (4)</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Word Choice/ Language</strong></td>
<td>Limited vocabulary. Choice of language is bland or inappropriate</td>
<td>Has some variety of language, but needs stronger, more effective words.</td>
<td>Most words match the purpose. Word choice is clear and adequate.</td>
<td>Words are interesting, appropriate and descriptive.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Organization</strong></td>
<td>Ideas are unclear. There are no apparent paragraphs. The main idea needs to be developed.</td>
<td>Has main idea, but writing does not clearly follow it. Ideas are not fully developed in paragraphs.</td>
<td>The writing sometimes gets away from the main idea.</td>
<td>Clear main idea and supporting paragraphs are logical and well connected.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Details/ Information</strong></td>
<td>Needs to include more details and information. Needs to pay attention to main idea. Does not respond to task.</td>
<td>Not enough details or too many details supplied without a clear purpose.</td>
<td>The main idea is explained, but requires more important details than what is present. Aware of task.</td>
<td>Has very interesting and important details and a variety of information. Right on task.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Mechanics</strong></td>
<td>Many spelling and grammar errors that make the writing hard to follow. Incomplete sentences.</td>
<td>Several errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation or capitalization, but meaning can be understood. Simple sentences.</td>
<td>Few errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation or capitalization. Some complex sentences.</td>
<td>Minimal errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation or capitalization. Variety of sentence structures.</td>
</tr>
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</table>

Comments

Contributed by Multiage Classroom, Falls Elementary School, International Falls, Minnesota.
### Speech and Presentation Rubric

Contributed by William Kelly High School, Silver Bay, Minnesota.

**Assignment:**

**Student:**

**Date:**

**Course:**

**Grade:**

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<tr>
<th><strong>Content and Organization</strong></th>
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<td><strong>Introduction</strong></td>
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### Score

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<tr>
<th>Points for Content &amp; Organization</th>
<th>Points for Style</th>
<th>Student Followed Directions</th>
<th>Yes (4) No (0)</th>
<th>Total Points</th>
<th><strong>Score</strong></th>
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**Strengths:**

**Weaknesses:**

Evaluator: ___________________________
## Presentation Rubric

### Message Development
Circle level and check comments that apply.

- **Level 4**  Clearly focused topic  
  - Richly supported with examples and details  
  - Highly meaningful to speaker and audience

- **Level 3**  Focused topic  
  - Sufficiently supported with examples, details  
  - Meaningful to speaker and audience

- **Level 2**  Somewhat focused topic  
  - Supported with some examples and details  
  - Interesting to speaker and audience

- **Level 1**  General topic  
  - Some support  
  - Interesting to speaker, but not necessarily to audience

- **Level 0**  Topic unfocused  
  - Little support

### Organization
Circle level and check comments that apply.

- **Level 4**  Exceptionally effective introduction, body and conclusion  
  - Smooth transitions

- **Level 3**  Complete introduction, body and conclusion  
  - Good transitions

- **Level 2**  Minimally developed introduction, body and conclusion  
  - Predictable transitions

- **Level 1**  Missing at least one organization element  
  - Introduction, body, conclusion, transitions

- **Level 0**  Little evidence of organization

### Delivery
Circle level and check comments that apply.

- **Level 4**  Professional delivery enhances the message  
  - Confident, poised with total confidence on audience  
  - Exceptional speaking voice

- **Level 3**  Effective delivery enhances the message  
  - Practiced and controlled  
  - Good posture and clear speaking voice  
  - Focused on audience

- **Level 2**  Adequate delivery  
  - Evidence of some practice  
  - Somewhat focused on audience  
  - Understandable speaking voice

- **Level 1**  Some delivery elements detract from message  
  - Needs more practice and control  
  - Self-focused  
  - Read message to audience (from notes or monitor)

- **Level 0**  Many delivery elements detract from message  
  - Needs more practice and control  
  - Self-focused  
  - Read message to audience (from notes or monitor)

### Use of Media
Circle level and check comments that apply.

- **Level 4**  Professional quality media  
  - Striking graphics – print enhances the message  
  - Evident use of design elements, creativity

- **Level 3**  Good quality media enhances the message  
  - Good use of graphics  
  - Print is easy to read and error free

- **Level 2**  Adequate quality media  
  - Appropriate graphics  
  - Some errors (spelling, grammar, etc.)

- **Level 1**  Media is used, but is irrelevant to message  
  - Poor quality media (difficult to read print, many errors, etc.)

- **Level 0**  No use of media

### Comments:

**Presentation Rubric**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Student Presenter</th>
<th>Grade Level</th>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Evaluator:</th>
<th>Student</th>
<th>Educator</th>
<th>Parent</th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Member</th>
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Presentation Rubric Process

This presentation rubric was developed at Mississippi Horizons Technology Magnet in Brainerd, Minn., a project-oriented, technology rich school for students in grades 6–9. Mississippi Horizons offers the following guidelines for use of the rubric:

1. Student presentations should be videotaped and scored at least once during each year. Students should use the classroom microphone while being videotaped. At Mississippi Horizons, tapes are stored on a grade level book truck.

2. Use the attached rubric form for scoring students’ presentations. At least one student and two adult evaluators should score each student’s presentation. Mississippi Horizons creates and attaches a list of potential evaluators.

3. After completing presentations and storing tapes, file score sheets so that students may access them in the future. Mississippi Horizons students review their tapes during a multimedia class and create a reflections/goals sheet.

4. Ninth graders are given their tapes and score sheets at the end of the school year. Tapes include presentations from each of their four years at the school. The school makes copies of two or three of the ninth graders’ tapes and score sheets at the end of each year to keep as examples.

Contributed by Mississippi Horizons Middle School, Brainerd, Minnesota. Rubric is used for grades 6–9.
Junior Exit Exhibition

This project requires you to research a controversial issue, formulate a position, and write a paper making clear your position with a thorough defense. Following the writing of this paper you will give a speech that summarizes and defends your position to a select audience.

The Exit Exhibition must be a quality work that demonstrates thoughtfulness, inquiry and expressiveness on a current issue. We are looking for a deep, not shallow, work of writing.

Criteria for Position Paper

- The paper shall be written in a formal style.
- It must be at least three pages but no more than seven pages long.
- The paper shall be typed or word processed and double-spaced.
- Sources must be appropriately documented, and the paper shall have a works cited page.
- Use a minimum of three different and current resources.

In addition, one reference book may be used to supply necessary historical and background information.

Oral Presentation

The speech will be a summary and defense of your position paper.

- You are expected to give a speech that lasts as close to five minutes as possible. Speaking a little longer will not penalize you, but speaking less than four minutes will.

- You may use one visual aid, but are not required to do so.

- You may deliver your speech using a note card that contains your thesis statement and no more than 50 other words. Note cards must be shown to the Connect-4 teacher prior to the speech. If there are too many words you will be asked to make cuts to get down to the required 50.
Format for Presenting the Summary and Defense Speech
1. Introduction
   a. Who you are
   b. Introduction of topic and why you feel this topic is relevant to your audience
   c. Summary of research (where and how) and acknowledgment of resources
2. State position (thesis)
3. Defend position
4. Call for questions (questions will not exceed five minutes)

Audience
The speech will be delivered to an interested audience of:
• Community people;
• At least one of your parents or guardians;
• Ten peers, Connect-4 teacher(s);
• When possible, to an audience that has a stake in the issue being defended; and
• Others at your invitation.

Evaluation
This exhibition will be evaluated by the Connect-4 teachers, at least one community person, a student, and when possible someone who is a stakeholder in your topic. It will be taped and included as a part of your portfolio.

Note: A rubric used to evaluate students' position speeches is included on the following page.

Contributed by Monticello High School, Monticello, Minnesota.
Position Speech Evaluation

Rate the speaker’s performance on each item in the left column by circling one of the numbers in the right column following that item. The ratings proceed from 1 (lowest) to 5 (highest).

**Introduction of the Speech**
- Introduced self with poise
  
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- Communicated topic’s relevance to audience
  
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- Acknowledged resources
  
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- Clearly stated position (thesis)
  
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**Defense of Position**
- Solid and forceful arguments
  
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- Arguments supported by research
  
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- Effectively spoke to audience
  
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  - Eye contact
    
    |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|
    |   |   |   |   |   |   |

  - Volume
    
    |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|
    |   |   |   |   |   |   |

  - Expression
    
    |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|
    |   |   |   |   |   |   |

  - Poise
    
    |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|
    |   |   |   |   |   |   |

  - Effective use of visual aids (optional)
    
    |   | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
    |---|---|---|---|---|---|
    |   |   |   |   |   |   |

**Conclusion**
- Appropriate and substantial
  
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- Created a lasting impression
  
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- Responded well to questions
  
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**Topic Choice and Limitation**
- Suitable for attending audience
  
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- Suitable to the time limit
  
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</table>

Overall grade

Please use the back of this sheet to provide further comments on the above categories or general comments on the presentation as a whole.

Signature

Contributed by Monticello High School, Monticello, Minnesota.
Senior Exit Exhibition

Connect-4’s senior exhibitions require each student to develop a thorough understanding of an area of personal interest. The student also needs to create a product that represents the interest. Finally, in addition to writing a paper and making a speech, the student is required to create a multimedia presentation — a display booth that includes a visual presentation using media such as slides, transparencies, presentation software, posters, objects and video or audio tape. The purpose of the display is to show that real effort, time, talent and research went into creating and refining the finished work.

A Sample Project
A student with an interest in furniture might decide to create a Chippendale style piece of furniture as a project. This kind of product would involve the student in researching the history of Chippendale, including how the period in which it was produced affected its development. The project would require the student to understand the techniques involved in building a piece of Chippendale furniture and then use that knowledge to actually build a similar piece of furniture.

The student’s paper would discuss what the student had learned about the history of the furniture, including how the period’s architecture and fashion influenced its design. It would explain specific features and techniques involved in creating Chippendale furniture. The student’s speech would present this information to an audience while the piece of furniture made as part of the project is on display. A multimedia booth would visually document the steps taken to create a piece of furniture from a pencil sketch to the actual product.

Evaluation
In addition to following a speech rubric similar to that for the junior exit exhibition, evaluators of senior projects apply a rubric to examination of the student’s display and product. Some items in that rubric include:

- Demonstration of an advanced level of skill in technology including all media incorporated in the display.
- Are physical materials used in the booth of high quality?
- Are the physical materials used in making the product of high quality?
- Does the display — including the arrangement of equipment and media — show a high degree of creative and artistic merit?
- Does the product display a high degree of creative and artistic merit?
- Does the presenter exhibit knowledge through an ability to answer questions about the product and topics covered in the speech?
- Does the presenter make eye contact with individuals asking questions?
- Does the presenter show confidence and poise during the presentation and question time?
- Does the presenter speak loudly enough to be heard easily?
- Is s/he pleasant and courteous to the audience?

Contributed by Monticello High School, Monticello, Minnesota.
Professional Development

Developing new and better ways to help students learn takes time and lots of hard work. For systemic changes, it is important for educators to have time to research and plan before ever implementing new ideas. Once changes are put in place it is equally important to have time for reflection and refinement.

Collaborating with colleagues generates energy for growth and change. School district leaders need to support training and planning time for teachers. In return, teachers need to set and maintain high standards of performance for themselves, their colleagues and students.

Professional Development Tools
The two professional development tools presented in this section may not be commonly used, but should be. The first, created by students, is a way for students to assess teacher performance and curriculum effectiveness. Staff members who use this tool say requesting student feedback is the best way to gauge what is working, and what isn’t.

The second tool is a professional development checklist that encourages and focuses yearly goals. Specific activities such as professional reading and reflection, peer review and feedback surveys support professional growth.

Working on a school change project is a wonderful professional growth and renewal experience. To be able to think about creating possibilities and opportunities for kids to learn in a different way is very refreshing. It opens up opportunities and growth for you as an educator and person. It changes the routine and allows you to learn and think about what is possible instead of what is not possible.

Working on a change project requires and allows you to find out about current research, ideas and new methods about how we learn, why we learn and what we learn. .... After working on a school change project you will never be the same educator or person again.

Les Gunderson, teacher, Perham, Minn.

"It's easier for students to step outside of the box than for adults. Changing a paradigm is tough. It can be hard to walk the talk."

Gene Stukel
Yellow Medicine
East Teacher
Teacher/Advisor Performance and Curriculum Rubric

Throughout the year, usually after large projects are complete, teams of students use this rubric to evaluate their teachers and curriculum. Students are encouraged to write specific comments. The results are shared in a dialogue format between students and the teachers. Teachers may also use this form for self-assessment.

**Time – Do teachers provide enough time for students to work on projects?**
- 4 – Time schedule is clear and appropriate.
- 3 – Time schedule is usually adequate.
- 2 – Time schedule changes and is inconsistent.
- 1 – Not enough time is allotted.

**Organization – How well have teachers organized the project?**
- 4 – Well organized
- 3 – Pretty well organized
- 2 – Somewhat organized
- 1 – Not adequately organized

**Motivation – How well do teachers motivate student learning and interest?**
- 4 – Students are highly motivated to learn.
- 3 – Students are motivated to learn.
- 2 – Students are somewhat motivated to learn.
- 1 – Students are not motivated to learn.

**Alignment to Standards – How well do teachers align standards to student-selected projects?**
- 4 – Standards fully explained
- 3 – Standards stated
- 2 – Standards not clear
- 1 – Standards not assessed

**Attendance – How well are the expectations for attendance at service learning work sites communicated and maintained?**
- 4 – Teachers require excellent attendance and use appropriate consequences for absences.
- 3 – There are some attendance expectations and consequences.
- 2 – Attendance expectations and/or consequences are inconsistent.
- 1 – There are no consequences for poor attendance.

**Purpose/Goal – Is the purpose of learning activities clear?**
- 4 – Clearly defined purpose and goals
- 3 – Somewhat defined purpose and goals
- 2 – Uncertain of purpose and goals
- 1 – See no connection between learning activities and goals
Discipline – How well are the consequences for inappropriate behavior communicated and maintained?
4 – Expectations are clearly communicated and consistently maintained.
3 – Some expectations are clearly communicated and consistently maintained.
2 – Few expectations are clearly communicated and consistently maintained.
1 – Expectations are not clear, and they are inconsistently maintained.

Communication – How well does the mentor/supervisor communicate with and guide students?
4 – Comprehensive method of communication
3 – Sufficient method of communication
2 – Inconsistent method of communication
1 – Ineffective method of communication

Challenge – How well does the staff challenge students?
4 – Challenges all abilities
3 – Challenges many abilities
2 – Challenges basic abilities
1 – Challenges some abilities

Public Information – How well do teachers keep the community informed about student accomplishments and projects?
4 – All audiences are accurately informed about projects and programs.
3 – Some audiences are appropriately informed about projects and programs.
2 – Very few groups or people are kept informed.
1 – No groups are kept informed about projects and programs.

Product/Reflection – How well do teachers provide feedback on projects?
4 – Feedback is specific, thorough and given in a timely manner.
3 – Feedback is adequate, but takes too long to receive.
2 – Only partial feedback is given.
1 – No feedback is given, or it is too vague to be helpful.

Outcome/Experience – How well do outcomes relate to students’ lives?
4 – Outcomes make an impact on community and student.
3 – Outcomes make some impact on community and student.
2 – Outcomes rarely impact community and student.
1 – Outcomes do not impact community and student.

Student Choice – Are students given a voice/choice in the kinds of projects they pursue?
4 – Students’ ideas help form the curriculum.
3 – Students are listened to, but opinions rarely alter the curriculum.
2 – Student input is not taken under advisement.
1 – Students are not given a chance for input.

Developed and contributed by Together for the Future students (Leah Perry, Danielle Rieber, Ashley Heresh, Shelly Stephens, Jeseka Masloski, Zac Zacharis), Perham, Minnesota.
Professional Development Checklist

Name ________________________________

Position ____________________________  Year ____________________________

1. Choose a professional development committee

   One coordinator

   One colleague

2. Write a personal plan with goals and activities and arrange a plan proposal meeting with professional development committee.

   Date __________  Time __________

3. Complete peer review process.

4. Attend a state or national education conference.

   Conference title

   Place and date

5. Attend one workshop or class related to your goals.

   Workshop or class title

   Place and date

6. Complete professional reading and reflection (approved by committee).

   List professional reading

   Describe reflection process
7. Complete re-licensure certification as required.
   Requirements
   Date completed

8. Arrange year-end interview with professional development committee.
   Date
   Time

For Teachers
9. Conduct feedback surveys of parents and students.
   Date(s) conducted
   Number surveyed

Unifying for Excellence

When staff members and community members were dissatisfied with the school climate and performance at Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Elementary School, they created a plan to achieve excellence for themselves and their students.

During the course of a year:
1. Surveys were given to parents, other community members and staff members to assess areas that needed to change.

2. Goals were set based on survey results that revealed four major areas for school improvement: academics, parent involvement, public relations and leadership.

3. Innovative ideas were explored through a research phase. Planners were encouraged to think differently about school and to talk about their dreams for a better place.

4. All actions were connected to goals.

5. Relationships were strengthened through service and example.

6. A new school culture and expectations were modeled by staff members who believe good education is:
   • People looking for the best, most effective teaching ideas;
   • People who are willing to evaluate and adjust daily;
   • People who are open to new ideas and willing to take risks;
   • People who jump in and dedicate time and talents beyond the call of duty;
   • People who join to promote unity, but also contribute individual specialties;
   • People who want excellence in education;
   • People who are willing to serve others; and
   • People who empower themselves and one another.

Shared beliefs and implementation goals are revisited and revised as needed.

Staff members say, “The feeling of success and the confidence from seeing our school transformed has impacted us forever!”

Contributed by Janesville-Waldorf-Pemberton Elementary School
Chapter Five

Strategies and Tools

This chapter includes contributions from several Center for School Change sites. While most materials were created for specific projects, a few are remodeled and recycled versions of items that have been used in a variety of learning environments over the years.

Some of the pages in this chapter may be useful in their current format, and some may provide starting points for new lessons and assessments. In any case, all are included with the permission of the sites and individuals credited, and readers are welcome to reproduce pages for their own uses.

International Falls students end a field trip to Voyageurs National Park with a game played long ago by fur traders.
Entries have been sorted into several categories, and symbols have been added to indicate whether an item is more likely to be used at elementary or secondary levels. Like many sorting systems, the one used in this book is not infallible. Many of these items fit into more than one topic, and bits of most could be used at any grade level.

Here are the starting points for each section:
- Learning in the Community ...... page 51
- Service-Learning ...... page 67
- Environmental Education ...... page 75
- Students as Entrepreneurs ...... page 81
- Schools as Caring Communities ...... page 91
- Parent Involvement ...... page 107
- Assessment Tools ...... page 113
- Professional Development ...... page 123
Learning in the Community

When asked to describe some of the characteristics of their best learning experiences, many people reply with answers like: It took place outside of the classroom. It was connected to the real world. It was collaborative in nature. It involved people outside of school. It gave me a chance to apply skills in a relevant context. It was exciting.

In years of attending hundreds of community and faculty meetings, never once did CSC staff members hear, "It was answering the questions at the end of the chapter in a textbook."

An endless laboratory for learning thrives outside the confines of school buildings. Many CSC projects use the community as a focus for study, giving students a chance to move beyond the four walls of their classrooms and the limitations of their textbooks.

**We needed 60 percent voter approval** to improve an 81-year-old building so that our facilities would fit our curriculum.

Many community members supported the bond issue, but some were completely against it. A representative of the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning had said that the vote and the school would fail, but we knew that it was up to us as a community to determine our future.

Hundreds attended two public meetings to discuss the school board’s plans. Students made signs supporting the referendum and called citizens to remind them to vote. Then we waited anxiously to hear the results.

On the night of the referendum, we had an away girls’ basketball game. We listened to the radio the whole way home to find out if the bond issue had passed. Finally, our bus driver called his wife, and we learned that it had been approved by 69 percent of the voters with a record-high voter turnout. Construction of our new building and remodeling of the old one started in May 1998.

Southwest Star Concept School student, from *Rural Matters*, Summer 1998.
“Among my science courses I took two full years of biology, but I never learned that the beautiful meadow at the bottom of my family’s pasture was a remnant virgin prairie. We did not spend, so far as I can remember, a single hour on the prairies — the landscape in which we were immersed — in two years of biological study.”

Paul Gruchow
Grass Roots: The Universe of Home

Students are able to use their communities’ valuable resources as a way to gain deeper knowledge and practice and apply skills within a meaningful context. Some educators refer to this method as place-based education or learning in place.

A curriculum focused on the local economy, history, culture, politics and environment encourages in-depth learning about important content. Students engaged in community-based projects have an authentic way to improve their academic, interpersonal and citizenship skills. At the same time, communities are strengthened when students help research real issues, fulfill real needs and solve real problems.

In Fertile-Beltrami, high school students learned about economic development by becoming community developers. They created and maintain a Web page for the city and all of its businesses. In Miltona elementary students learned about grammar, syntax and advertising by becoming newspaper reporters. They produced their town’s only newspaper and used local ad space to cover publishing costs. Students at Southwest Star Concept School, Okabena, Minn., learned about local politics by becoming community activists. They helped promote a referendum that passed in spite of huge odds against it, and proved “It was up to us as a community to determine our future.”

Survey responses indicated that students developed new and more positive attitudes about the places in which they live as well as about the adults with whom they worked. Students seemed genuinely surprised at the number of resources their communities had to offer, and reported pride in their communities and a sense of feeling good about making contributions that really mattered.

Students don’t always have to leave the school building to make connections with their communities. Community people can be invited into the school to share their knowledge, talents and interests with students. Involving senior citizens connects students with one of their community’s greatest human resources.

**Recommended Reading**

*Learning in Place* is available at the Rural School and Community Trust Web site. www.ruraledu.org

How to Start
1. Think of ways to connect existing curriculum to the community.
2. Research community resources and make connections.
3. Think creatively and be purposeful.
4. Let students do 1-3!

Project-Based Learning
Project-based learning is very similar to place-based learning. The main difference is that while project-based learning often utilizes community resources, sometimes it does not. For example, some schools require a senior project that focuses on an in-depth study of a student’s interest. One musically inclined student in a CSC project built his own guitar. As part of his senior presentation he explained the process and history of his craftsmanship and then performed on his guitar. This hands-on, student-determined project required the acquisition and application of many skills.

Many practitioners describe how well project-based learning complements standards-based education. In Minnesota, where students are required to meet basic standards in areas such as writing, speaking and mathematics, project-based learning is a natural way to integrate multiple subject areas while meeting several academic standards at one time.

Schools and communities working together means more than providing valuable lessons for students. In a workshop setting with School Nature Area Project participants, former North Shore Elementary teacher Judy Johnson and parent Rich Sill came up with five reasons to promote school-community partnerships.
1. People outside the schools bring fresh ideas.
2. They contribute time to get things done.
3. Some contribute money or stuff.
4. Community people offer a kind of staff development for teachers when they come in to share expertise or do activities with kids.
5. Working with community people just feels good!

Web Sites
The Rural School and Community Trust provides resources and technical assistance about community-based learning.
www.ruraledu.org

EdVisions shares ideas about reconfiguring schools and ways to replicate Minnesota New Country School’s project-based design.
www.edvisions.com

For current stories about projects involving young people in project-based learning, visit What Kids Can Do.
www.whatkidscando.org
Community Learning and Academic Rigor

In order to assure quality learning for students, and to put to rest the notion that the only real learning is book learning, consider the following guidelines for maintaining academic rigor in community-based study. These ideas are based on the experience of teachers and community members, and were included in an article, *Community Learning and Academic Rigor*, written by Doug Thomas for the March 1997 issue of *Fine Print*.

- Be sure students have an opportunity to demonstrate their learning. Presentation nights, science fairs and speeches are a few of the formats to consider.

- Give positive feedback to encourage students’ interest and raise their expectations.

- Involve community members in verifying and validating accomplishments. Some schools, such as Mississippi Horizons in Brainerd, Minn., provide workshops for evaluators from the community. In other places, community experts serve as mentors for students working on specific projects.

- Hold focus groups to find out what the community believes standards should be.

- Make sure the public has good information about learning activities. Involve local media.

- Make sure everyone involved in community-based learning is aware of individual responsibilities.

- Work with community and business partners to decide on goals and expectations for student learning.

- Make sure other students see the best work their peers are doing. Good modeling improves everyone’s performance.

- Maintain multiple connections to the community. Involve many organizations in student learning activities.

- Be sure the work is meaningful and important to both students and community members.

- Allow time for reflection and improvement.

- Be clear about goals from the start. Make sure students know what is expected of them before they go out in the community.
Laptop Computer Checkout Form
Sharing School Resources with the Community

Name ____________________________________________
Address ____________________________________________
City, State, Zip ____________________________________________
Home Phone ___________ Work Phone ___________

Laptop Make & Model ____________________________
Serial Number ________________________________

Date checked out ___________ Date due back ___________
Note: A $5.00 per day penalty will be charged for any computer not returned on time.
Please call if you are going to be late.

Please check to see that the following are in the case upon checkout and return:

Checkout
__ Laptop Computer CDs (list)
__ Power Adapter 1
__ Power Cord 2
__ Telephone Cord 3
__ Mouse 4

Return
__ Laptop Computer CDs
__ Power Adapter 1 3
__ Power Cord 2 4
__ Telephone Cord

Conditions for Use of Laptop Computers

• The maximum checkout period is three days.
• If a unit sustains damage that requires the school to submit an insurance claim, the signer of this form will be required to pay a fee of $100.00.
• If you need instruction or help to use the computer, please notify the instructor.
• Microsoft Office is loaded for your convenience. It includes a word processor, database, spreadsheet and power point. Please save your work to a diskette.
• Please do not load any personal software or printer drivers without prior approval. Also, please do not remove any software that is pre-loaded.
• If you need to print an item, bring your diskette with you so you may print your document in the library when you return the computer.

I have read and understand the terms of this agreement.
Signature ____________________________ Date ________________
Not valid without approval signature.

Contributed by Fertile-Beltrami Schools, Fertile, Minnesota.
Off-Site Experience Form

I. This section is to be completed by the student before the experience.

Student name ____________________________________________

Name and title of contact person ____________________________

Phone number ___________________________________________

Location of experience ____________________________________

Date contact was made ____________________________________

Date and time of experience ________________________________

Through this experience I intend to accomplish ... 

Pre-approval signature of teacher ____________________________

II. This section is to be completed by the contact person.

As a contact person, I verify that Goodhue High School student __________

_________________________ was with me from (arrival time) __________ until

(departure time) __________ on (date) ____________.

Signature ______________________________________________

Comments:

III. This section is to be completed by the student following the experience. On the
back of this form tell what you accomplished on this experience. Give details
about the things you actually did and what you learned.

Contributed by the G.O.A.L.S. program at Goodhue High School, Goodhue, Minnesota.
Journal Assignment for Community Projects

A journal is a tool that helps us promote personal growth and development. It should be more than a diary or list of daily events. It should be a record of much deeper analysis and personal reflection based on your experiences. Properly done, a journal can become a path to self-discovery.

Make entries in your journal on a regular basis. It may be written in a style that is comfortable to you since your reflections are for your own benefit. Your journal will be evaluated every other week.

Journal Expectations
1. Labeled correctly (name, class, date, assignment number)
2. Handed in on time — at the beginning of class on the due date
3. Typed — one page, double spaced, acceptable font and size
4. Grammatically and mechanically correct

Directions
The following questions include ideas to use in your journal. The questions will help you decide what to write. Each journal will use one of the following as a focus.

1. What happened? What did I see, hear or feel? What did I do? What did I say?
2. What is new? What is familiar? What is difficult? What is easy?
3. What did I learn? How do the things I learn apply to what I already know? How do the things I learn apply to the future? What do I still need to learn?
4. How did a particular experience affect me — personally, professionally, academically?
5. What problems/situations did I encounter? What problem-solving strategies did I apply? What was my success in dealing with the problems/situations?
6. What is the most important skill or aptitude I brought to this experience? What is the most important thing I have gained in this experience?
7. Talk to someone who works in the area in which you are doing your project, then summarize what you learned. For example, what training did the person need? What jobs are available in this area? Where did the person attend training or school? What kind of salary could you expect? What are working conditions like?

Contributed by the G.O.A.L.S. program at Goodhue High School, Goodhue, Minnesota.
Project Proposal Form for Students

Name ___________________________ Date ___________________________

Names of others if group project:

_________________________  ___________________________  ___________________________

Title of the project: ________________________________________________________________

I. Identify the topic to be researched and/or investigated.

II. List at least three basic information/fact questions you would like to answer concerning your project.
   1.
   2.
   3.
   4.

III. How does your project apply to life outside of school? What makes this project important to the community/world around you? Give at least two reasons.
   1.
   2.
   3.

IV. Brainstorming – Choose between A and B or do both.
   A. Develop a web (attach)
   B. Design an outline (attach)

V. Tasks and activities to complete this project: Date to completed
   ____________________________________________  _______________________
   ____________________________________________  _______________________
   ____________________________________________  _______________________
   ____________________________________________  _______________________

VI. List a minimum of three different types of resources you will use. At least one of these must be a primary source (living person).
   1. 3.
   2. 4.
VII. List the Minnesota Grad Rule Profiles that will be validated after project completion. Copy and highlight the applicable profiles and attach them to the proposal form.

VIII. Number of Proposed Project Credits (Must have documented hours/work to receive credit.)

IX. Initial Proposal Approval

Parent/Guardian ___________________________ Date _____________

Advisor _________________________________ Date _____________

Project Planning Group ___________________ Date _____________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

X. Checklist needed to be completed before final approval.
   a. Documentation of Project Learning __________
   b. Timelog __________
   c. Project Checklist (if needed) __________
   d. Works Cited/Bibliography (example found on page 276 of Writers Inc.) __________
   e. Performance Rubric __________
   f. Summary/Reflection (Describe the process of completing. What went well and what would you do differently? How did the project affect you as a student, citizen, and/or family member?) __________

XI. Final Approval

I agree my child’s project is ready for final approval.

Parent/Guardian: ___________________________ Date: _____________

Advisor: _________________________________ Date: _____________

Project Planning Group:

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

____________________________________________________________________

Contributed by Minnesota New Country School, Henderson, Minnesota.
Building a City

Purpose: This activity promotes study of maps as well as shapes and forms. Discovery Elementary students also incorporate a discussion of architecture.

Appropriate age or grade group: This activity is used in K-2 multiage classrooms, but could be adapted for other grade levels.

The project requires “lots of boxes” and several days.

After walking through parts of Buffalo, students used cardboard boxes to build a model of their town. Each student was assigned a structure. Kindergarten students built simple one-level buildings such as houses. First graders did complex structures such as the fire station, library, or city hall, and second graders created two-story, complex structures such as a shopping complex, airport or courthouse. Each student worked at home, with parents’ help, to create his or her building. Sometimes families made extra trips to look at the buildings they were trying to recreate.

When the box buildings were completed, the students brought their box structures to school and organized them – north, south, east, or west – according to geographical points such as major roads or landforms. Students then made construction paper roads on the floor and placed their structures in the right parts of town.

Contributed by Discovery Elementary, Buffalo, Minnesota.

Parks Project

Designed to raise students’ awareness of vandalism that was occurring in the local parks, this project had several parts:

• Representatives from the City of Buffalo and the Buffalo Parks Committee discussed park issues with students, including the purpose of parks, park safety, expenses related to maintaining parks and the responsibilities of citizens.

• Students were bused to local parks where they completed a checklist about available equipment, vandalism and park needs.

• The students reviewed the data they had collected and wrote recommendations which they then presented to the representatives from the city and parks committee.

Contributed by Discovery Elementary, Buffalo, Minnesota.
School Bus History Tours

Community members Helen Hendrickson and Jeannine Engelson, both retired, are part of a history committee that began meeting in 1997 to design a community-based study component for North Shore Elementary School. Building on their own knowledge of the area, and working with teachers to identify themes which run through the school’s curriculum, the women have led many local field trips for students. They have conducted school bus tours of historical points of interest, taken students to a fish hatchery, stopped at an old post office and set up a nature tour with a forester. They have taken students to an old cemetery, visited a family farm, and helped to arrange old fashioned school days in a nearby one-room school building.

Putting together field trips appropriate for each grade level requires time, creativity and thoughtful planning, skills the tour guides contribute with enthusiasm. “You meet the most wonderful families when you do this,” Hendrickson said. In addition, she and Engelson have always found agencies and area residents eager to accommodate groups of students.

Contributed by North Shore Elementary, rural Duluth, Minnesota.

Hometown Study

The Isanti County Historical Society has had a long-standing partnership with Braham third grade students during the students’ study of their own hometown. For many years, the historical society gave walking history tours to augment what the students learned in social studies classes. Gradually, the third grade project grew to include:

- An historical slide presentation in which the history and development of the town is compared to a pie.
- The walking tour, which has expanded to include a history scavenger hunt component and a marching band. See sample on following page.
- Poetry and editing sessions during which students write Braham and pie poems and stories.
- A marbling session – to make the top crust of the pie book.
- Sessions with a book artist from the Minnesota Center for Book Arts, where children learn to make pop-up books.
- A book reading during the school year, plus an appearance and reading at the annual Braham Pie Day festival the first Friday in August. Children read the books they have made.

The Braham Comprehensive Arts Planning Program budgets for this project, making it possible for teachers to keep it in their curriculum and bring in the outside presenters.

Contributed by Valorie Arrowsmith, Isanti County Historical Society.
Kids Yesterday and Today

Southwest Star Concept Elementary teachers Deb Mathias and Marless Milbrath developed a performance package for primary children that includes elements of inquiry, writing, speaking and people and cultures. The project gives children an opportunity to interview elders and then present what they have learned about children in earlier days. Teachers designed six tasks:
1. Prepare children to conduct interviews;
2. Children do interviews with community members who are at least 60 years old;
3. Children write reports based on the information they’ve gathered;
4. Children answer the same questions related to their own lives and write another report;
5. Children make a display that compares life “then and now”; and
6. Finally, children make an oral presentation based on data collected and displayed.

A “then and now” comparison provides many opportunities for children to work with folks in their communities. The first activity for Southwest Star students involves observing a local newspaper reporter in the process of conducting an interview. Children learn more about interviewing by asking the reporter questions, and then they create and publish a list of steps related to conducting interviews.

Southwest Star students then work together to develop a list of interview questions that will help them gain answers to the theme question — “How does the life of a child in the past compare to the life of a child today?” Each student then contacts an elder and sets up an interview time. As the interview takes place, a tape recorder collects both questions and answers.

Throughout the steps of this project, teachers use checklists to document children’s work. The checklist for the oral presentation indicates the high level of expectations held for primary levels students.

☐ The oral presentation represents the student’s opinion about life in the past versus life in the present.

☐ The oral presentation includes reasons and examples to support the student’s opinion.

☐ The oral presentation explains the answer to the original question — “How does the life of a child in the past compare with the life of a child today?”

☐ The student’s responses are appropriately related to questions asked.

☐ The reports, display and oral presentation describe how the life of a child has changed over time.

☐ The student’s voice quality is clear and volume is appropriate.

Contributed by Southwest Star Elementary School, Heron Lake, Minnesota.
Community Interaction Projects

Building a Community Center
K-2 students at Discovery Elementary, Buffalo, Minn., wrote a play as a way to encourage students to have a vision and then work together to obtain that vision.

Students brainstormed a list of the features of a community center. The features were divided into categories: basketball court, swimming pool, food court, exercise equipment and games area.

Students were divided into groups to make these community center features using cardboard boxes, paper or other free or cheap materials. The play itself featured the students sitting around with nothing to do. Then the students convince the community to build a center, and the students and parents work together to assemble the community center with the props the students created.

Community Visitors
A fifteen-minute period is set aside at Discovery Elementary, Buffalo, Minn., every Thursday morning when each classroom hosts a community member. The visitor reads a book and then tells the children why he or she selected that book.

Buffalo Storytellers
Thirty community members agreed to come to school to tell 10-minute stories about Buffalo to groups of up to six children. The children were grouped across classrooms, and each group rotated to four different storytellers. The students returned to their own classrooms and retold what they thought was the most memorable story. Afterward, some students and classrooms wrote Buffalo Storytellers books.

Save for America
Students at Discovery Elementary School have developed a partnership with a Buffalo bank through the Save For America program – an in-school savings program that is sponsored by local banks and run by volunteers.

Children bring their deposits – ranging from pennies to dollars – and bank at school before classes start one day each week. Student and parent volunteers have been trained to enter the deposits on a computer at Discovery Elementary, and money and data are carried to the bank for processing. Deposits are also registered in the students’ personal savings registers. Students may make deposits at school, but must go to the bank in order to withdraw funds from their accounts. Benefits for students include developing the habit of saving money and learning about the ways banks work.

Contributed by Discovery Elementary School, Buffalo, Minnesota.

Save for America has supplemental curriculum materials approved by the U. S. Department of Education as a national model. For information about how to start a Save for America program, go to www.saveforamerica.org.
Elders’ Wisdom, Children’s Song

Troubadour Larry Long has helped several Center for School Change sites – as well as sites throughout the United States – create celebrations of community and place. A residency with Larry Long gives students an opportunity to develop academic and social skills while honoring the lives of local elders.

In a process Long calls collective song writing, students interview an elder and then work with a transcript of the interview to create the theme for a song. Long works closely with the children and their teachers to develop words and music which celebrate the life of the elder, and then joins the children as they perform the song as part of a community event. Most community celebrations include children’s songs and narration about three or four elders as well as performances by local musicians or authors. One Minnesota celebration featured an auctioneer’s calls.

Some of the skills practiced by students during the course of a residency include:
• listening and observing,
• note taking,
• finding patterns, related topics and themes,
• asking probing questions,
• working well with others,
• working with rhyme, meter and rhythm, and finally,
• revising, refining and adding finishing touches in preparation for a performance.

Elders Wisdom, Children’s Song is a project of Community Celebration of Place, Inc. for which Larry Long is director. To learn more about Larry Long and Community Celebration of Place, note the following contact information.

Larry Long
Community Celebration of Place
Box 581601
Minneapolis, Minnesota 55458-1601
Phone – 612-722-9775
E-Mail – larryl@larrylong.org
Web Sites – www.larrylong.org
www.communitycelebration.org

Larry Long is a recipient of the Bush Artists Fellowship, the Pope John XXIII Award, and an In The Spirit Of Crazy Horse Award for his work in forgotten communities.
I'm A Logger, Loggin' Man
(Inspired by Oscar Bergstrom)

(C) Larry Long Publishing 1997/BMI

Verse 2:
Like my dad from overseas
A bow saw by the name of 'Swede'
Cut them logs, slid them down
(Chorus)

Verse 3:
With a dray, one cord of wood
With a jammer, doing good
Swing them logs onto a truck
Working hard to earn a buck
(Chorus)

Verse 4:
Chain them up into a boom
A 'cant hook' and 'pickeroon'
Drag them out onto the snow
(Chorus)

Verse 5:
A bull cook on a boat
A 'wannigan' that kept afloat
A 'pike pole', can’t go wrong
Food tastes best with your mittens on
(Chorus)

In October 1997, Larry Long spent a week working with elders and children from the Multiage Classroom at Falls Elementary School in International Falls, Minn. *Im a Logger, Loggin' Man* is based on the stories lifetime logger and entrepreneur Oscar Bergstrom shared with fourth grade students. This song and three others were part of a Friday evening celebration attended by families and community members.
Many Community People are Eager to Help Schools

In a March 1997 article for the Center for School Change newsletter, *Fine Print*, Joe Nathan urged readers to consider suggestions from community members who had worked with schools in their own communities. Here, in excerpts from the story, is advice from the field.

› **Remember that many senior citizens are open, and in some cases eager, to work with young children.**
  Shirley Ettestad (at that time outreach aide for the Koochiching County Retired and Senior Volunteer Program) explained that many communities or counties have people whose job is to find volunteer opportunities for senior citizens. Ettestad said schools should work with these volunteer coordinators who are pleased to help identify seniors who will work in various ways with students.

› **Consider people who traditionally have not been invited to make presentations at school.**
  Carlos and Mary Martinez described their successful efforts to involve Latinos in a community-based program at East Grand Forks Middle School. Mrs. Martinez said, “Many of the students didn't realize that Hispanics have lived in the Red River Valley for several generations. We are not just migrants.” By using her knowledge of the community, Martinez was able to identify people willing to talk with students.

  A second example came from Mark Hall, a glass artist based in Kasota, Minn., who had not worked with students before being contacted by Minnesota New Country School. Hall said he enjoyed showing students his craft and helping them understand the pleasures and challenges of making one’s living as an artist.

› **Recognize that some government agencies are very willing to be asked to cooperate with schools.**
  A fisheries area supervisor for the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources described a close collaboration between the DNR and Little Falls High School. Jim Lillenthal pointed out that government agencies have many resources, and he said the school/DNR collaboration helped students learn important scientific principles as they conducted valuable tests that might not have been done without students’ involvement.

› **Provide potential collaborators with options.**
  Shirley Ettestad pointed out that some senior citizens prefer to work with one student while others are comfortable working with a group. Some want to help with cooking while others are talented carvers or story tellers who want to help children learn about local history.

  Providing community groups with a list of different ways to collaborate means many more people will be able to help local schools.
Service-Learning

Service-learning is a lot more than an annual field trip to pick up trash in ditches. It is more than stuffing envelopes for a local charity; more than doing hours assigned by the courts in order to make up for bad behavior.

The quality that places the hyphen between service and learning is attention to both elements. In order to qualify as service-learning, work must have a benefit for the student as well as the community.

The National Commission on Service-Learning identifies several important qualities of service-learning connected to schools.¹

- Service-learning links community service to academic content and standards;
- It offers students opportunities to identify and meet real needs within the community;
- Service-learning benefits both the community and the student;
- As part of public education, service-learning provides a way to promote active citizenship;
- Service-learning is appropriate for all ages, not just high school or college students; and
- Service-learning can be used in any curriculum area.

The Power of Kids

Over the years, students at Center for School Change sites have been involved in a variety of activities that have enhanced their academic skills while providing valuable service to their communities. Students’ efforts have included projects such as:

- creating Web sites,
- providing instruction in use of technology,
- studying water quality and making reports to lake associations and government agencies,
- helping to design and create recreation trails,
- creating a local newspaper.

“Service-Learning is a particularly fertile way of involving young people in community service, because it ties helping others to what they are learning in the classroom. In the process, it provides a compelling answer to the perennial question: ‘Why do I need to learn this stuff?’”

Colin Powell
Founding Chairman
America’s Promise
• collecting stories from elders,
• and building planters, filling them with plants and distributing them throughout a small town.

The kinds of projects students have created have increased their problem-solving and teamwork skills along with their abilities to use math, to write and to speak. Their projects have also helped them understand that they have something valuable to contribute to the places where they live.

**Reflection is Important**

As Dan Conrad and Diane Hedin pointed out in a 1987 guide to creating service-learning programs, “Serious reflection is seldom the preferred activity of active young people.” Nonetheless, reflection is a key part of effective service-learning projects.

Some CSC projects require students to enter observations in journals or prepare presentations that may be shared with classmates and civic groups. Additional kinds of reflection include conferences with teachers or mentors, class meetings or even project parties. Sometimes reflection simply helps students understand what they have accomplished. Other times, it may enable them to plan more effective ways to approach problems in the future. As

Goodhue students help create a welcoming community by planting flowers near their school. Students also help maintain a nearby hiking trail.
Conrad and Hedin explained, Reflection is a skill, more accurately a cluster of skills, involving observation, asking questions, and putting facts, ideas and experiences together to add new meaning to them all. Learning to learn in this way, and instilling the practice as a habit, can allow program experiences to live on in the students’ lives in new experiences and new learning.¹

**Service-Learning Tools and Ideas**

Service-learning opportunities abound wherever learning in the community is an option. The project ideas in this chapter are just a few of the things that have been done by CSC sites, and the tools include forms that may be used by students and community members to reflect on the quality of service-learning experiences.


³Ibid., p. 40.

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**Web Sites**

Learn and Serve America supports service-learning programs across the United States through funding and training. [www.learnandserve.org](http://www.learnandserve.org)

The National Service Learning Clearinghouse provides a wealth of information and technical assistance. [www.servicelearning.org](http://www.servicelearning.org)

National Youth Leadership Council, a Minnesota-based organization that supports service-learning through conferences, publications and training programs for both adults and students. [www.nylc.org](http://www.nylc.org)

What Kids Can Do is a national nonprofit organization that documents projects involving young people in learning and public service. [www.whatkidscando.org](http://www.whatkidscando.org)
Student Evaluation of Work Site

Name ___________________________    Site ___________________________

The following list describes some possible features of a work experience. Please describe your particular experience by circling the appropriate number from one to five.

1. I have enough work to keep me busy.  
   Practically Never  |  Once in a Great While  |  Sometimes  |  Fairly Often  |  Very Often
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

2. What I do is interesting.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

3. I find my tasks challenging.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

4. I’m given enough training to do my tasks.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

5. I do things myself instead of just observing.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

6. I have adult responsibilities.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

7. I am learning things that will help me in my future employment or education.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

8. I am given clear directions.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

9. I have a variety of tasks to do at the site.  
   1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

10. Adults at site take a personal interest in me.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

11. I have freedom to develop and use my own ideas.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

12. I feel I am helping people or improving my community.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

13. My job is just busy work.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

14. I think the site is a safe place to work.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

15. I am appreciated when I do a good job.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

16. I get help when I need it.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

17. I discuss my experiences with my supervisor or co-workers.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

18. I feel I’m doing a good job at this site.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

19. I make important decisions.  
    1               |  2               |  3         |  4          |  5          

20. My overall rating of my placement at this point is (circle one):  
    Excellent        Good      Fair        Poor         Terrible

How To Set Up and Manage Mentorships

Students can learn and apply valuable academic and interpersonal skills while contributing to their communities in meaningful ways.

Here is a process for managing long term projects:

1. Individual students or teams of students design a project proposal based on their interests and research of community needs.

2. Student-elected officers lead meetings to review project proposals using parliamentary procedure.

3. In order for a project to be approved, student presenters must go before the parliament and discuss:
   • the location of the service learning site
   • the location site contact person
   • the projected outcomes of the project
   • skills that will be applied at the work site
   • graduation standards that will be met

4. When the project is approved, students send a professional business letter to the site contact requesting permission to implement their plans.

5. When the site contact agrees, a teacher meets with the site contact to review student expectations.

6. Sometimes the site contact interviews the student(s) before committing to the mentorship.

7. Students go to their site or work on their projects twice a week throughout the year. Some students work on more than one project.

8. The site contact evaluates student performance four times per year (page 73). Someone from the TFTF staff visits the project work site twice a month.

9. Students evaluate their project work site experience (page 70).

10. Parent/guardian permission forms are signed to address liability issues. Other appropriate parties sign off on a student and work site responsibilities form (page 72) and a talents and fund raiser form (used to identify resources to support projects).

Contributed by Sandra Weiser-Matthews, a Together for the Future staff member at Perham High School, Perham, Minnesota.
Student and Work Site Responsibilities

**Student Responsibilities**
- The student is to be present and on time each scheduled day, and will sign in and out with the instructor every day.

- The student will be prompt in carrying out duties, and will keep the work site supervisor informed of any problems that may develop during the time on site.

- The student understands that his/her work site supervisor will evaluate him/her from time to time and discuss progress with the instructor.

- The student and his/her parents are liable in the event of all accidents that take place on the way to or from the assigned work site.

- The undersigned will comply with the agreement according to the conditions set forth.

**Work Site Responsibilities**
- Work expected of students should focus on learning workplace skills.

- The instructor will be kept informed of all problems directly related to the student and the job.

- The work site supervisor will complete periodic evaluations of the student’s performance and attitude.

- The work site supervisor will provide all necessary safety equipment and training to the student.

*Either party may terminate this agreement for just cause. The instructor will be consulted before final action takes place.*

______________________________
Student’s Signature and Date

______________________________
Parent or Guardian’s Signature and Date

______________________________
Work Site Supervisor/Owner’s Signature and Date

______________________________
Instructor’s Signature and Date  Principal’s Signature and Date

Contributed by Together for the Future, Perham High School, Perham, Minnesota.
Service Learning Evaluation
(used by community mentors to evaluate students’ work)

Student ___________________________  Date ___________________________

Rater ___________________________  Agency ___________________________

Please rate this student on the following statements using this scale: 0 – no knowledge; 1 – strongly disagree; 2 – disagree; 3 – neutral; 4 – agree; 5 – strongly agree. Circle the appropriate response for each statement, and add comments if you wish.

1. Student attended all agreed upon sessions. 0 1 2 3 4 5

2. Student arrived on time and did not leave early. 0 1 2 3 4 5

3. Student demonstrated skill in performing designated tasks. 0 1 2 3 4 5

4. Student showed positive attitude toward the project and the people involved. 0 1 2 3 4 5

5. This experience had a positive impact on the student. 0 1 2 3 4 5

6. This student had a positive effect on the project. 0 1 2 3 4 5

7. Recommendations to student for involvement in future community-based projects:

Please return this form to ___________________________

Contributed by Together for the Future, Perham High School, Perham, Minnesota.
Working to Support the Community

Food Shelf
Students at Discovery Elementary, Buffalo, Minn., hold an annual food shelf drive. Each classroom works to collect a particular kind of food. Food items collected are organized, and students fill decorated grocery bags with a complete dinner for a family of five.

Silent Santa
This is a cooperative project between Wright County Social Services, Discovery Parents and Discovery Elementary students and staff members. Parents organize items for the classrooms to purchase. Students donate money in their classrooms for the Silent Santa project, the money is counted by the students, the students shop at school for the items they can afford, and the items are donated through Wright County Social Services.

Thermal Imaging Camera
When a local firefighter visited Discovery Elementary, the students learned about fires and fire safety. They also had an opportunity to look through a thermal imaging camera. The firefighter told the students about the fire department’s need to purchase a thermal imaging camera in order to help rescue fire victims. Discovery students decided to team up with the local fire department to raise money for the camera.

Students decided to cover the commons – a central meeting area in the school – with pennies. First, they covered a small area of the commons with pennies. They measured the area, counted the pennies and then estimated how many pennies it would take to cover the whole commons. That number became the collection goal.

Students and staff members collected pennies for one month. On the last day, students worked together to spread paper on the floor and then put the pennies on the paper. They accomplished their goal! The students’ collection was a success.

Later, the firefighter visited Discovery again to show the students the new camera and to help the students understand that people working together can make a difference.

Miltona Newspaper
Students in Miltona, Minn. created a newspaper for their small town. Children came up with story ideas, wrote and edited their work, provided pictures or illustrations to accompany stories and created the newspaper’s layout. The newspaper was printed at a local printing press, and students sold advertisements to local businesses to cover production costs. Finally, students distributed copies of the newspaper before starting the process once again.

Contributed by Discovery Elementary, Buffalo, Minnesota and Miltona Science Magnet, Miltona, Minnesota.
Environmental Education

So much happens outdoors — creeks run, birds migrate, trees and flowers grow. Some of the best that community-based education offers is available just outside classroom windows.

Several Center for School Change sites have used the environment as a theme for learning. In some places, students have helped to create butterfly gardens or nature study areas. Elementary students in Heron Lake, Minn. have created a grassy prairie restoration site while their counterparts across the state at North Shore Elementary study nature along a wooded trail.

In many areas, students do the real work of testing the water quality of rivers and lakes, often in partnership with lake associations, government agencies or organizations such as the Mississippi Headwaters Board.

For students in Kenyon-Wanamingo, work in outdoor settings includes study of effective agriculture practices and the rural landscape of southeast Minnesota.

Benefits for Students

In addition to capturing students’ interest, environmental study offers a vehicle to practice a number of academic and life skills. Benefits acknowledged by Center for School Change sites are in line with those...
listed by the State Education and Resource Roundtable. Environmental education provides practice in acquiring:

- General and disciplinary knowledge;
- Thinking and problem solving skills;
- Cooperation and interpersonal communications skills; and
- Understanding of and appreciation for the environment. \(^1\)

**Environmental Learning Ideas**

Ideas included on the next few pages are just a few of the environmental learning projects undertaken by students and teachers at Center for School Change sites. For additional ideas and support, check out the Web sites listed on this page or contact federal, state and local agencies — including parks — that deal with natural resources.

Recycling with Worms

Five classrooms at North Shore Elementary School set up worm bins to recycle lunchroom waste. The bins required peat moss, red wiggler worms and brown paper towels.

Each week, one classroom was responsible for collecting waste. Tasks included telling the student body which foods could be recycled in the worm bins, weighing the garbage and then feeding the bins in the classroom. It was a messy job, but one that everyone seemed to love!

Fruits, vegetables, coffee grounds and egg shells were good for recycling. In only six weeks, North Shore students recycled about 200 pounds of garbage and containers full of used brown paper towels — significantly reducing the amount of garbage the school sent to the landfill.

The project helped North Shore Elementary students develop useful skills related to data collection and observation, and led to other interesting projects too.

Students read in Horticulture Magazine that “worm juice” drained from the worm bins was richer in the three important nutrients for planting than the commercial fertilizer Miracle Grow. It was also a natural fertilizer rather than a chemical. The third grade class then began an experiment to find out if worm juice really was a superior fertilizer. They planted marigolds in three groups:

- Group One was watered with plain well water;
- Group Two was watered with worm juice and water; and
- Group Three was watered with Miracle Grow and water.

The project required measuring skills (metric), discussion about variables, collecting data and drawing a conclusion from the data (state standard requirements).

Students planted the marigolds in the school’s new greenhouse, which was built by community members. The community also supplied gardening supplies and a watering container, and some parents taught a sustainable agriculture class to the fifth graders. Each class watched the plants grow. It seemed the data showed no difference between the worm juice and the Miracle Grow, but some students noticed a difference related to where the plants were growing and the amount of sun the plants received.

What a great project with so many questions to follow up in later studies! The kids loved planting and being in a greenhouse environment. They felt that recycling had made a difference in their school community and they shared this information with other students. They even sold worm juice to help pay for greenhouse supplies.

Contributed by Judy Johnson, North Shore Elementary School, rural Duluth, Minnesota.
Environmental Study at North Shore

North Shore Elementary School follows an integrated approach to environmental learning using guidelines from Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning (EIC) which centers on the following ideas:

1. Learning will be interdisciplinary;
2. Team teaching will be encouraged;
3. Learning and teaching will be student-centered;
4. There will be opportunities for both individual and cooperative learning;
5. Instruction will be issue based;
6. The program will include authentic assessment; and
7. Learning will take place in the context of the community or natural environment.

The school’s large organizing question for 2000-01 was, “What can we learn from the interaction of community and the natural environment?” The question attempted to integrate environmental education across the curriculum.

Each grade level had one central question to study all year long. Findings were presented to the whole school community in the spring.

Kindergarten – “How are trees useful?”
- Foss Kit – Paper, Wood, Trees
- Adopt a Tree lesson during three seasons of the year
- Teach by using inquiry method of developing a question, collecting information, drawing conclusions and presenting findings
- Examine trees on the nature trail
- Lessons from Learning Tree study
- Service learning project

First Grade – “How do insects affect our environment?”
- Foss Kit – Insects
- How do insects change during the seasons?
- Inquiry method of discovery, scientific method and presentation
- Art – Students create pictures of their own insects
- Using field guides to identify insects found around our school
- Literature relevant to study
- Service learning project

Second Grade – “How can we get new plants?”
- Foss Kit – New Plants
- Use of at least three art forms to communicate ideas
- Inquiry method of discovery, asking questions, collecting data and presenting information
- Making new plants from collected seeds on the nature trail
- Service learning project
Third Grade – “Which watering system shows the best results, (tap water, worm juice, commercial fertilizer)?”
- Setting up an experiment with one variable
- Use of the greenhouse
- Math skills of measuring using the metric system
- Service learning project

Fourth Grade – “How do organisms in Schmidt Creek change during the season?”
- Inquiry method of discovery
- Direct observation of the creek
- Experiment, collecting data, making conclusions using data
- Foss Kit – Water
- Journal entries
- Note taking
- Cooperative groups
- Researching pond critters and using field guides for identification
- Nature walks and testing during the three seasons
- Poster evaluation shows cooperative group skills, artwork of topic, research of topic, hypothesis, data, graph and presenting conclusions
- Service learning project

Fifth Grade – “How does the soil around our building affect landscaping possibilities? What do we need to add to it to grow what we want?”
- Foss Kit – Landforms, Measurement
- Use of Soil and Water Conservation – exercise on soil identification using all of our senses
- Collect soil samples from different areas around the building
- Present findings to the school for landscaping around the building
- Service learning project

Sixth Grade – “How does the water in Schmidt Creek change as it runs through from its source to its mouth?”
- Inquiry method of discovery
- Foss Kits – Mixtures and Solutions, Measurement
- Use the metric system of measuring
- Map the nature trail
- Wolf Ridge water study and use of water testing equipment
- Interview people along the creek
- Use grade four’s organism study to help answer the question
- Connect to fishing
- Incorporate writing standard – opinion paper, narrative, technical writing
- Service learning project

Contributed by North Shore Elementary School, rural Duluth, Minnesota.

For additional information about Environment as an Integrating Context for Learning, visit the State Education and Environment Roundtable (SEER) Web site – www.seer.org.
Environmental Education Site

Tenth grade students and teachers in Yellow Medicine East’s Bio-Comm (Biology–Communications) class restored and now maintain a 40-acre environmental site called Prairie Smoke Nature Center. It is a place of study for students and a recreational area for residents who enjoy walking the trails. The site is full of mammals, birds, reptiles and prairie plants native to the area.

Students created all of the trails, plant identification signs, a field guide, wooden park benches, bird houses and bird feeders. Students also developed on-site lessons for elementary children, and they host visiting classes and an Environthon competition for junior high students. The Environthon tests teams in the areas of wildlife, aquatics, forestry, wetlands and current environmental issues and topics.

Bio-Comm students were awarded grant money for the addition of paved trails, a vault toilet, a storage facility and aerial pictures of the site. Students use a Powerpoint presentation and brochures to share Prairie Smoke with other schools, service organizations and the general public.

Teacher Stacy Hinz enthusiastically points out that “all types of students thrive” from an integrated, hands-on approach to learning. While making their community a better place, students also develop academic and personal best life skills. Character education is an important part of the Bio-Comm curriculum.

Hinz says work in Bio-Comm has many benefits for kids that keep them interested in learning. Students see themselves as valued members of the decision-making process, and they learn leadership skills, how to communicate well and the importance of perseverance. She adds, “Kids view school differently when they get to link to real world applications.”

Contributed by Yellow Medicine East High School, Granite Falls, Minnesota.

The Community Voices and Character Education curriculum developed by Dr. Darcia Narvaez at the University of Minnesota, is incorporated in Bio-Comm. Areas of focus include ethical judgment, ethical motivation, ethical sensitivity and ethical action. A CD that contains information about curriculum materials is available, at no charge, through the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning.
Students as Entrepreneurs

Schools and communities have many resources to offer one another. In the fields of business education and economic development, opportunities are limited only by imagination.

Among Center for School Change sites, students working with adult advisors have:

- Developed a bike sales and repair shop
- Established a printing business
- Built and operated a student union and snack shop
- Operated school stores in both elementary and secondary locations
- Invented new flavors of sausage
- Built and operated an ice cream store
- Created Web sites
- Built and sold fish houses
- Raised goats for wool
- Promoted a dee jay and music service
- Used electronic embroidery software to create and embroider designs on clothing
- Provided catering for school and community gatherings
- Performed diagnostic water testing
- Operated a grocery store
- Built adaptive furniture for individuals with special needs

Some businesses continue for years, while others — either by design or because of lagging interest — are short lived. In either case, businesses give students wonderful opportunities to combine research and critical thinking skills with creativity and hands-on work.

When it comes to school business experiences, it is important to remember that success is not measured as much in making a profit as in helping students learn. It is not appropriate to develop projects that simply use students as cheap labor.

Web Sites

The Consortium for Entrepreneurship Education, Columbus, Ohio, has information about curriculum materials and resources related to entrepreneurial education. www.entre-ed.org

Heartland Center, Lincoln, Nebraska, offers Schools as Entrepreneurs: Helping Small Towns Survive. www.heartlandcenter.info

Real Enterprises provides entrepreneurship education and training curricula. www.realenterprises.org
Types of Businesses

Student-related businesses tend to fall into one of two categories — school-based and stand-alone.

School-based businesses such as school stores offer students opportunities to learn about business development without the element of competition that exists in the community. Usually, there is no rent involved, and no need for a lot of start-up funds. Most often, students do not earn wages, but locations within school buildings encourage the participation of many students and teachers from a variety of subject areas.

Stand-alone businesses provide students with experiences related to real competition and management of funds. In addition to dealing with inventory, students also need to pay expenses such as rent and salaries, so making a profit becomes critical.

Business Strategies

Items on the following pages illustrate the ways a few elementary and secondary schools have used entrepreneurship to promote learning. Also included is advice for those considering entrepreneurship programs.

Recommended Reading

Students as Entrepreneurs: Building Academic Skills and Strengthening Local Economies, Center for School Change, Minneapolis, Minn., 1995.

Entrepreneurial Spirit Leads the Way in Houston, Minnesota

Community members, students, school administrators and teachers in Houston, Minn. have developed an interesting and effective approach to student entrepreneurship through two businesses that involve students as board members and workers.

The first venture to become a reality was ClassCycle Bikes, a bike sales, repair and rental shop that began in the high school and eventually moved to a downtown location. Since the Root River State Trail runs through town, the bike shop offers a service that is appealing to both local residents and visitors who are biking through the area.

Houston's second business venture is PrintWorks, Inc. a full-service printing business that has clients within the school, community and county. Currently located in a portion of Houston Secondary School, PrintWorks was created with assistance from the Initiative Fund of Southeastern Minnesota, the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning and the Center for Reducing Rural Violence.

One feature that sets ClassCycle Bikes and PrintWorks apart from many student businesses is the fact that they have been established as nonprofit corporations responsible for their own operation. Both businesses are supervised by full-time professionals, but governed by independent boards of directors which include students and adults.

Houston students receive credit toward graduation for their work in the school businesses, and may also earn credit for work on independent study projects related to the companies. Students register for work just as they would for any other class.

Because the companies employ an adult full time, they are able to stay open during summers. Students earn wages for summer work.
Fish House Project

Every fall, students and teachers at Miltona Science Magnet School look forward to starting the Fish House Project. The project involves many phases and skills, helps raise funds for special class activities and is lots of fun. The fish house, ready just in time for ice fishing, is raffled off. An approximate profit of $5,000 is made each year.

A multiage group of fifth and sixth graders is divided into committees that take responsibility for specific tasks:

- **Lumberyard and Design** – Students meet with a lumberyard and design professional to draw up blueprints and obtain a cost estimate for materials.

- **Trailer** – This committee communicates with the design committee and then meets with a blacksmith to design a trailer for the fish house.

- **Public Relations** – Students make contacts with television and newspaper outlets to advertise and help folks in the community learn about the project. This group also sets up work schedules and makes calls for parent volunteers.

- **Accounting** – Students sign for a loan at the local bank and keep track of the budget and raffle ticket sales.

- **Interior Design** – Committee members make contacts and purchase carpet, a stove, paneling and other interior items.

On six different evenings, in the workshop of a parent volunteer, groups of students, teachers and parents gather to build the fish house. Although parents do much of the major construction (using power saws, building rafters, etc.), the students are able to put in screws to hold the flooring in place, measure and nail siding and watch the overall construction process take place.

The Miltona Volunteer Fire Department helps out by making sure the raffle for the completed fish house is in accordance with charitable gambling guidelines, and students sell tickets for the raffle.

Teachers Eric Amundson and Jeff Dewanz say:

> When all is said and done, we make a $5,000 profit! The greatest benefit of the project is not the money, but a feeling of pride and accomplishment that comes with knowing what a big job we’ve done. The project is a source of pride for our small community as well. Looking at the overall picture of the project, we realize how many real life skills are used: communication, teamwork, dependability, measuring, hard work, cooperation, organization and the list goes on.

Contributed by Miltona Science Magnet School, Miltona, Minnesota.
Making Sausage

Miltona’s multiage classrooms of fifth and sixth graders teamed up with a local locker plant and went into the sausage business. They started by visiting with a local businessman, Greg Johnson, who gave the students a tour of his meat locker and showed them the kinds of things that take place there on a daily basis. After that, the students did some taste testing and research about various types of sausage so they would have background knowledge to use when they invented their own line of sausage.

First, students were divided into five groups. Each came up with its own line of sausage, including such flavors as potato, chili cheese, pepperoni, Italian and a regular country sausage.

To enhance the opportunity to team with a local business, the students actually went to the locker to make their sausages. They ground the pork, put in the seasonings then stuffed and hung the sausages.

The next step was to see which flavor would be marketed. Over 100 people attended an all-school taste testing night. Fifth and sixth graders were the workers, and teachers Eric Amundson and Jeff Dewanz say the students were “extremely proud of their accomplishments.” The winning sausage flavor turned out to be chili cheese.

Students made and packaged large quantities of the chili cheese sausage, and then went out and sold their product. Some students even went to the locker and worked a few Saturdays selling their creation. A sample was entered in a sausage contest, and the students won a third place trophy which is now on display at the school.

Miltona teachers point out that the sausage project provided many valuable lessons for the students:

- Curricular areas were imbedded in the project.
- Students saw uses for skills learned in the classroom.
- Students collected data, created a marketing plan and sold enough sausage to make a profit.

One of the teachers commented that the project was a highlight of the year for the children. In addition, he said, it was “a great connection that tied the community of Miltona to the learning that takes place within the walls of the school building.”

Contributed by Miltona Science Magnet School, Miltona, Minnesota.
Students as Entrepreneurs

Teachers involved in the Students as Entrepreneurs project first gathered in summer 1999 for a workshop about implementing school-based businesses. Training was provided by instructors from REAL Enterprises, Inc., and was sponsored by the Center for School Change, the Minnesota Department of Children, Families and Learning Office of Lifework Development and University of Minnesota Extension. Participants were invited from nineteen sites, although not all chose to attend. Some of the sites were given small grants to support projects while others received training only.

Between June 2000 and March 2001, several individuals who had taken part in the original training participated in one or more of three follow-up sessions. Topics covered a range of questions and included discussions and advice based on the experiences of those who showed up. During the final meeting, participants generated the following ideas about student entrepreneurship programs based on their own experiences.

Assets Created Through Student Entrepreneurship Programs

- Students gain real-life, hands-on experiences which may give them an advantage when they approach future work.
- Students learn from mentors.
- Students acquire skills, including self-esteem and social skills.
- Projects offer opportunities for recognition within the school, community and state (often for kids who don’t traditionally get it).
- School offers a safe environment in which students may take risks.
- Projects offer connections with the community which benefit the school.
- Student businesses are not canned classroom exercises.
- Projects reflect students’ work. They provide a form of authentic assessment.
- Entrepreneurship develops students’ leadership skills and lets their talents shine.
- Teachers get to work with kids outside usual classes.
- Teachers stretch to try something new.
- Projects allow teachers to use skills developed before they became teachers.
- Students apply real-world applications.
- School happens out of the building. Everyone benefits.
- Projects help erase stereotypes about low-income and minority youth.
- Entrepreneurship programs provide purposeful learning.
- Each student is an individual.
- Community and students learn together and celebrate successes.
- Entrepreneurship provides “another avenue” for learning.
Obstacles to Maintaining Effective Entrepreneurship Programs

- There are many details to cover.
- There may be a high turnover of students. It is sometimes difficult to retain student leaders.
- Maintaining student interest can be difficult.
  - When learning is high, kids are interested.
  - It is important to maintain real-life value.
- There is limited time for teachers, yet there are multiple responsibilities.
- There is limited time for students to be involved.
- If focus is lost, it degrades the integrity of the project.
- Sometimes it is difficult to translate work to school credit.
- Low expectations about kids can impede progress.
  - There is a need to help folks recognize that kids can do valuable things.
  - There is a need to help folks realize the value of projects.
- Uncontrollable factors sometimes get in the way of progress.
- Sometimes, supporters may have different expectations. Be selective in accepting partners.
- A shortage of venture capital can hinder project development.

Advice from Students as Entrepreneurs Participants

- Listen to everyone’s advice. If necessary, agree to disagree.
- Make the project part of the curriculum.
- Commitment from administrators regarding time to work during the normal work day is critical.
- Look at student-generated ideas, including ideas from younger kids.
- Integrate curriculum at developmentally appropriate levels.
- Decide early how much risk (how many mistakes) your project can tolerate. How many mistakes will the leader allow?
- Do midpoint assessments.
- Be willing to make changes.
- Assess funder’s (s’) expectations up front.
- See what’s in place within the community to support kids’ ideas.
- When problems occur, present them to participants and let them work on solutions.
- It’s always “we” not “I.” Make it the kids’ project.
- If you’re a 9-5 person, DON’T GET INVOLVED!
- If you can’t tolerate failure, DON’T GET INVOLVED!

Contributors included: Keven Kroehler, Minnesota New Country School (Henderson); Kathy Ferrin, Mora High School; Rod Martel, Chiron Middle School (Minneapolis); Marlys Krenz, Wheaton Area High School; Najib Schlosstein, Bluffview Montessori School (Winona); Carlos Gallego, Carver County Extension (Waconia); and Vicki Nelson, Center for School Change.
Starting and Managing a School Store

Warren-Alvarado-Oslo students in grades 9–12 have learned important entrepreneurial skills in starting up, managing and maintaining their WOA Wearhouse school store.

The WAO Wearhouse started out in a storage closet and now has a prominent place in the high school with its own structure. It is well stocked with merchandise ranging from WAO Ponies athletic wear, school supplies, student edited cookbooks, stuffed animals, blankets and fresh baked Otis Spunkmeyer cookies every day. When the store opens, crowds of students gather to make their purchases. Students also created and built a store on wheels that resembles the kind of vendor carts seen in shopping malls and amusement parks.

Teachers Sharon Nelson and Mary Stanislowksi caution other planners not to expect changes overnight. They did at first and got frustrated. They regrouped, did some research, visited other school stores and learned from experienced students and teachers. Training in REAL (Rural Entrepreneurship through Action Learning) gave them the confidence and tools they needed to nurture essential skills in young entrepreneurs. Determination helped them to not lose sight of their goals, and now they say, “Oh, we really have accomplished a lot!”

WOA Wearhouse student manager Chris Novak says he appreciates the practical experience he’s received from running the school store. Vanesa Chandler agrees and says that learning by doing is much better than only reading about something in a book. Peter Sedgeman, one of the original students involved in planning the school store, believes that his experience has guided his decision to pursue a business degree in college.

**A Few Entrepreneurship Projects from Phase I CSC Sites**

**Little Falls Aqua-Tech** provides affordable diagnostic water testing to organizations concerned with Minnesota’s water resources. Aqua Tech is an education outreach service of the Minnesota Fishing Museum and Education Center which works with Little Falls High School’s on-the-job training program. Aqua-Tech is an outgrowth and expansion of the Little Falls River Watch program started in the early 1990s. Little Falls High School received Phase I CSC funding to support interdisciplinary programs.

**B.O.L.T. Enterprises** manufactures, bottles and distributes three flavors of Prairie Smoke Bar-B-Que Sauce. Students at Westbrook-Walnut Grove High School, Westbrook, Minn., started with a recipe shared by a school board member, and have developed two additional flavors. The business celebrated its sixth anniversary in May 2002.

Founded in 1998, **Railway Catering** provides food service for the community of Proctor, Minn. In addition to preparing food for special orders, the business operates the Railstop Cafe in the lobby of Proctor Senior High School. Students stop by the cafe for healthy after school snacks. With no other catering service in town, the business has no competition. Proctor High School received Phase I CSC funding for a variety of projects through which students provided valuable services to the community. Proctor students also build houses with Habitat for Humanity, and operate a chore service.

Projects at Minnesota New Country School, Henderson, Minn. include **Dreamer Designs**, a business in which students create designs and do machine embroidery. In addition to planning and doing many kinds of work, students pay bills, meet with customers and prepare quarterly reports.
Guidelines for School Business Success

In 1998, the Northwest Minnesota Foundation, Bemidji, Minn., decided to take a look at the work it had been doing in the area of youth entrepreneurship. With the help of an independent evaluator, the organization reflected upon information related to several projects it had funded. Projects fell into three basic groups: planning and development of youth entrepreneurship activities, school-based businesses and stand-alone community businesses.

The following guidelines, based on evaluation of projects, were included in a March 2000 issue of the Center for School Change newsletter Fine Print. Information is reprinted with permission of the Northwest Minnesota Foundation.

- Careful planning is critical. Not only does planning help set the groundwork for successful businesses, sometimes it can help students avoid projects that may be too ambitious or risky.

- Successful projects have limited human and financial risk. They do not require intensive management oversight and do not begin with large debt. Projects not meeting this limited risk test are likely to fail.

- Projects should not require a high level of ownership in order to succeed. While the rhetoric used is real life business, these are still school projects implemented within a learning environment.

- Someone with real life business experience should be part of the project; and teachers responsible for entrepreneurial projects should have business experience or take business start-up classes. It is not reasonable to expect a faculty member, whose knowledge is based in theory rather than practical experience, to accept the burden for maintaining a stand-alone community business.

- The community should be informed about any project to be implemented — especially stand-alone businesses — along with the risks involved. Doing so will limit negative publicity if a business fails. Bad publicity can further deflate those who have struggled to provide a learning opportunity for students.

- The type of business a school chooses to start must be realistic given the level of resources available.

- Schools should note that much of the learning that takes place in student businesses happens during the time when students analyze the market and develop a business plan. It is sometimes difficult to maintain students’ interest in a project year after year. While learning the functions of an ongoing business has merit, it is not the same experience as developing a business from the ground up.
You can do it!

Rural areas are well-positioned to make effective changes in the ways schools and townspeople work together. Small size, informal communication systems and people who play multiple roles in the community help to make things happen. Each place seems to find its own best route to change, but the critical element that shows up again and again in successful projects is a shared commitment to make a collective vision a reality. While it may be easiest to get started in small places, valuable partnerships can form in any community where people are willing to join forces.

Community members, parents and teachers consider options during a planning meeting.

Recommended Reading


How to Start Planning

Beginning steps are key to effective and thoughtful planning. While it may be tempting to rush ahead, take time to get your plan off to a good start.

1. Assemble a team.
   - Decide how your group wants to be identified. The naming of the group may be as general as steering committee, planning team or advisory group. Or the title might be more personalized and creative to reflect your group’s unique characteristics.
   - Seek a balanced representation of 10 to 25 participants who are affiliated with the school (faculty, administrators and school board members), students, parents and community members. Invite people who represent a broad range of support.
   - Establish a mailing list and an efficient way to communicate with team members about upcoming meetings.
   - Share information and progress with other individuals who are not team members, but whose support is critical. For example, inform the local parent/teacher organization, school board and other staff members who are not directly involved.

2. Research the past. It is important to understand events that have affected your school and community in the past in order to help plan for the future.
   - Identify community milestones, school milestones and how they’ve affected one another.
   - Consult as many resources as possible, including local elders and historians.
   - Give planners a chance to share and celebrate what makes them most proud of their school and community.

To eliminate barriers that may prevent townspeople from coming to schools for meetings, consider getting together in public spaces such as restaurants and community centers. Meeting in a place other than the school — even in someone’s home — encourages all team members to check titles and assumptions at the door and come to the table as equals.
3. Define the present.
   • Research demographics to develop a community profile.
   • Identify critical needs and challenges of the school and community.
   • Identify strengths and assets of the school and community.
   • Identify resources the school and community have to offer one another.
   • Identify ways students are involved in improving the community.
   • Consider the role and impact of education in the community and the role and impact of the community in education.
   • Listen to planners’ dreams and hopes for the future of their school and community.

4. Explore opportunities.
   • Visit and learn about other schools and projects.
   • Gather as many perspectives as possible.

5. Focus on priorities.
   • Determine what makes the most sense for your school and community.
   • Determine what the proposed change(s) will accomplish.
   • Develop themes or concepts for your school or project.

Elements of a Community Profile
- Population trends
- Ethnicity percentages
- Population diversity by age
- Per capita income
- Unemployment rate
- Major employers and industry
- School district information
- Housing and recreation

Throughout the planning process, involve students in gathering and sharing information with the committee. These are great opportunities for students to develop research, interviewing and presentation skills.
Create a Plan for Action

1. Develop a work plan.
   • Identify and state the outcomes first, and then make a plan for meeting them. What needs to be done?
   • Develop a time line. Who will do what by when (see action plan template on page 136)?

2. Identify and secure necessary financial support.
   • Reallocate funds to support plan if needed.
   • Research new funding sources to support plan.

3. Prepare an effective evaluation component.
   • How will you know if your goals are met?
   • How will you measure the results of your plan (see Chapter 8)?

4. Develop a communication plan.
   • Use internal and external communication mechanisms that might include a school or district newsletter and local media.
   • Establish a positive relationship with local editors and news managers (see Chapter 7).

5. Check the likelihood for success.
   • Does the plan meet the needs of students and the community?
   • Are all staff members up-to-date on the plan?
   • Does the plan have the approval and support of administrators and community members?
   • Are the necessary funds and resources available to support the plan?
   • Can the plan work in this school and community?

How to Survive the Change Process

1. Focus on some short term items.
   • Choose some areas to work on for early success.
Thoughtful Planning for Change

• Concentrate on a few things rather than too many.

2. Celebrate!
   • Recognize planning accomplishments and achievements along the way.
   • Have fun together as a team.

3. Nurture and maintain supportive relationships.
   • The planning team or steering committee should continue to meet in a way that allows meaningful participation.
   • Replace members as needed to maintain balanced representation.
   • Select a team listener or mediator to handle conflict within, or outside of, the group.
   • Keep people informed and up-to-date with developments.
   • Maintain a mailing list for supporters who are not directly involved.

4. Continue to evaluate, plan and improve changes.
   • Make modifications where necessary.
   • Determine who will continue the management phase.

5. Avoid burnout.
   • Share leadership and involve new people.
   • When discouraged, celebrate the positive things you have done!

“Staff, parents, board members and senior citizens all came together in committees to make decisions that formed our school. These committees still meet as needed to continue to make the decisions required to keep our school running and successful. Our school is a gathering place for the community and a source of community pride.”

Staff Member
Southwest Star Concept School
Heron Lake, Minn.

The Mississippi Horizons School steering committee, Brainerd, Minn., meets four times per year. The committee reviews survey data, sets and monitors goals based on survey results and celebrates each year’s accomplishments with a summer luncheon meeting.
Planning a Meeting

Here are a few things to think about when organizing meetings.

First,
• Is a meeting necessary?
• Are there other ways to accomplish what needs to be done?
• What are the consequences of not having a meeting?

If a meeting is in order, consider the following items.

Content – What is the task?
• What is the primary purpose of this meeting?

• How should people feel at the conclusion of the meeting?

Process – How do we accomplish the task?
• What is the best way to approach the content of the meeting?

• What materials are needed?

Style – What environment will assure success?
• Where will we have the meeting?

• When is a good time to have the meeting?

• What is the best format?

• Who will lead the meeting, and who will take notes?
Sample Mini Retreat Agenda
(two hours, ten minutes)

Purpose – Celebrate, Dream, Reflect and Plan

Opening – 15 minutes
Review participants’ expectations for the meeting. Adjust the agenda if necessary. Then try to stick to items and times established.

Introductory question for each participant: *If you had an extra thousand dollars that you could spend on the school, what would you buy?*

Celebrate – 15 minutes
Share what makes you most proud of your school and community.

Dream – 30 minutes
In the best of all worlds, how would you like your school to be?
What would it look like?
What do you most want to provide for your students?

Break – 10 minutes

Reflect – 20 minutes
Based on your dreams, identify and rank three priorities.

Plan – 30 minutes
Create an action plan for each priority. It may be helpful to divide participants into small groups.
- What steps will be necessary?
- What obstacles need to be overcome?
- What opportunities exist to help overcome obstacles?
- Who will be responsible?
- Establish a time line.
- If you use small groups, share plans with the large group.

Closing – 10 minutes
Identify dates, times and places for future meetings.
Adjourn.
# Action Plan

Name of Project ___________________________   Date ____________

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Priority -</th>
<th>Obstacles -</th>
<th>Opportunities -</th>
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<th>Key Steps</th>
<th>Who's Responsible?</th>
<th>Target Date</th>
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Schools and Communities Working Together
Chapter Seven

Effective Communication

Sharing stories with students, parents, project planners and the general public is an ongoing challenge for groups involved in school change. Good communication is always an asset.

There are four basic reasons why it is important to publicize information about your project:
• to develop support in the school and community;
• to advertise for individuals willing to help with planning;
• to educate the public about the project; and, finally,
• to seek families and students who may want to enroll.

It is absolutely necessary to maintain open communication about what you hope to accomplish and how you plan to measure it. Remember, too, that there are many ways to convey information. Informal conversations shared over coffee and cookies may be as critical to your communications plan as carefully planned articles and presentations.

When you're ready to communicate, try a variety of formats — letters, school publications, community and regional newspapers, commercial and public radio and television, your own newsletters, Web sites and presentations to groups. If you feel timid about asking for time or space to provide information about your project, remember that the worst that can happen will be that a person in charge will
reply, “No!” If you get a no, take a deep breath and move on.

**General Communications Guidelines**

As part of the community planning process, take time to develop a communications plan that will serve both the school district and the community. This applies to charter school developers as well as groups creating projects within traditional school districts. Plan to educate the public about your project monthly through meetings, mailings and other means. Appoint a public information person who will be sure the communications plan is carried out, and remember to save copies of newspaper stories and other print materials in a scrapbook — both for fun and for reference later on.

**When working with reporters...**

Courtesy goes a long way, but persistence, patience and careful preparation are helpful too. Here are a few ideas to consider as you work with newspaper, radio and television staff members.

- If you’re planning an event, get in touch with reporters well ahead of time. Usually, a reporter needs more than a day or two to fit you into a busy schedule. In addition, your news item should be submitted long enough in advance to make it useful to the public.

- Prepare by listening to local radio stations, reading newspapers and watching television. Make requests for coverage that are in line with the formats used.

- Don’t wait for reporters to come to you. Seek their help.

- Be persistent. If an event doesn’t get covered, don’t be discouraged.

- Always return reporters’ calls the same day.

- Be brief. Get to the point immediately.

- Be honest. Never say, “No comment.” Do say, “I don’t know,” or offer to get back to the reporter. If you don’t make an effort to be forthright, the
reporter may seek information from someone else — possibly someone who does not favor your project.

• Whenever possible, have evidence to support your comments. Also, give credit when you use someone else’s comment or idea.

• Respect deadlines and meet them.

• News releases and photos should always be newsworthy. Material should never be old.

• When submitting photos, include the names of individuals pictured — preferably listed from left to right as they appear, with names typed or printed legibly. Be sure that photos are clear and interesting.

• If you’re working within a school district, check with the district public information specialist. He or she may be willing to help with news releases, stories and making good contacts.

• Always keep the needs of busy media professionals in mind. Be nice. Be clear. Say “thanks.” And never whine!

**Just the Facts**

Like other worthwhile endeavors that require investments of time and soul, school change projects are often complicated by personal interpretations. To encourage clear communication, planners should agree on a list of facts that accurately describe the project. Fact sheets may be distributed to the public or used by group members to ensure that everyone provides the same information to reporters and community members.

**News Releases**

A few years ago, public relations expert Jeanne Kling, a former member of the Minnesota State Board of Education and a radio professional, offered helpful advice to participants at a Center for School Change workshop. “The more trouble it is for you,” she said, “the easier it is for the media.”

Kling indicated that spending time on careful prepa-
Sample News Release

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
March 3, 2003

CONTACT Jane Doe
Traditional School Project
12345 Country Road
Somewhere, MN 55000
Phone – 555-555-5555
Fax – 555-555-5554
E-mail – jdoe@cscmail.net

Year-round facility welcomes school-within-a-school

Be sure the first paragraph is newsworthy.

Somewhere, Minn. — Beginning in the 2003-04 school year, Harmony School, a grades five through eight year-round school, will include an optional program for students and families who prefer to follow a nine-month calendar.

The school-within-a-school, Harmony Nine, will be located in four classrooms, and will share use of Harmony School’s media center, music room, commons and playground area.

Harmony Nine will include two fifth grade and two sixth grade classes that operate much like other elementary classrooms within the Somewhere School District. Each student will have his or her own desk and locker space. Special education services will be provided, and phy ed, music and art specialists will work with students on a weekly schedule. Students interested in band will be included in the Harmony School band for fifth and sixth graders.

Harmony administrator Sally Green said the year-round staff looks forward to working with the teachers, students and parents who will be part of the new school-within-a-school. “We are excited about offering families a choice of programs at one site,” she explained.

Harmony School opened in a large part of a renovated warehouse at 111 West Main Street in August 1995. The school currently shares space with a daycare center that will move to another site to allow room for the new school-within-a-school.

Green said Somewhere School District will provide information meetings and registration materials for families interested in the new school-within-a-school beginning with an open house at Harmony School from 3 to 7 p.m. April 1.

###

Try to keep news releases to one page.
ration of news releases may increase the likelihood that your material will be used by busy editors and reporters. For some publications, a well-written news release may be printed as is.

News releases should be brief, factual and attention getting. You may use them to announce meetings or celebrations, as a record of events or to draw attention to other news that is worth sharing with your community. As you prepare news releases, consider the following:

- Capture the reader’s interest in the headline and the first few words of the release. If a busy editor hasn’t found something newsworthy by the end of the first paragraph, it is possible that the rest of the story will never be read.

- News releases should include a publication date at the top of the page. Unless there is a reason to hold the story until a later time, indicate that the story is “for immediate release.”

- Include contact information. Make it very easy for writers to gather additional information if they are interested.

- Separate the headline from the rest of the copy, and put it in bold or large letters.

- Keep the first paragraph short — under 35 words if possible. Large blocks of type sometimes discourage readers.

- Use inverted pyramid form. Put the most important information at the beginning of the news release and add details later.

- Write for your audience. Think about the people you want to read your story, and include information they will want to know.

- Make your news release easy to read by using short, simple sentences.

- Check for errors. Make sure your news release is perfect. Mistakes in punctuation, grammar and spelling take attention away from the content of...
the news release. In articles related to education and schools, errors are especially unforgivable.

- If you include photos, provide a caption and the name of the photographer. Also be aware of the necessity of getting permission from parents or guardians before submitting pictures of children.

Elementary school students from Miltona, Minn. work on a newspaper they prepare for distribution in their rural community.

Radio and Television Interviews
Working effectively with radio and television professionals requires the same basic elements as working with all reporters — especially honesty and courtesy. Since both radio and television tend to feature short bits of information, however, it is important to get to the point quickly and to use lively, interesting words. A heartwarming story about your project is likely to get more attention than a long list of facts and figures.

As you get ready for a radio or television interview, take a little time to think about the questions the reporter is likely to ask, and prepare answers based on the kinds of information people in the community will need to know. If the interviewer is interested, you may want to suggest questions that will bring out the kind of information you want people to hear. If you are going to be interviewed for television, here are some additional things to consider:
• If you have questions, ask the director before the show begins;

• Dress as you would for a day in an office. Avoid clothing that will distract viewers and heavy jewelry that may be noisy or reflect light;

• For the most part, look at the interviewer rather than the camera, and use the reporter’s first name;

• Don’t fidget;

• Assume that any microphone is on; and

• Don’t get up to leave until it is clear that you are no longer on the air.

Robert Gunning’s Fog Index is one way of analyzing written material to see how easy it is to read and comprehend. Here is how it works.

1. Select a portion of writing that is at least one hundred words long.

2. Count the number of words. To find the average length of sentences, divide the number of words by the number of sentences.

3. Count the number of large words — words that have three syllables or more — but do not include proper nouns, compound words made up of easy words or verbs that include “es” or “ed” as a third syllable.

4. Add the numbers that stand for the average sentence length and the number of large words.

5. Multiply the total from step 4 by .4. The result is the sample’s Fog Index.

For the sample above, 128 (words) divided by 8 (sentences) = 16 (words per sentence). The number of large words is 6. 16+6 = 22, and 22 x .4 = 8.8 — approximately a ninth grade reading level. An ideal level for most readers is 8. When the Fog Index is above 12, the material may be too difficult for many readers.

NOTE: The Gunning Fog Index is not an absolute tool. Generally, the formula comes up with a somewhat higher reading level than the index included in Microsoft Word software. Its lesson, however, is that using shorter sentences and smaller words can make written material easier to read.
**Designing Brochures**

Brochures are especially helpful when it is time to recruit students or build interest in a project. Brochures can be slick and colorful or very simple, but, like fact sheets, they provide a way to distribute accurate, agreed upon information.

At a summer 1998 workshop for Center for School Change sites, Beth George, director of university relations at the University of Wisconsin-Superior, offered general advice about designing brochures. She suggested that planners ask themselves several questions before starting work on brochures:

- What do we want to say, and is a brochure the best way to communicate our message?
- What are our expectations for quality? Will the brochure be one color or more; be photocopied or taken to a printer? Will it include photos?
- Who is the audience?
- How will brochures be delivered to the audience? Will they be mailed, hand-delivered or set out on a rack? Who will make sure that distribution happens?
- Does the budget for the brochure support our expectations for quality?
- What is our timeline? What is the printer’s timeline?
- Who is responsible for writing, editing, taking photographs and assembling the brochure?
- Are tools available (a computer, software, copiers, digital cameras, etc.) to create the kind of quality that meets our expectations, and is someone available who knows how to use these tools?

If, after considering all of these questions, a brochure seems like a good idea, take time to consider copy. Begin by thinking about the audience and the kinds of things readers need to know about your project.
Likely topics, according to George, include:

- A description of your project. Use language that is easy to read. Avoid acronyms and long sentences.

- Benefits of the project. This may be the most important message.

- Who is involved, or who may be contacted if the reader needs additional information.

- A description of what the reader should do — send money, sign up, volunteer, visit, etc. Without some idea about what to do next, readers will probably do nothing.

Finally, when using photos, be sure the quality is very good. If photos are blurry, leave them out!

Easy guides for a three-panel brochure on 8.5 x 11 paper include:

- Top, bottom margins – .5 inches
- Column width – 3 inches
- Inside and outside margins – .3 inches
- Alley width – .67 inches
**Information Meetings Checklist**

Open houses and meetings are wonderful ways to share information with people who are interested in a school change project. Nearly all of the Center for School Change grant sites had one or more meetings for parents and students — often just ahead of deadlines for registration. Some projects continue to have annual information meetings.

To help a meeting run smoothly, consider the following suggestions.

- Set a date as early as possible, but first check school and community calendars for possible conflicts such as sports, concerts or regularly scheduled church activities. It is best to hold information meetings at a time when parents and students are most likely to attend.

- Select a place for the meeting, and be sure to reserve it. Public buildings maintain reservation lists.

- If you need equipment such as microphones or projectors, check on its availability and reserve it well ahead of the meeting.

- Publicize the meeting in a variety of ways. If you can afford newspaper or radio ads, consider buying them. In addition, supply news releases to local media two weeks ahead of the meeting. Announce the meeting in school newsletters if they are available, and in newsletters of friendly organizations. Recruit volunteers who will make phone calls or send announcements through e-mail.

- Prepare handouts such as fact sheets or brochures and bring adequate copies to the meeting. If the meeting is organized to encourage students to enroll in a school option, be sure to have sufficient registration forms on hand.

- Arrive early to turn on lights, check out the sound system and make sure chairs are in place. If there are problems, it helps to find out long before the audience arrives.
If there are questions from the audience for which you do not have answers, offer a way to share the information as soon as it is available. For example, participants might leave questions and their phone numbers in a question box near the door.

Begin and end the meeting on time. If there are questions, offer to stay after the meeting with those who wish, but allow a few minutes for others to leave at the designated ending time.

Chapter Eight

Measuring Progress

When the Center for School Change requested proposals for school improvement projects, guidelines were clear. The Center was looking for projects that could show — over a period of time — increases in three areas:

• measurable improvements in students’ academic skills;
• curriculum that involves students in study of local history and community issues; and
• more extensive local use of school buildings, equipment and expertise of educators.

With those goals in mind, the Center asked grant sites to use a variety of measures including standardized tests, performance assessments, logs and surveys — whatever worked — to gauge progress.

Measuring progress was sometimes an unpopular requirement. After all, folks involved in school change projects tended to be working as hard and fast as they could to keep up with innovations in curriculum and day-to-day classroom tasks. Tests and surveys took time away from good work teachers and students preferred to be doing, and sometimes it was difficult to find an instrument that measured a specific goal.

“Isn’t it enough,” some asked, “that we can see improvements in the ways our students are working?”
Why We Measure

From a school change standpoint, there are two basic reasons to measure progress toward goals. First, assessment helps projects be accountable. Second, good measures provide a means of establishing guidelines for further improvement.

Beyond meeting the requirements of funders, school change planners must consider the needs of students, parents and the communities in which the projects are taking place. Periodic assessment helps answer the questions: “What have students learned?” and “Is this program worthwhile?”

At the same time, results from a variety of measures can help planners guide and redirect programs. If wonderful plans do not produce good results for children, programs need to be adjusted. On the other hand, if something works very well, teachers need to understand why so they can continue and build upon the work.

Start with Goals

Center for School Change sites confirm that effective measures do not come about after the fact. They are based on carefully designed project goals and built into school improvement plans.

Early in the planning process, CSC sites were encouraged to gather hopes and dreams. They were asked to look ahead five years and consider:

• What will be different for students?
• What will be different for teachers?
• What will be different for parents and community members?

Answers varied with circumstances and locations, but in many places these questions helped planners develop concrete goals that guided their planning. By considering what the results of their work might be, planners were able to picture the indicators that would be measures of their success.

Well-written goals go beyond abstract statements. While “More students will work with adults in the community,” is an admirable idea, a more effective goal is “There will be a 20 percent increase in the number of students who take part

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Recommended Reading

in job shadowing experiences.”

In order to promote purposeful change, goals should be specific, achievable and measurable.

Finally, a few may be more important than a bunch when it comes to setting goals. While it is helpful to create different kinds of goals, both academic and nonacademic, the experience of Center for School Change sites has been that goals are most likely to be nurtured, measured and achieved when planners focus on a few at a time.

**Defining Measures**

The best kinds of measures are designed with several questions in mind:

- What information is needed?
- Who is going to use the information gathered?
- How will the information be used?

For the Center for School Change and its sites, what included results from standardized tests, information related to students’ performances on skills such as speaking or writing, portfolios, exhibitions and surveys of students, parents and teachers. Some schools monitored use of school buildings or kept logs of volunteer hours. In most cases, preliminary information was gathered, and measures were repeated on an annual basis.

Who included Center for School Change staff members, independent evaluators and local planners.

How varied from user to user. CSC staff members referred to results in reports and articles. Evaluators used results as evidence of the effectiveness of Center for School Change work. And grant sites passed information along to parents, administrators and school board members. Some sites used results to support the need for programs or to prompt revisions in the ways they carried out their work.

**A Mix of Measures**

Determining the kinds of measures to use may not be a simple task.

State and nationally normed tests do a relatively good job when it comes to comparing students’
Features of Effective Academic Assessment Programs

A Center for School Change report, supported by funding from the U.S. Department of Education and issued in December 2000, lists several features critical to effective academic assessment. Included are:

- **Clear Goals** — Clear, explicit measurable learning goals, outcomes or standards, along with a curriculum designed to help students reach the goals.

- **Outcomes Understood** — Teachers, parents, students and community members understand and support the expected outcomes and goals. Students and parents have examples of what is required, and have opportunities to work with teachers toward improving students’ performance.

- **Multiple Measures** — The school uses many methods of assessment, not just standardized multiple choice tests.

- **Assessment Is Part of an Integrated Approach to School Improvement** — Assessment is used not just for ranking or sorting, but to modify instruction and suggest areas for staff development.

- **Language Proficiency** — Assessment takes students’ language proficiency into account to assure that the system actually measures what students know.

- **All Students Are Assessed** — The school reports on the academic growth of all of its students.

- **Outside People Help Judge Student Work** — Assessment may include community experts, parents or others willing to review students’ work.

- **Assessment Measures Graduates** — Attitudes of people who have graduated from the school are valued.

- **Assessment Committee Includes a Variety of People** — Parents, educators, community members and — in secondary schools — students can help plan and monitor the assessment system.

progress in reading, language, math and social studies skills with that of other students of a similar age. In order to demonstrate students’ abilities in core subject areas, standardized tests can be a valuable part of an assessment program.

CSC project planners often pointed out, however, that multiple choice standardized tests do not measure the kinds of skills students learn when working in groups or spending time out in the community. Beyond that, standardized tests may not indicate a student’s ability to put knowledge to practical use. For those reasons, many sites developed assessments that required students to perform tasks rather than pick out test answers. In some cases, schools recruited community members to help teachers and other staff members judge the quality of students’ work based on a predetermined set of guidelines.

While creating and evaluating performance assessments requires more staff time than monitoring standardized tests, the results indicate how well students are able to apply their knowledge and skills. For that reason, the Center for School Change asked sites to use both standardized and performance assessments to monitor students’ progress.

**Baseline Data**
Once measures have been designed, it is important to collect baseline data — either before a project starts or very shortly after it begins. Without preliminary information, there is no basis for comparison and no way to prove that a project is meeting its goals.

**Assign Tasks**
It takes more than good intentions to ensure effective evaluation. In addition to selecting measures, be sure to give someone responsibility for purchasing tests, setting up schedules and distributing surveys. Without someone in charge, measurement and evaluation tasks may be lost in the scramble to keep up with daily work. Sample evaluation plans are included on pages 155 – 156.

**Survey Samples**
In addition to an assessment plan, this chapter includes surveys used by Phase II CSC sites to
measure attitudes of students, parents, teachers and administrators. These surveys (pages 157 – 165) document items such as the school’s interaction with the community, students’ sense of safety and types of parent involvement. Another survey (pages 102 – 103) was created by teachers and community members from International Falls, along with Allison Anfinson of the Center for Reducing Rural Violence, to measure student behavior. Like all other materials in this book, the surveys may be copied and modified to meet readers’ needs.
## Sample Evaluation Overview

Purpose: Measures will indicate: satisfaction of parents, students and teachers; kinds of parent involvement; sense of community involvement; academic measures.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Task</th>
<th>When</th>
<th>Who Does</th>
<th>Who Compiles</th>
<th>Who Analyzes and Reports</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Surveys of Parents</td>
<td>Baseline – first fall</td>
<td>All parents</td>
<td>Parent or community volunteer</td>
<td>Principal, advisory committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual in May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys of Students</td>
<td>Baseline – first fall</td>
<td>All students</td>
<td>Parent or community volunteer</td>
<td>Principal, advisory committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual in May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Surveys of Teachers</td>
<td>Baseline – first fall</td>
<td>All teachers</td>
<td>Parent or community volunteer</td>
<td>Principal, advisory committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Annual in May</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interviews of Five</td>
<td>Annual in May</td>
<td>Advisory com.</td>
<td>Advisory committee</td>
<td>Principal, advisory committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Community Contacts</td>
<td>member</td>
<td>member</td>
<td>member</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Volunteer Sign-In Log</td>
<td>Continuous</td>
<td>All volunteers</td>
<td>Parent or community volunteer</td>
<td>Principal, advisory committee, parents’ group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Academic Measures</td>
<td>Annually</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>Outside source</td>
<td>Principal, advisory committee, teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- MCAs (Minnesota Comprehensive Achievement tests) to grades 3 and 5, as scheduled
- ITBS to grades 2 – 5, fall
- Writing samples to prompts in grades 3 – 5, September and May
- Student portfolios – all grades, continuous

Plan will be reviewed by principal, advisory committee and teachers each year. Last updated May 1, 2002.
## Sample Evaluation Plan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Academic Goal</th>
<th>Standard</th>
<th>Growth</th>
<th>What will be used to measure our progress?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Students will read and perform mathematics at grade level as measured by the SAT-9.</td>
<td>By the end of the third year, at least 50 percent of the fourth and fifth grade students will be performing at or above the 50th percentile in reading and mathematics where the distribution of scores will be similar to the national population.</td>
<td>Each year, students on average will make at least one year’s growth in reading and mathematics.</td>
<td>Stanford Achievement Test – Ninth Edition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will demonstrate increased presentation skills and knowledge in the sciences.</td>
<td>At least three-fourths of fourth and fifth grade students will achieve a score of excellent on their science exhibitions using a well-defined rubric.</td>
<td>For both grade levels, the average score on science exhibitions will increase significantly each semester.</td>
<td>A well-defined teacher rubric aligned with the curriculum.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students will perform at or above statewide averages on the Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments.</td>
<td>Each year, fifth grade students will perform at or above statewide averages in reading, mathematics and writing.</td>
<td>The percent of fifth grade students scoring at or above Level II will increase each year.</td>
<td>Minnesota Comprehensive Assessments</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Administrator Survey

Name of Project ________________________________ Date ________________

Please answer the questions below. Elaborate where appropriate.

1. Do you feel safe and respected when you are in the school?

2. What indication do you have that students are valuable resources in the community?

3. In what ways are school staff members valuable resources in the community?

4. In what ways are parents and community members involved in educating students outside the classroom?

5. How are parents and community members involved in educating students within the classroom?

6. In what ways does the community make use of school facilities?

7. How do you encourage and continue to support innovations in local schools?

8. How do educators, parents, students and other community members work together to strengthen the community and increase student achievement?

9. Do you feel that this school helps students to use the community as a place to learn?

10. What aspects of the school do you especially like?

11. If you could make changes to improve this school, what would they be?
Teacher Survey

Please circle one response for questions 1–7, and write brief answers for questions 8–10.

1. Parents and community members are involved in educating students in my classroom.
   Always        Often        Sometimes        Rarely        Never

2. Parents help their children with school projects outside school.
   Always        Often        Sometimes        Rarely        Never

3. Community members volunteer time and resources outside the classroom to help educate students.
   Always        Often        Sometimes        Rarely        Never

4. Administrators encourage and continue to support innovations in our school.
   Always        Often        Sometimes        Rarely        Never

5. I feel I have the support of colleagues.
   Always        Often        Sometimes        Rarely        Never

6. I enjoy teaching in our school.
   Always        Often        Sometimes        Rarely        Never

7. Educators, parents, students, and other community members work together to strengthen our community and increase student achievement.
   Always        Often        Sometimes        Rarely        Never

Please respond to 8–10 on the back of this sheet or on a separate piece of paper.

8. How do parents and community members use the school and school staff as resources?

9. What do you do to help yourself become a better teacher?

10. If you could make improvements in your school, what would they be?
Parent Survey

Please circle one response for questions 1–6, and write brief answers for questions 7–10.

1. Parents are encouraged to take part in educating students in the classroom.
   Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

2. I am involved with my child’s education.
   Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

   Please indicate the ways you participate. Mark all that apply.
   ___ Attending workshops, using materials provided by the school
   ___ Conferences, phone calls, visiting or exchanging notes with teachers
   ___ Volunteer work in the school or classroom
   ___ Helping with homework or doing family activities which support learning
   ___ Participation in PTA/PTO or school committees
   ___ Through support of other activities such as music lessons, sports, scouting
   ___ Other (please describe)

3. Community members volunteer time and resources in and outside the classroom to help educate students.
   Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

4. Administrators encourage and continue to support innovations in our school.
   Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

5. I am enthusiastic about this school.
   Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

6. Parents, educators, students, and other community members work together as a team to strengthen our community and increase student achievement.
   Always  Often  Sometimes  Rarely  Never

Please respond to 7–10 on the back of this sheet or on a separate piece of paper.

7. How does your school encourage your child to learn about the local community?

8. Do you use the school and school staff members as resources? If so, how?

9. What aspects of your child’s school or classroom do you especially like?

10. If you could make improvements in your child’s school, what would they be?

Secondary Student Survey

Please circle one response for each statement.

1. I am happy with the quality of work I do in school.
   Yes        No        Sometimes

2. The things I learn in school are useful to me.
   Yes        No        Sometimes

3. My school provides learning experiences outside the school building.
   Yes        No

4. Community members volunteer time and resources to help me learn.
   In the classroom?   Yes        No
   Outside the classroom?   Yes        No

5. Parents volunteer time and resources to help me learn.
   In the classroom?   Yes        No
   Outside the classroom?   Yes        No

6. My school has helped me understand how to improve my community.
   Yes        No

7. I do things which help my school and/or community.
   Often        Occasionally        Never

8. When I am an adult, I would like to live in this community or one similar to it.
   Yes        No        Maybe
9. How do you feel about going to school? Please circle one response.

I like school very much.
I like school quite a bit.
I like school a little.
I don't like school very much.
I hate school.

10. During the last 30 days, how often have you skipped or cut full days of school?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>6 to 10 times</th>
<th>Once or twice</th>
<th>More than 10 times</th>
<th>3 to 5 times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

11. During the last 30 days, how many days did you not go to school because you felt you would be unsafe at school or on a school bus?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Frequency</th>
<th>Never</th>
<th>6 to 10 times</th>
<th>Once or twice</th>
<th>More than 10 times</th>
<th>3 to 5 times</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

12. How many students in your school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A few</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are friendly?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Behave well in the hallways and lunchroom?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make fun of or threaten students of different races or backgrounds?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

13. How many of your teachers

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Question</th>
<th>All</th>
<th>Most</th>
<th>Some</th>
<th>A few</th>
<th>None</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Are interested in you as a person?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Show respect for students?</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Elementary Student Survey – Grades 3–6

Please circle one response for each statement in questions 1–10.

1. I am happy with the quality of work I do in school.
   Always       Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

2. I feel safe in school.
   Always       Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

3. I feel safe going to and from school (walking or on the bus).
   Always       Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

4. When I have questions, I know it’s OK to ask them.
   Always       Often       Sometimes       Rarely       Never

5. Sometimes my class learns outside our school building. We take trips or visit places in our town.
   Yes          No

6. People from the community come to our class to help us learn.
   Yes          No

7. Parents come to our class to help us learn.
   Yes          No

8. My school has helped me understand how to improve my community.
   Yes          No
9. I do things which help my school and community.
   Yes  No

10. How do you feel about going to school? Please circle one response.
   I like school very much.
   I like school quite a bit.
   I like school a little.
   I don't like school very much.
   I hate school.

11. How many students in your school
   Are friendly?  All  Most  Some  A few  None
   Behave well in the hallways and lunchroom?  All  Most  Some  A few  None
   Make fun of other students?  All  Most  Some  A few  None
   Behave well on the playground?  All  Most  Some  A few  None

Please write brief answers to the following questions.

12. What are the things you especially like about your school?

13. What would make your school a better place?
Elementary Student Survey – Grades K–2

Please circle one answer for each statement.

1. I am happy with the quality of work I do in school.
   Yes  No

2. I feel safe in school.
   Yes  No

3. I feel safe going to and from school (walking or on the bus).
   Yes  No

4. When I have questions, I know it’s OK to ask them.
   Yes  No

5. Sometimes, my class learns outside our school building. We take trips or visit places in our town.
   Yes  No

6. People from the community come to our class to help us learn.
   Yes  No

7. Parents come to our class to help us learn.
   Yes  No

8. My school has helped me understand how to improve my community.
   Yes  No
9. I do things which help my school and community.

   Yes   No

10. How do you feel about going to school? Please circle one response.

   I like school very much.
   I like school quite a bit.
   I like school a little.
   I don't like school very much.
   I hate school.

11. How many students in your school

   Are friendly?             All   Most   Some   A few   None
   Behave well in the hallways and lunchroom?   All   Most   Some   A few   None
   Make fun of other students?             All   Most   Some   A few   None
   Behave well on the playground?             All   Most   Some   A few   None
Center for School Change Staff Members Actively Involved with Rural Programs Between 1990 and 2002

Terri Anderson, Outreach Coordinator (1997 ...)
  Sara Cannon, Secretary (2002 ...)
  Cosy Conyers, Secretary (1999–2000)
  Sue Finnegan, Secretary (1991–1995)
  Deb Hare, Associate Director (1998 ...)
  Martha Hardy, Secretary (2000–2001)
  Jerry Langley-Ripka, Secretary (1995–1999)
  Joe Nathan, Director (1990 ...)
  Cathy Neuman, Outreach Coordinator (1991–1997)
  Betty Radcliffe, Program Associate (1990–1998)
  Doug Thomas, Outreach Coordinator (1991–2001)
Our thanks go to a number of individuals and organizations who have contributed to the Center for School Change and the development of this book.

**Program Assistance**

On behalf of CSC, we recognize the many folks throughout Minnesota who served on advisory committees and as readers of Center for School Change grant proposals. Their time and expertise helped a small staff understand a state’s worth of issues and contributed to the selection of the sites recognized in this book. In addition, we appreciate the participation of a number of local and state agencies and organizations that supplied expertise and financial support to CSC schools. Although we had no formal work plan together, we enjoyed sharing sites with staff members from the former School Nature Area Project, and we acknowledge grants made to several CSC sites by the Center for Reducing Rural Violence.

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Help with the Book

Several individuals contributed time and expertise to the development of this book. Julie Igo, who we first met as a member of the North Shore Elementary School planning committee, shared her editing skills, and Elaine Salinas contributed thoughtful advice based on reading an early version of the manuscript. Participants in two workshops sponsored by the Rural School and Community Trust offered encouragement when we seemed to need it most.

John Kelly, a retired teacher and World War II veteran who now volunteers time at North Shore Elementary School near Duluth, created the colorful drawings used on the cover and throughout the book. We appreciate his good humor and willingness to keep working until we all agreed that we had the right collection of illustrations.

Photo Credits

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Page 75 – John Kohlstedt
Page 83 – Chuck Smith
Page 129 – Vicki Nelson
Page 142 – Miltona Science Magnet
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Finally, our thanks go to our husbands, Virgil Nelson and Mark Rothschadl, who shared our cheer on days when work on the book project was going well and endured our misery on days when it was not. The next time one of them asks, “Is it finished yet?” we will be happy to respond, “YES!”
Bibliography


Strengthening Your School and Community in Partnership with the Center for School Change (a handbook for grantees). Minneapolis: The Center for School Change, 1996.