

Preface

This volume combines the research and observations of Joy Dryfoos, a long-time tracker of youth development programs and a strong advocate for full-service community schools across the country, and the day-to-day experiences of principal Sue Maguire of Molly Stark Elementary School, an emerging full-service community school in Bennington, Vermont. In a unique dialogue from complementary perspectives, the coauthors expose readers to a new approach to educational reform. This book has a strong bias: We hope to convince you to use these community school concepts to create public schools that will be able to meet the demands of our complex 21st-century society.

Community schools differ from traditional schools because they are open all the time as neighborhood hubs, operated through partnerships with community agencies, and designed to provide on-site support services to children and families. Educational enrichment is offered in the context of overcoming social and economic barriers to learning. Youth development and community involvement are important components. Around the country, many different models for incorporating these concepts have been advanced. It is important at the outset to state the basic idea: Remove burdens from schools by building partnerships.

This book begins with some background on the different paths we took to come to the same conclusion: Full-service community schools are an important solution to the problems confronted by many children, families, and their schools today. In Chapter 1, we go into detail about why schools and community agencies need to change the way they operate and bring community stakeholders together. We show that the diverse designs of full-service community schools are responsive to the growing list of barriers confronting children and families. Chapter 2 starts with a brief review of the various models of community schools that have been promulgated largely from the bottom up. The chapter goes on to present some planning concepts used to develop the programs around the country, and Sue Maguire describes how she went about planning the transformation of her school.

In Chapter 3, we present material about the numerous services and programs that can be offered in full-service community schools during the school day, including primary health and mental health services, family resource cen-

ters, preschool programs, high school programs, and some one-of-a-kind components that are found in selected community schools. We learn about the Molly Stark Family Center's experience with child care, dental services, parent programs, and other health and social service components within the school. After-school programs are presented in Chapter 4, with particular emphasis on the significant federal program—21st Century Community Learning Centers—which has greatly expanded the field. A number of state and local efforts are described, along with Molly Stark's extensive offerings in after-school enrichment and mentoring.

Chapter 5 looks at the special requirements of community school staffing, with emphasis on the important leadership roles of principals and the new category of community school coordinators. Consideration is also given to the use of youth workers in school settings and the importance of universities in developing more cross-disciplinary curricula to prepare educators, social workers, psychologists, and others to work across domains. In Chapter 6, we turn to a discussion of governance and the challenges that result from mixing school administrations with community-based agencies. How do you organize relationships between stakeholders so that someone is in charge and everyone has a voice in decision making? Many different approaches are reviewed along with the experience at Molly Stark, where the school is the lead agency.

In this book, we emphasize the "people factor" throughout, encouraging broader thinking on roles parents can play in schools. Chapter 7 shows ways that parents can be brought on board and reviews exemplary parent programs around the country. Evaluation research cited in Chapter 8 presents evidence that community schools can positively impact educational, health, and social outcomes. Data from Molly Stark document improvements in educational and behavioral outcomes that may be attributable to the transformation of the school.

We do not downplay the barriers to implementing these models, acknowledging in Chapter 9 that many issues, such as time, space, turf, maintenance, confidentiality, and replication difficulties, must be resolved to create a new and well-functioning school-community institution. At Molly Stark, the greatest concern is sustainability: Where is the financial support going to come from to keep programs like theirs up and running? As we show in Chapter 10, the financial picture is complex. Typically, these kinds of school-community partnerships rely on a mix of national, state, local, public, nonprofit, and private resources that must be combined under one roof. Molly Stark reports tapping 18 different sources of funds in 2000–2001 in addition to the usual public education funding that every school receives. Several bills have been introduced in Congress that would integrate public funds at the federal level and give grants to states and communities to plan and implement comprehensive full-service community schools, but these potential acts are still tied up in committees. Many foundations support this work and intend to continue to do so.

We conclude in Chapter 11 with practical suggestions for advancing the movement toward community schools at the national, state, and local levels. We

are upbeat about the future of community schools, given the potential success of these programs, the resources identified here that could be used, and the action building around furthering these models through state and local community school initiatives and the Coalition for Community Schools.

The appendixes contain various survey forms, program materials, and job descriptions from Molly Stark that will be useful to anyone planning or implementing a school-community partnership program. The Resources section has a selected list of organizations, with e-mail addresses and Web sites, that provides a starting point for gathering further information. The many books, articles, and Web sites referenced throughout the book provide a wealth of background on all of the subjects covered. One major caveat: We have tried to present the most recent information available, but in this era of uncertainty, with massive budget cuts and changing political fortunes, we may have failed to capture all the latest news.

We hope the audience for this book is very wide. Of course, we hope to influence educators to consider community school concepts as significant components of school reform. Because one of the authors is a principal herself, principals throughout the country should find some comfort in her experience. We have emphasized the challenges and difficulties, but it should be clear from Sue's story just how rewarding it is to see a school fill up with partners who are willing to help administrators overcome the critical problems they face in this era of testing obsessions and fiscal tightness.

Teachers and other school personnel, as well as school board members and superintendents, will also be interested to learn about how partnerships can benefit their classrooms and their schools. It is essential that they understand that the full services do not come from educational budgets. All kinds of categorical funds—for example, money for prevention of drug abuse, pregnancy, and violence—can be redirected toward more comprehensive programs. Community-based agencies of all kinds also have an enormous stake in the future of education. Health and social agencies will learn how they can relocate their services into school buildings. Youth agencies like Boys and Girls Clubs, Big Brother/Big Sister, Y's, and 4H Clubs will learn how they can become providers of after-school programs in schools.

Mayors and county executives, governors and state commissioners, and public administrators at every level are becoming increasingly involved in school-community planning efforts. United Ways, Local Education Funds, community planning agencies, and youth bureaus are being called upon to lead community-wide planning groups that apply for grants to develop full-service community schools. Universities are being asked to revise their curricula to actively participate in school transformation efforts; this book will be useful in an array of college courses, including educational administration, community relations, and school-community partnerships.

Finally, we hope that this book will be read by the people who should make the decisions: the general public, parents and grandparents, and the youth themselves. Parent demand for responsive schools and strong community involvement is the moving force in school reform.

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Joy Dryfoos

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Sue Maguire

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