

***Building Home, School,
Community Partnerships:
The Planning Phase***

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First printing November 1995

This publication is based on work sponsored wholly, or in part, by the Office of Educational Research and Improvement, U.S. Department of Education, under Contract Number RP91002003. The content of this publication does not necessarily reflect the views of OERI, the Department, or any other agency of the U.S. Government.

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Preface

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) exists to challenge, support, and enrich educational systems in providing quality education for all learners, enabling them to lead productive and fulfilling lives in an ever-changing, increasingly interconnected world. A private, non-profit corporation, SEDL has served for more than 29 years as a federally designated Regional Educational Laboratory (REL). SEDL's current REL operations serve the states of Arkansas, Louisiana, New Mexico, Oklahoma, and Texas. The REL operates with funds from the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Educational Research and Improvement. SEDL provides training and technical assistance, creates and fosters educational networks, conducts applied research studies, and produces research- and practice-based materials.

This volume is the first in a series of booklets developed by SEDL's Home, School, and Community Partnerships (HSCP) Project. This booklet focuses on the planning phase of building HSC Partnerships and is based on technical assistance provided at five sites (see Appendix A). Two other booklets are being developed in this series: *Building Home, School, and Community Partnerships: The Role of the Neutral Facilitator*, and *Building Home, School, and Community Partnerships: Charting Progress Toward Collaboration*. The HSCP Project also produces an annual *Directory of Home, School, and Community Partnership Programs* and participates in networking activities to advance collaboration at the state and local levels.

Our deepest appreciation goes to our many partners at the five demonstration sites. They are listed by name along with brief site profiles in Appendix B. Together we learned and grew in our understanding and practice of collaboration. The partners gave generously of their time and expertise, and demonstrated their strong commitment to children and families. It was a very moving experience to share in the process of growth and change undertaken at each of these sites. Thank you for allowing us to be part of those experiences.

We also want to thank Gwen Chance and members of the Texas Head Start Collaboration Project who helped us learn about state and local connections to support collaboration; Veronica Tomalik Rivisto who was a member of our original technical assistance team; and our colleagues at SEDL who infused our work with new ideas about policy issues, leadership practices, and other concerns that affect collaboration at the local level.

Special thanks go to Artie Stockton, Lonne Parent, and Lori Foradory at SEDL for their editorial and production assistance.

"Collaboration must be based on a community-wide process that is locally generated and includes broad citizen involvement"- (Kirst, 1991)

Introduction

Background

Collaboration that involves the home (parents and other family members), school (teachers, school administrators, and other educators), and community (health and human service providers, business representatives, and other community members) has been heralded as an effective way to reform and improve services for children and families (U. S. Department of Education, 1994). When all of these players work together to enhance services for children and families, the undertaking is often new and very complex.

Studies suggest that undertaking a planning phase before implementing collaborative activities is an effective way to build the intensive relationships that a successful collaboration requires (Mattessich and Monsey, 1992). Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL) used this approach in its field work, using a neutral facilitator to guide the partnership through the planning phase with five demonstration sites in the Southwestern Region.

The planning phase of partnership formation is frequently referred to as the "formation stage"; and its activities are often referred to as "preformation activities." Kagan (1991) asserts that the formation stage is one that shapes all future stages of a collaborative partnership. Kagan suggests that a group must successfully pass through this initial stage of a collaborative partnership before it will be ready to implement its program.

Research findings are clear about the importance of allowing sufficient time for the planning phase of a collaborative effort. Morrill, Reisner, Chimarine, and Marks (1991), in their study of collaborative efforts to integrate services for children and families, found that these efforts required considerable planning time: 12 to 18 months was usual, two years was not surprising, and less than six months was not sufficient.

Key Concepts

Three concepts guide the planning phase described in this booklet: home, school, and community partnership, collaboration, and neutral facilitator. The following paragraphs describe these three concepts.

Home, School, and Community Partnership (HSCP)

SEDL's working definition of an HSC Partnership is:

An effort that involves families, school staff, and community representatives as equal partners working interdependently to plan,

implement, and assess: (a) coordinated comprehensive services (educational, social welfare, health, mental health), and/or (b) academic support services (tutoring, training, and mentoring) to increase children's school success and improve the functioning of their families and communities.

The planning phase of HSC Partnership development offers opportunities for diverse individuals to suspend traditional roles so they may learn about and appreciate their differences and similarities. Widespread representation keeps partners in touch with the community's values, culture, history, needs, strengths, and aspirations. The needs of young children and their families provide the common ground from which HSC partners explore ways to create new and strengthen existing linkages in the community.

Benefits of an HSC Partnership

Builds a shared vision among families, school staff, and community representatives regarding the community's strengths and weaknesses

Identifies opportunities for addressing priority concerns

Suspends traditional roles so that new collaborative relationships can be developed that reflect mutual trust, respect, and understanding

Builds a broad base of support for change

Develops ongoing mechanisms for sharing information among partners and key decision makers in the community

Identifies opportunities for sharing resources and participating in joint activities

Collaboration

The aim of the planning phase is to determine how HSC partners will collaborate to address specific health, social, educational, and other needs in their communities. A body of literature defines and discusses collaboration in the context of improving the delivery of educational and human services to children and families. Mattessich and Monsey (1992) present the following working definition.

Collaboration is a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations to achieve common goals. The relationship includes a commitment to: a definition of mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure and shared responsibility; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards.

Collaboration is distinguished from *cooperation* and *coordination* by the extent to which partners "...establish common goals and agree to use their personal and institutional power to achieve them." (Melaville, Blank, and Asayesh, 1993, 15). When partners collaborate, they share resources, power, and authority, to achieve goals which could not be achieved independently (Kagan, 1991). *Coordination* involves mutual goals and some shared resources. However, when organizations coordinate, they maintain their independence (Kagan, 1991). *Cooperation* is an informal relationship between organizations; members maintain their autonomy and the cooperating group does not have its own defined structure (Kagan, 1991). Field experience suggests that if true collaboration is the aim of the partnership, then the group must invest time and effort in developing the skills and relationships necessary to work collaboratively.

Benefits of Collaboration

- Develops shared resources, power, and authority among two or more organizations.
- Achieves goals which members could not achieve independently.
- Improves the delivery of educational and human services.

Neutral Facilitator

Field experience and research findings suggest that the technical assistance provided by a neutral facilitator enhances an HSC Partnership's work together. The neutral facilitator ensures that home, school, and community representatives participate equally in the partnership and that their diverse perspectives are honored. Initially, the facilitator also may lead meetings and prepare written summaries that capture the partnership's progress.

Because the neutral facilitator keeps the partnership's focus on shared concerns about children and families, working relationships strengthen among partners. The neutral facilitator actively seeks opportunities for partners to practice collaborative problem solving and build consensus as they identify their desired outcomes for children and families. The neutral facilitator also encourages partners to reflect on their progress and to keep decision makers abreast of the partnership's work. Clearly, assistance from a neutral facilitator enables HSC Partnerships to complete the planning phase of partnership development successfully and more easily. (For more information on the role of the neutral facilitator, see *Building Home, School, and Community Partnerships: The Role of the Neutral Facilitator* enclosed with this publication.)

Benefits of a Neutral Facilitator

Guides activities that are sensitive to the needs of the partnership

Models respect for diversity

Gauges the readiness of partners to move forward

Develops a safe environment for risk taking and change

Reflects with partners on their progress and stumbling blocks

Builds consensus among partners with conflicting perspectives

Stages and Strategies of HSC Partnership Development

Many researchers have described partnership development as a series of stages or phases (for example, Melaville, Blank, and Asayesh, 1993). SEDL has drawn on this research and on its field experience to develop a framework for the planning phase of HSC Partnership development. This framework consists of the four stages through which partnerships usually pass during a period of between 12 and 18 months. Below is a brief description of the four stages and their expected outcomes.

Stage 1: Initiating the Partnership

Potential partners reflect on their diverse backgrounds, roles, education, etc., and begin to develop respect for each other's differences. They develop an accurate, complete picture of the community's strengths, weaknesses, and concerns. They understand and value the key concepts of parent involvement and HSC Partnership, and explore what these might mean for their community.

Stage 2: Building the Partnership

Potential partners develop a shared understanding of the gaps in existing services and resources, and a preliminary sense of their common concerns. They demonstrate a willingness to share resources and participate in joint activities, and they adopt ongoing mechanisms for sharing information among themselves and with key community leaders.

Stage 3: Developing a Shared Vision

Partners generate and prioritize desired outcomes for their work together, and develop a vision that reflects these outcomes. They explore initial ideas about how the HSC Partnership can make the vision a reality, and share responsibility for establishing linkages across programs.

Stage 4: Translating Planning into Collaborative Action

Partners identify activities that address the priority outcomes of the partnership and determine the feasibility of each activity. Then, they develop a collaborative plan that involves partners in implementing one or more feasible activities (for example; a project, program, or goal).

It is important to note that each group builds from its own strengths, weaknesses, and interactions. Thus, the stages of the planning phase will vary in length and intensity depending on many factors, such as: the community's political and social climate; the partners who participate; the technical assistance available to the partnership; and the partnership's own unique process. While the stages are presented sequentially in this booklet, partnerships will often find that they overlap, circle back, and expand, depending on these factors.

For each stage of the planning phase, SEDL staff have identified three strategies which help HSC partners accomplish the expected outcomes of that stage. The strategies are outlined as follows:

Needs Sensing

This is an information gathering process consisting of identifying, collecting, synthesizing, questioning, and analyzing ideas and information with partners. The needs sensing activities grow increasingly more specific as partners build a common base of knowledge and identify activities they may want to pursue collaboratively.

Developing Collaborative Relationships

This is a team-building process that helps a diverse group of individuals coalesce, build trust, and achieve consensus about how they will work together. Through modeling and experiential activities, partners develop mutual trust, gain respect for cultural diversity, and share leadership and decision making.

Building a Support Network

This is a resource building process that creates and strengthens ongoing support for collaboration. The process involves building support for collaboration among school and community decision makers and the general public. It also involves identifying financial as well as other kinds of support (volunteer, in-kind, etc.) for the collaborative activities of the partnership.

Just as the stages of HSC Partnership development will vary in length and intensity depending on many factors, so too will the strategies vary, depending on the strengths, weaknesses, and resources of the HSC Partnership. It is because of this dynamic environment that the planning phase plays a critical role in building a foundation for the partnership's work together.

The circular flow of this structure demonstrates a number of principles:

- the complexity of HSC Partnership development;

- the importance of employing the three strategies—needs sensing, developing collaborative relationships, and building a support network—at each stage of HSC Partnership development; and
- the need for partnerships to build from and connect one stage to another as they prepare to collaborate.

About this Booklet

Purpose

This booklet aims to help communities launch new or strengthen existing partnerships to improve education and services for young children and their families. The booklet describes how to engage in a planning phase to support the development of collaborative partnerships. The booklet does the following:

- describes the stages of home, school, and community partnership development;
- offers insights into how to build the skills and relationships necessary for collaboration among diverse individuals; and
- shares lessons learned from SEDL's experience providing technical assistance to communities involved in the planning phase of HSC Partnership development.

Limitations

This booklet does not assume that a neutral facilitator is available to all partnerships, although SEDL's five demonstration sites did use this approach. (Another booklet in this series, *Building Home, School, and Community Partnerships: The Role of the Neutral Facilitator*, describes how a neutral facilitator can help build HSC Partnerships.) In addition, the planning phase described in this booklet is not intended to be a prescription or step-by-step description of how to form HSC Partnerships. Rather, the booklet shares lessons learned from five unique demonstration sites. It is the authors' synthesis of their experiences and observations as they provided technical assistance to HSC Partnerships in five states. We suggest that leaders in local communities challenge themselves to reach out and work with new partners so that diverse individuals are brought together. The collective knowledge of such a group will begin to identify how the information in this booklet can be most useful to the local community.

Organization

For each stage of the planning phase, this booklet provides the following:

- an overview which describes what partners can expect to gain from their participation in that stage;
- a discussion of the three strategies—Needs Sensing, Developing Collaborative Relationships, and Building a Support Network—and their application within the context of each stage;

- questions for reflection and feedback to help partnerships gauge their progress in accomplishing the outcomes of the particular stage; and
- milestones that partners can expect to achieve when they have completed each stage of HSC Partnership development.

Stage 1: Initiating the Partnership

Overview

Stage 1 begins an ongoing dialogue with representatives of the home, school, and community to discuss the needs of children and families. By gathering information from individuals with diverse perspectives, both individually and in groups, it is possible to gain insights into the need, readiness, and support for an HSC Partnership in the community.

At Stage 1 potential partners explore the concepts of collaboration and HSC Partnership, and thus begin to build a base of common knowledge from which an HSC Partnership can develop. They also establish or strengthen a support network for an HSC Partnership and its collaborative approach. Decision makers brought on board at this stage can, over time, provide strong support for an HSC Partnership.

By participating in Stage 1, potential partners will gain the following:

- an increased understanding of the community's history, the political and social conditions, and the current status of home, school, and community relationships;
- an increased awareness of the needs of children and families in the community;
- more opportunities to meet and interact with other potential partners representing homes, schools, and the community; and
- an increased understanding of collaboration and how the community might benefit by forming an HSC Partnership.

Needs Sensing: Mapping the Community Climate

When considering the development of an HSC Partnership, one of the first tasks is to gauge the community's openness to and interest in starting a collaborative effort to address the needs of children and families. This booklet refers to this needs sensing activity as mapping the community climate. Its purpose is to do the following:

- identify and recruit key individuals to involve in an HSC Partnership;
- learn about the needs of children and families that motivate people to work collaboratively in a particular community; and

- gather information about the history and current status of relationships among individuals representing the home, school, and community.

Methods for Gathering Information

Mapping the community climate is accomplished through outreach efforts, meetings, and other information-gathering activities. Consider focusing initial meetings on key decision makers (for example, school superintendents, human service supervisors, major employers, city and county health officials, etc.) and invite them to support the idea of an HSC Partnership. Later, outreach efforts will expand to a wider audience of parents, school staff and administrators, and community members.

Mapping the community climate provides opportunities to learn about a broad range of perceptions and concerns about children and families in the community. Information gathering can include formal efforts, such as community assessments, needs assessments, and assessment surveys; or, it can consist of informal sessions with open discussions that focus on several key questions. Sometimes a combination of formal and informal approaches works well. The important point is to gather information in ways that allow diverse individuals—potential partners representing homes, schools, and community—to compare their perceptions. Brief descriptions follow of the kinds of information gathering efforts to consider organizing.

Handshake Meetings. Handshake meetings are an effective way to involve decision makers in the initiation of an HSC Partnership. These meetings are generally short, one-on-one or small group meetings held at a decision maker's work place. Handshake meetings help identify decision makers' key concerns about the needs of children and families and their openness to collaboration. These meetings are also a good way to measure decision makers' initial levels of support for an HSC Partnership approach.

Whether or not the climate is ripe for collaboration, such meetings lay important groundwork for action. In communities that have little history of collaboration, several handshake meetings are necessary to inform many decision makers about the HSC Partnership, and to help them feel comfortable about becoming involved at its earliest stages.

Community agencies generally have not worked collaboratively with schools or families. Through one-on-one meetings and telephone conversations, the HSC Partnership concept can be explained to agency staff, and partnership members can learn about the work of the agency. It is difficult to have this type of dialogue at a multi-agency group meeting. However, at one-on-one meetings, HSC partners can build relationships with agency staff; they can learn about the politics and power structure within the community; and they can identify what the agency would like to contribute to and gain from the HSC Partnership.

Handshake meetings are often the best method for recruiting local businesses to join the partnership, as well. One-on-one outreach makes it easier to

identify, for businesses, the benefits of their participation in an HSC Partnership. When decision makers are asked for input and are invited to participate and recommend other potential partners, they are more likely to support the effort. Frequently, decision makers invite their staff to attend the handshake meeting and appoint a specific staff person for ongoing involvement with the project. Sometimes support is offered immediately; sometimes it takes several meetings. The level of support needed to launch an HSC Partnership will vary from community to community. The aim should be to secure some commitment of support from leaders of each of the participant groups—home, school, and community—before further expanding recruitment efforts.

Target Group Meetings. Target Group Meetings bring together potential partners who have similar knowledge bases and affiliations, such as Head Start staff, school staff, parents, or staff from a particular community agency or organization. At these meetings, explain the concept of HSC Partnership and find out whether people are interested in participating in such a partnership. Gather information about people's perceptions of community concerns. Get the names of other community leaders who should be invited to participate and of other organizations that should be represented. Participants at target meetings often know or know of other people to involve in the HSC Partnership; but these participants may want a neutral party to invite the additional persons to the table.

Parents and other family members often are best recruited through schools and community agencies. Staff at these organizations can identify parents or clients who have expressed an interest in school and community concerns, or who have demonstrated leadership skills. Parents commonly develop strong commitments to HSC Partnerships and thus become their greatest advocates.

Community Forums. Existing community forums can be useful supplements to the information gathering process. Although these meetings have their own purposes and agendas, potential HSC partners can gain important insights about the politics, concerns, and working relationships of the community by attending these meetings. It may be appropriate to ask for time on the agendas of these meetings to introduce the HSC Partnership and to invite interested persons to attend its meetings.

Cold Calls. Invite by telephone and letter those individuals who were recommended by other meeting participants as key players in the community. Business representatives, health and social service providers, and other community representatives are often recruited in this fashion. It also is a common way to recruit representatives from community colleges, local universities, and other educational agencies. This outreach ensures that home, school, and community are well represented at initial partnership meetings. Be prepared to give a brief overview of the purpose of the initial partnership meeting (described in the next section) and encourage people to attend or send a representative. Keep the tone informal and describe the

information sharing nature of the effort at this time. Opportunities to exchange information are usually welcomed by community representatives.

Summarizing Information from Needs Sensing

Mapping the community climate lays important groundwork for the HSC Partnership. It produces a pool of interested persons to invite to the first HSC Partnership meeting, and it helps potential partners acquire important insights into the needs of children and families in the community.

- It is important, therefore, to summarize the information from needs sensing activities in ways that are accessible and non-threatening to potential partners. Here are some suggested guidelines for summarizing the information.
- Identify commonalities across groups so that similarities are immediately apparent.
- Acknowledge negative perceptions or historically difficult relationships in ways that can lead to healing rather than continued division.
- Use language that softens rather than heightens differences that emerge.
- When strong concerns are voiced by specific groups be sure to share them, but do so by discussing the impact they have (or are perceived to have) on children and families.
- Summarize the information using easy-to-read formats, such as charts and bulleted lists.

The information gathered in mapping the community climate will continue to be used, refined, and expanded throughout the planning phase. Its use and dissemination will be discussed further in later stages.

Developing Collaborative Relationships: Convening HSC Partnership Meetings

HSC Partnership meetings are the primary forum for developing collaborative relationships among diverse individuals. It is at such meetings that partners learn together about collaboration and practice consensus building as well as collaborative problem solving.

At the first meeting, consider all participants as potential partners. After a person has attended two meetings, consider adding his/her name to the partnership roster and regularly send meeting summaries to everyone on the roster. This will promote the inclusion of many individuals and will encourage them to remain involved.

The appropriate time to secure a commitment from participants will vary based on the needs of the partnership. In some HSC Partnerships, it works well to ask for a commitment to the partnership early on. Such commitment

reflects a willingness to attend meetings and perhaps some willingness to take a leadership role in certain activities. Be cautious, however, when individuals are extremely eager to assume a lot of responsibility early on, they may be inclined to control the partnership in ways that work against collaboration. In other partnerships, all participants at meetings are considered as partners and commitments do not begin to emerge until much later in the planning phase, when the partnership has decided what work it will undertake collaboratively. Later in the planning phase—when interest is high, common understanding has been achieved, and the partnership's direction is clear—partners can make more substantive commitments.

The purposes of the first few partnership meetings are to do the following:

- define the concepts of collaboration and HSC Partnership;
- outline the planning phase;
- develop ground rules for partnership meetings;
- build positive group dynamics;
- share what was learned from the needs sensing effort; and
- celebrate linkages—begin exploring how the group can develop a collaborative effort address priority concerns about children and families.

Each of these topics is discussed in the following paragraphs.

Defining the Concepts of Collaboration and HSC Partnership

The term “collaboration” is used so frequently in all kinds of contexts that it is essential to define it at the first meeting, and explain how it is different from coordination and cooperation. (Please see the Introduction for these definitions.) Use examples from real programs to highlight the ways in which collaborative efforts share decision making, engage in joint planning and bring to life other characteristics of collaboration. The examples also help the group think about how it might work together in the future.

The action plan that the HSC Partnership develops later in the planning phase will identify the extent to which the HSC partners will collaborate. The diversity of representation among participants delivers a clear message that the partnership is serious about working with representatives of the home, school, and community.

Outlining the Planning Phase

In addition to defining collaboration and HSC Partnership, the purpose of the planning phase must be outlined. The following is an example of a statement of purpose used at an HSC Partnership meeting:

The purpose of the planning phase is to help partners develop common understanding of the gaps in existing services for children and families and identify common concerns and desired outcomes for children and families. Partners fashion the purpose and direction of the partnership by identifying activities that require collaborative effort among partners to make an impact on children and families. Over time, partners assume responsibility for partnership activities.

Discuss any questions and concerns that participants may have about the planning phase. Consider limiting discussion to a “big picture” look at the planning phase and become more specific about what participants can expect at subsequent meetings.

Setting Ground Rules for Partnership Meetings

It is important to have the discussion of ground rules after talking about collaboration and HSC Partnership. Linking ground rules to the discussion of collaboration and partnership keeps discussion positive and oriented toward a collaborative approach. Actively discourage democratic methods (for example, voting, majority rule, election of chairpersons, and Robert's Rules of Order) so that the group can practice consensus building and collaborative problem solving instead.

Building Positive Group Dynamics

Each partnership develops its own group dynamics based on many factors, including the following:

- the mix of partners, and their skills and comfort levels in working as a group;
- partners' willingness to suspend traditional roles and personal agendas; and
- the history and past working relationships that introduce a range of dynamics, from conflict and tension, to positive regard and forward momentum

The following paragraphs offer tips for building positive group dynamics.

Be Prepared. Plan to spend about eight hours preparing for a two to three hour partnership meeting. At the beginning of the partnership, preparation usually takes longer because the group is just forming and the partnership's direction is not yet clear. Preparation includes reviewing the outcomes of past meetings; preparing an agenda based on next steps; developing goals; and planning large group presentations and small group activities for the upcoming meeting. Use transparencies, handouts, and other materials to support each portion of the meeting. Also, be sure to plan for the logistics of a meeting. This includes securing a comfortable room (consider rotating among partners' workplaces) and purchasing refreshments (have partners rotate responsibility for providing refreshments). About two weeks before each

meeting, mail partners a reminder about the meeting. It should include the date, time, and place of the next meeting, a preliminary agenda or list of discussion topics, directions to the meeting place, and a summary of the previous meeting.

Stay Positive. At initial HSC Partnership meetings, it is important to convey openness to and positive regard for the diverse opinions of potential partners. Expect to hear opinions that convey personal agendas, remarks that are tangential, and attitudes that are negative about the HSC Partnership. Positive encouragement of the emerging partnership will support the development of a core of positive, interested individuals and help build positive group dynamics. Continue outreach efforts at least until such a core of individuals appears to be emerging.

Model Collaborative Behavior. Working in teams is an ideal way to lead partnership meetings. This approach gives partners the opportunity to observe more than one facilitator in action. Facilitator's model the kind of behavior that supports collaboration when they share responsibility for leading the meeting, when they listen carefully to partners, and when they direct and redirect discussions so that the meetings are productive. A team approach also provides the facilitator with at least one colleague to help plan for and debrief from partnership meetings. The resulting support and interaction make it easier to ensure that the diverse perspectives of all partners are considered.

Honor the HSC Partnership's Process. Strive to ensure that differing opinions are elicited, heard, honored, and worked with until the HSC Partnership comes to a consensus about important issues. The HSC Partnership determines its own timeline and progress, based on its own strengths, weaknesses, experiences, and membership. The HSC Partnership's own starting point must be honored as its reference point. Progress should be framed in the context of the partnership, not imposed by external standards.

Make It Interesting and Worthwhile to Participate. Acknowledge that attending HSC Partnership meetings is an extra responsibility for partners. Value their contributions of time and ideas, and work to ensure that their time at meetings is well spent. When the neutral facilitator takes responsibility for planning, coordinating, and conducting the partnership's work sessions, the partners can concentrate on carving out roles that are manageable, that fit with their interests and skills, and that support a collaborative approach.

After the first meeting, HSC Partnership should meet at least monthly (length and time will vary) to explore how the community wants to develop and implement a collaborative effort addressing the needs of children and families. Keep in mind that the planning phase is a fluid process that the HSC Partnership shapes by identifying, building upon, and drawing from its strengths and resources. The value of this approach is that it is flexible and

allows the partnership's identity to emerge, grow over time, and sustain itself.

Sharing What Was Learned from the Needs Sensing Effort

Initial HSC Partnership meetings offer an important forum for sharing the information gathered through the needs sensing activities. The information allows potential partners to identify commonalities. When differences are framed in the context of children and families, defensiveness is minimized. By sharing information, participants begin to understand each other's perspectives and honor the reasons behind differences. Discussion focuses on the needs of children and families and on the partnership as a vehicle or catalyst for collaborative responses to address these needs.

Celebrating Linkages

Ask partners to think about existing linkages between projects. Encourage partners to actively develop connections with each other and with staff from agencies and organizations. Making linkages helps partners get to know each other and thus build the relationships necessary for collaboration. Set aside time at each HSC Partnership meeting to celebrate linkages. The purpose of this activity is to:

- underscore the need for participants to work together outside the partnership and provide positive reinforcement for doing so;
- make clear the distinction between simple, short term activities and the long term, complex activities of collaboration; and
- provide a communication link and way of sharing information among partners.

Encourage partners to share information in the context of promoting collaboration. Avoid showcasing programs in ways that promote competition among partners or suggest ranking of any sort. If showcasing is done, aim to demonstrate linkages and celebrate new working relationships among partners, if possible. Make it clear that a range of linkages is acceptable, from short-term events to longer-term cooperative ventures. Wherever partners are starting is acceptable. Look for progress from their reference points.

Building a Support Network: Building Support for the Planning Phase

Many people resist spending time and energy to plan activities or programs, and would rather move immediately to implementation. The purpose of this strategy, therefore, is to educate people about the importance of the planning phase and build support for it among decision makers and partners.

Identifying the Benefits of Planning

It is not unusual for people to insist that they have already "done enough" planning when they have developed a vision, written goals and objectives, or

participated in similar activities. Be prepared to talk about the benefits of collaboration and the need to begin the HSC Partnership with a planning phase. Share research findings that underscore the need for planning and outline the purpose of the planning phase in developing the HSC Partnership. (The Introduction provides sources for this information.) The following list of benefits will help persuade decision makers and potential partners of the importance of planning collaborative efforts

Benefits of Planning for Collaboration

Cultivates an environment conducive to collaboration

Identifies and clarifies the potential contributions of all partners regardless of knowledge base, skills, experiences, etc.

Validates problem-solving approaches that accept divergent thinking and build consensus

Builds interdependent relationships that enhance collaboration

Offers time for partners to become sensitive to each other's needs, uniqueness, and constraints

Increases the resource base available to address shared concerns

Allows time to prepare for and commit to the complex tasks that partners deem necessary for their collaborative effort

Building Support for Collaboration

Handshake meetings are an important entry point for establishing communication with decision makers. While their staff may ultimately become partners in the HSC Partnership, it is important to keep communication channels active between decision makers and the HSC Partnership. Learn about decision makers' priorities so that when they dovetail with partnership activities, decision makers will be sure to hear about these activities. Decision makers' perspectives and influence can be very helpful in building the HSC Partnership's base of support.

Because the partnership will need support at each step of the planning process, find opportunities to involve decision makers in the partnership throughout the planning phase. For example, some HSC Partnerships do the following:

- Invite decision makers to give welcoming remarks when an HSC Partnership meeting is hosted by their agency or organization;

- Before each partnership meeting, invite staff and ask them if there is information that the decision maker would like them to share with the HSC Partnership;
- Report information from partnership meetings that may be of interest to the decision maker;
- Meet periodically to update decision makers about the progress of the HSC Partnership; and
- Encourage parents to call or meet with decision makers to talk about the importance of HSC Partnership activities for children and families in the community.

As these examples suggest, advocacy for the HSC Partnership and its collaborative efforts must begin very early in the planning phase. If the HSC Partnership keeps decision makers abreast of its progress, then decision makers will be more likely to continue their support for the partnerships collaborative work over time.

Reflections and Feedback

One of the greatest challenges facing an HSC Partnership is the tendency to lose sight of the “big picture” because of the press of organizational structure. Partners benefit from stepping back periodically and reflecting on the partnership’s progress and direction. The Reflections and Feedback section at each stage is designed to encourage such a process. Here are several guiding questions that can help determine progress during Stage 1 of HSC Partnership development:

What levels of response and openness emerge for the HSC Partnership from parents and families? from school staff and other educators? from community representatives?

How effective was the first round of recruitment for the HSC Partnership?

Based on initial HSC Partnership meetings, who else needs to be involved?

Where do working relationships exist in the community? How can recruitment efforts continue to draw upon, extend, or enhance them?

What areas of need seem to be of greatest interest to the potential partners? and

How can the HSC Partnership build upon the initial support that emerged from key decision makers?

Milestones

Stage 1 is a broadly defined phase of partnership development. Its primary tasks are to raise interest in an HSC Partnership; identify potential partners;

introduce key concepts; and work to create a receptive, positive environment for the planning phase. The HSC Partnership is ready to undertake Stage 2 when it has accomplished the following:

- Recruited a pool of potential partners for the HSC Partnership;
- Developed an understanding of the history of the community, its political and social conditions, and past and current working relationships among home, school and community;
- Initiated HSC Partnership meetings which begin to build collaborative relationships, model collaborative behavior, and identify how the HSC Partnership will work together; and
- Created openness to and interest in supporting an HSC Partnership from community decision makers.

Stage 2: Building the Partnership

Overview

During Stage 2, the HSC Partnership assesses the strengths and weaknesses of existing resources for children and families and the linkages that exist among these resources. Partners also strengthen their communication skills and build group cohesiveness so that they can work together more effectively. Through this process, potential partners blend their individual perspectives to form a common base of knowledge about the needs of children and families.

Through participation in Stage 2, partners will gain:

- a shared understanding of the needs of children and families, and the community resources which attempt to meet those needs;
- an increased understanding of the concepts of HSC Partnership and collaboration and how the partnership might work together;
- increased opportunities to share information and participate in joint activities; and
- increased opportunities for communication with decision makers stemming from the work of the HSC Partnership.

Needs Sensing: Identifying a Common Base of Knowledge

Needs sensing at Stage 2 of partnership development provides opportunities for partners to identify what they have in common in order to set direction and make a commitment to the partnership. Partners examine both facts and perceptions about concerns facing children and families in the community. Partners assess resources that are available to address the needs of children and families as well as identify gaps in resources. Needs

sensing also provides opportunities for partners to network and explore ways to strengthen linkages among themselves.

Identifying a common base of knowledge helps the HSC Partnership:

- develop a shared understanding of the needs of children and families;
- assess the ability of current resources to meet these needs; and
- identify gaps in services and create linkages.

Brief descriptions follow for each of these activities.

Developing a Shared Understanding

Some partnerships organize specifically to address one need (for example, increasing services for homeless children and families, increasing health and social services in the community, or preventing alcohol and drug abuse). Others begin with broad notions of addressing children's needs, such as improving educational outcomes for children, or improving the quality of life for children and families. With either approach, sharing experiences and gaining new information as a group help partners identify their common base of knowledge.

Videotapes, guest speakers, and written material that relate to the HSC Partnership's concerns can also be useful for building a common base of knowledge. Guest speakers who have experience with issues of concern to the partners can enrich their shared knowledge base. Keep presentations brief, however, and preview or highlight the most relevant information so that it broadens partners' knowledge and understanding without diluting the partnership's sharing process. Guest speakers can also help partners explore ways to use their collective knowledge and experience to address the needs of children and families.

Assessing Current Resources

The next step is to connect the needs of children and families with resources in the community. Resources are the means to meet the needs that have been identified and generally take the form of information, technical assistance, social services, volunteers, and funding. Use the information about the needs of children and families to organize and direct discussion about the community's currently available resources. Begin with a brainstorming exercise that matches needs and resources. It is not necessary at this point in the discussion to make judgments about the strengths and weaknesses of the resources or their fit with the category of need. Partners' breadth of experience will bring various perspectives to bear on the discussion. As partners share information about resources, they demonstrate their value as contributors to the partnership. Partners learn from each other and hear about what each partner knows and values. Common ground emerges as a result of the partners' interaction. Here are some tips to enrich this discussion.

- Bring or refer to existing materials (agency brochures, journal articles, etc.) when sharing information about current resources. Sharing such information with individuals from different agencies and disciplines increases enormously the knowledge base of all partners. Some HSC Partnerships use the information to update or generate new resource directories.
- Consider technological resources as well. On-line databases and referral sources can provide valuable information, although partners may not know about them or utilize them.
- Identify areas where resources are sketchy or lacking. A small group of partners might volunteer to do additional fact-finding to identify such resources not well known to partners.

Invariably a “laundry list” emerges from the discussion. Work with this list to make it as inclusive, meaningful, and accurate as possible. Eliminate duplications and identify headings that link or combine similar ideas wherever possible. Such efforts also increase the likelihood that all partners will become knowledgeable about existing resources. The partnership can then move on comfortably to the next aspect of identifying a common base of knowledge—strengthening connections between resources and identifying gaps that need to be addressed.

Identifying Gaps and Creating Linkages

Ideas about bridging gaps and improving services take the discussion to a new level of specificity. Partners move from discussing resources in general to focusing on services.

- Where do gaps exist in the current services of the community?
- What connections might partners make right now to fill gaps or strengthen existing services for children and families?
- Which gaps might require collaborative action to begin to address them?

Such discussions can yield two important outcomes. First, these discussions help HSC Partnerships identify where resources are weak and need to be strengthened or expanded. Partners can make a list of gaps in resources for children and families which will inform later partnership discussions and suggest opportunities for collaborative action.

The second outcome is a list of connections that can “easily” be made in the community. These connections, or linkages, reinforce the fact that there are often simple things which members of the HSC Partnership can do to make a difference in the lives of children and families. Examples include the following:

- Inviting staff from social service agencies to visit a Head Start site one day each month, so that families can gain easier, regular access to needed services;
- Offering space for the Red Cross to provide CPR training at locations which are convenient for parents, school staff, and representatives from other community organizations; and
- Inviting partners to attend in-service training sessions on child development that were originally planned for one agency's staff only.

Linkages provide entry points for working together without requiring additional funding or formal arrangements, and they demonstrate that working together can produce immediate results. Partners can celebrate linkages at each meeting to give credit and share their successes. These linkages also help partners build the relationships they will need to support larger, collaborative projects at a later time. Thus, they reinforce the concept of collaboration and the kinds of projects that the HSC Partnership aims to do together. Linkages provide entry points for working together without new funding or formal arrangements.

Developing Collaborative Relationships: Strengthening Communication Skills and Group Readiness

At Stage 2, the unique communication and work style of an HSC Partnership begins to emerge. Developing collaborative relationships at this stage aims to build individual communication skills as well as effective group interaction. Group readiness is a term that refers to the partners' potential and willingness to work together, and varies from partnership to partnership. While readiness is a subjective term, it is helpful to describe it across three dimensions: *communication skills, group cohesiveness, and group openness to change.*

Communication skills include the group's ability to:

- share ideas clearly;
- listen to others' points of view; and
- convey respect for and openness to individuals with diverse opinions, backgrounds, and approaches.

Group cohesiveness includes the group's ability to:

- move beyond hierarchical and traditional roles in group interaction;
- build consensus around issues and concerns;
- develop a group sense of mutual trust and respect for members; and

- jointly undertake group activities, events, and projects.

Group openness to change includes the group's willingness to:

- consider issues from multiple perspectives;
- accept the validity of ideas and approaches that vary from one's own or from the partners' collective experiences;
- make changes in one's traditional role or behavior; and
- accept and welcome others in new roles.

Group readiness is not merely an indication of the skills of individuals within the partnership. Rather, it is a dynamic among the partners signaling to each their ability to think and work together. When determining group readiness, it is important to accept the HSC Partnership's starting point as a positive one and to communicate this acceptance to the group.

Expecting the partnership to "measure up" to a preconceived notion of what is "acceptable" can be counterproductive. This can slow the process of building group cohesiveness and can cause individuals within the partnership to lose confidence and feel unaccepted. It is more productive to ask partners to reflect together on their satisfaction by building on their communication skills and group cohesiveness.

Group readiness grows and changes as the HSC Partners work together and begin to trust each other. Regular meetings provide opportunities to strengthen communication skills, build group cohesiveness, and increase group openness to change. The following paragraphs explore these ideas more fully.

Strengthening Communication Skills

Effective HSC Partnerships are ones in which members develop effective communication skills and are able to do the following:

- share ideas freely;
- listen to the perspectives of others;
- participate without controlling other's or the group's agenda;
- accept and value diversity of opinion;
- come to consensus about concerns facing the partnership; and
- convey ideas clearly, both orally and in writing.

In SEDL's experience, all partners benefit from recognizing the strengths of their personal communication styles, identifying those aspects needing improvement and working to enhance them, regardless of their prior training and background. The following chart lists some common ineffective communication styles and ideas about how to address them at partnership meetings.

Ineffective Communication Styles

Suggested Improvement Approaches

Quiet and Timid

Shy, seems unsure of self

Uncomfortable speaking in large groups

Cultivate one-to-one relationships.

Use activities and techniques that encourage participation from everyone without undue pressure.

Knows few other partners and doesn't readily reach out

Encourage a buddy system and provide activities with opportunities for one-to-one interaction at meetings.

Monopolizer

Loves to talk, can go off on tangents or lack focus

Often has trouble listening to others, may interrupt frequently

Use activities and techniques that encourage participation from everyone. Set time limits for comments offered in group settings.

Offer skill building activities that raise individuals' awareness of the impact of such behavior on others.

Controlling behavior

Brings own agenda to meetings

Imposes structure and direction in small group sessions

Use skill building activities that raise individuals' awareness of the impact of such behavior on others.

Use handouts or written information to specify directions and divide responsibilities among all group members. Specifically assign the role of facilitator to another person.

HSC Partnerships generate a good deal of information that needs to be summarized and shared in writing—for example, summaries of discussions at meetings, information about collaboration and other topics addressed at meetings, celebrating linkages, and information about community resources. Here are some tips to help improve partners' skills in conveying written information:

- Summarize or restate the main ideas of each topic or each speaker before moving to a new discussion topic. Ask the speaker to help with this process so that he/she also gets practice identifying the central ideas behind comments.
- Use flip charts, overhead transparencies, handouts, and other visual aids to capture the ideas being shared.
- Consider asking partners to jot down a brief summary of the information they shared during celebrating linkages so that it can be conveyed accurately in meeting summaries.
- After meetings, telephone partners and ask them to clarify information that is unclear before finalizing meeting summaries. A quick phone call can lessen the need for corrections and apologies.
- Use a standard format for summarizing meetings to simplify the writing task.

Stage 2 is a good time to discuss how partners might want to organize partnership information. SEDL's partners have used notebooks, expandable file folders, and even tote bags to collect all materials distributed to them. The collection provides a chronology of partners' work together and a reference point over time. It can also serve as a place to file information about community resources. Another benefit of organizing partnership information is that it can serve as an easy reference for informing new partners about the partnership's progress to date. Remember to share the information tools with decision makers so that they stay informed of the HSC Partnership's progress.

Building Group Cohesiveness

Group cohesiveness develops when partners feel accepted by the group and feel that others are willing to work together. Group cohesiveness helps convey a positive atmosphere and promotes positive interaction among partners. Thus, the partnership's ambiance provides an important source of support for its efforts to work together.

Group cohesiveness draws from the strengths and participation of all individuals in the partnership. Be cautious about depending heavily on one individual or on a select group of partners, regardless of their roles in the community or their personal charisma. Such action can limit the

cohesiveness of the partnership, narrow its base of support, and jeopardize the partnership's ability to work together collaboratively. The goal of an HSC Partnership is to share the responsibility and rewards of the partnership among all of the partners. Strong group cohesiveness makes this goal more achievable. The message each partner must feel and find ways to bring to life is, "I can make meaningful contributions to this partnership."

HSC Partnerships can cultivate group cohesiveness by engaging in activities that provide opportunities for partners to get to know each other, both personally and professionally. At this point in the partnership's development, it is important to remember that partners are still relatively unfamiliar with each other. Set aside time at each meeting and use work sessions to build rapport between and among partners.

The process of gaining and losing members affects group cohesiveness and may signal the need to observe the effects of such changes on group dynamics. If the core group of partners established during Stage 1 begins to erode, partners can benefit from reflecting together on the impact of changes in membership. Discuss challenges stemming from turnover in membership and identify ways to address those challenges. Follow up with former partners to identify their reasons for leaving the partnership, and gather suggestions for new members who fill the gap left by such departures. If recruitment of new members is an ongoing part of the partnership, it will help to conduct special orientation sessions for them. Such sessions allow new partners to learn about progress to date, to ask questions, and to become familiar with the planning phase before attending a partnership meeting. These efforts will help newcomers feel part of the group more quickly and thus support group cohesiveness.

Small group discussions and activities also help to build group cohesiveness. Small groups often generate rich discussion, especially when the partnership has many members. Small group work also provides opportunities for partners to practice communication skills. SEDL uses two ways to structure small groups: (1) by dividing partners into role-alike groups (for example, all parents in one group, all school staff in another, all community representatives in a third); or (2) by placing them in mixed-role groups (for example, each group includes parents, school staff, and community representatives). At this stage, allowing partners to decide which small group they will join can limit the effectiveness of discussion. Dividing partners with some thought about the composition of each group and the purpose of the small group activity can help ensure everyone's participation.

Promoting Group Openness to Change

Groups become open to change when partners feel that they are respected by other group members and can make substantive contributions to the partnership. From these feelings flow the interest and commitment needed to make the partnership effective. Interest and commitment emerge more readily when partners feel that meetings offer them the opportunity to do such things as:

- vent their feelings, be listened to, and have their feelings acknowledged;
- validate their concerns and get answers to their questions;
- promote “*it can happen*,” positive, “*can do*” attitudes;
- learn more about issues related to the needs of children and families;
- work with others who are committed to helping children and families in the community; and
- be more effective in their jobs as parents and as citizens of the community.

Partners' openness to change is also influenced by their understanding of and expectations about HSC Partnership meetings held during the planning phase. Some partners will want immediate action while others will want to spend considerable time talking about the issues facing children and families. Partners need to feel that their time is well spent and that the planning phase is moving forward at a pace that is visible and comfortable.

During Stage 2, partnerships seem to benefit from developing a timeline of events or activities for the planning phase. Reviewing progress to date and future projections for the planning phase can help partners feel more comfortable about the partnership's direction and process. Timelines produced during this stage of HSC Partnership development reflect progress to date and its readiness for the next stages of the planning phase.

Describing progress in the context of the strategies (for example, needs sensing, strengthening collaborative relationships, and building a support network) reminds partners of the complexity of collaboration and of the priorities at each stage of the planning phase. It also offers partners an opportunity to reflect on progress to date and make adjustments as needed. Such reflections should not be viewed as a “report card,” but rather as a checkpoint to help partners build a feeling of ownership and investment in the planning phase. (See *Building Home, School, and Community Partnerships: Charting Progress toward Collaboration*, enclosed with this publication.)

Building a Support Network: Assessing and Strengthening Support for the HSC Partnership

During Stage 2, it is critical that partners develop and keep a “finger on the pulse” of support for the partnership. Every HSC Partnership experiences challenges when building support for its activities. Resistance is a normal part of change, and dealing with it is sometimes a skill, in and of itself. It is important to recognize and respond to resistance to, as well as support for, the HSC Partnership. In some cases, early resisters later become great advocates for the HSC Partnership. The HSC Partnership needs to actively seek support for its work. This section offers ideas about how to do so.

Cultivating Support from Many Sources

Successful HSC Partnerships draw upon a broad base of support for their collaborative efforts. Relationships initiated at the handshake meetings need to be cultivated during Stage 2. By making site visits, phone calls, and sharing written communication, partners can strengthen the initial connections and assess the emerging support of—or resistance to—the partnership.

In contrast, adopting a single sponsor or spokesperson from the community can limit the roles that other decision makers take in supporting the partnership. This can also raise competitive responses from decision makers in similar or higher roles. This is not to say that HSC Partnerships do not need enthusiastic supporters—they certainly do. But aim for a balance of influence and support from many decision makers. Sometimes, it is easy to depend on a single community leader, only to have that person relocate or change positions without finding a similarly supportive replacement. It is much better, especially at this stage of HSC Partnership development, to cultivate support for the partnership from a wide variety of sources. A broad base of support also can act as a catalyst for gaining support from additional decision makers.

Drawing Partners from Many Workplaces

Another way to build a broad base of support is to draw HSCP members from varied workplaces. For example, in working with schools, try involving staff from more than one campus, and a mix of central office staff, campus administrators, teachers, and others. Similarly, aim to identify partners from a number of Head Start sites, human services offices, and city and county health centers. This approach is especially effective if the HSC Partnership faces opposition from specific decision makers. This approach also can lessen the influence of resistant decision makers on the partnership as well as broaden the base of supporters who can advocate for the partnership. An important goal here is to welcome the involvement of many decision makers, and to ensure that no organization is permitted to overly influence the outcomes of the HSC Partnership. When the base of support is broad, no one agency will likely control the HSC Partnership's efforts.

Communicating with Decision Makers

Another benefit of making site visits and building relationships with decision makers is that partners gain credibility for their participation in the HSC Partnership. Partners may need to pursue such advocacy efforts so that they can more actively participate in partnership meetings. Communication with decision makers is essential as the partnership seeks to expand its base of support. Here are some suggestions for increasing such communications:

- Send meeting summaries and other correspondence regularly to decision makers to keep connections alive.

- Use your best listening skills when meeting with a decision maker and have one other partner accompany you to provide as broad a perspective as possible.
- Do not become defensive, but rather “tune in” to a decision maker’s concerns. Work hard at identifying the decision maker’s concerns and not as hard at trying to persuade him/her of the partnership’s views.
- Convey the shared decision-making approach to avoid being put on the spot or to make a commitment that the partnership should consider as a group. Let the decision maker know that “you’ll get back to them” after you’ve discussed the idea or concern with the HSC Partnership.
- Identify common ground or a common concern that the partnership shares with the decision maker and clarify what you’ve understood before ending the conversation.
- Send a follow-up letter thanking the decision maker for his/her time and identify common ground that emerged from the discussion. When common ground is limited, suggest two or three ideas that might begin to bridge differences.

Reflections and Feedback

At this point in the planning process, partners may ask the following questions in order to examine the progress of the partnership during Stage 2. The answers to these questions will reveal the partners' shared understanding of the needs and available resources in their community, the usefulness of collaboration, and level of commitment to collaboration within the partnership.

What gaps in services for children and families seem to evoke the passion of the group? How can the group build around this passion?

How strong are partners' group skills (for example, listening and working together)? How strong are participants' self-esteem and confidence? In what ways can the partnerships activities strengthen and build individual and group skills and confidence?

How strong is initial buy-in among potential partners? Among decision makers? Who needs extra attention to bring them along? How are individual agendas affecting the progress of the group?

What additional resources does the partnership need? Who might be able to provide them? What additional resources are present in the community? How can they be brought into the partnership?

Milestones

The primary tasks of Stage 2 are to build a common base of knowledge among partners, and as a result, increase their trust in the group and their skills for

working collaboratively. Partners will also cultivate support from a broad range of community decision makers for the partnership's collaborative efforts.

The HSC Partnership will be ready to undertake Stage 3 when it has accomplished the following:

- Established a core group of approximately 10-20 partners who attend meetings regularly. (At this point, a well-rounded group of home, school, and community representatives should have emerged.)
- Developed a shared understanding of the needs of children and families and of the community resources which are available to address those needs. (At this point, the partnership should have identified gaps in resources and shared ideas about linkages and collaborative action that can be taken to address these gaps.)
- Generated an increased interest in the planning phase and enthusiasm about what partners can accomplish together. (At this point, partners should leave meetings feeling that their time was well spent and feeling more comfortable with and involved in the planning process.)
- Instilled within partners a sense of mutual respect demonstrated by improved listening and communication skills. (At this point, partners begin to connect with each other at meetings as well as outside of meetings.)
- Identified an emerging base of support for the HSC Partnership that draws from many agencies and organizations in the community.

Stage 3: Developing a Shared Vision

Overview

In the previous stages, partners shared knowledge about the current situation facing children and families in their community. Stage 3 helps partners envision ways to improve outcomes for children and families in concrete ways. Partners practice consensus building and appraise the partnership's progress. During Stage 3, the HSC Partnership also publicizes its direction and successes.

By participating in Stage 3, the HSC Partnership will gain the following:

- insights into how fellow partners envision their ideal community and desired outcomes to support their vision;
- opportunities to practice building consensus and to reflect upon how well the HSC Partnership is functioning; and

- opportunities to share progress and resource needs of the HSC Partnership with local media, decision makers, and the local community

Needs Sensing: Exploring Partners' Shared Vision

Needs sensing activities help partners explore and connect what they know—their common base of knowledge—with what they want or envision for their community. By comparing and contrasting these two scenarios, partners identify what needs to change in order to bring their community from where it is to where they want it to be. Partners then translate statements about what needs to change into their desired outcomes. As partners share insights and build consensus about what needs to change, they begin to prioritize their desired outcomes. Partners examine these priorities in light of their desire for collaborative action. The priority concerns become collaborative activities that the HSC Partnership might undertake.

These discussions move partners toward increasing levels of specificity about how they will collaborate. It is important to note that the use of a neutral facilitator greatly enriches Stage 3 discussions. The neutral facilitator may be optional for other activities and discussions; however, SEDL recommends using a facilitator for these discussions even if one is not routinely participating in the planning phase.

In developing a vision statement, partners ask themselves, "What do we want or envision for children and families in our community?" "What would be different or strengthened for children and families?" "What desired outcomes are of greatest concern to the HSC Partnership?"

Developing a Vision Statement

Developing a vision statement has become a fairly commonplace undertaking. The HSC Partnership can develop meaningful exchange around this task through a needs sensing activity such as *La Mera Papa/The Real Potato* (see Appendix C). In this activity, partners capture, individually, their ideas, impressions, and desires for the ideal community. Later, by sharing their individual ideas, partners reveal through rich and meaningful discussion what they want for children and families in their community.

A partnership vision statement is a product of this discussion. The vision statement pictures the ideal or dream situation that partners want for their community. It is based upon their perceptions of both their common as well as the diverse views about issues and concerns that children and families face. When developing the vision statement, consider the following suggestions:

- Work to include all ideas from *La Mera Papa* or other such activities in the vision statement in the partners' words. This will underscore the value of individuals' contributions and demonstrates how partners can use good listening skills to enhance the planning phase.

- Consider selecting a volunteer or small group of volunteers to distill the ideas from, for example, *La Mera Papa*, for the vision statement. This is especially appropriate when the HSC Partnership uses *La Mera Papa* at a retreat or special partnership meeting. When done in such context, the results are usually very productive and true to the partnership's spirit and discussion.
- Allow time for partners to share and refine the first draft of the vision statement. Reviewing the vision at a later time can help partners refine and further clarify key ideas from the first draft.

Such activities will deeply engage members in the partnership's process. When conducted during the planning phase, it brings the partnership together in new ways and establishes even stronger connections among partners as it becomes the cornerstone for working together.

Developing Desired Outcomes

The next step is to connect the partners' vision with the community's current reality by asking, "What needs to change in order to move our community toward our vision?" and "What steps can partners take to bring the vision to life?" Insights often emerge from conditions, situations, and values that are expressed directly or implied in the vision statement. Partners can use these insights to begin identifying concrete changes that are necessary for their vision to come true. The aim of these discussions is to produce a list of desired outcomes that are as clear and concrete as possible. Once partners have identified what needs to change, they can consider another question, "What steps can we take to bring about the necessary changes?" In response to this, the partnership produces an increasingly specific list of ways that it can address the needs of children and families in their community.

Identifying Priority Concerns

From discussions about the vision, desired outcomes, and steps to bring the vision to life, the partnership begins to hear, see, and feel where the greatest interest of the group lies. Usually, between four and six themes or desired outcomes emerge from consensus building activities.

So what do these needs sensing activities look like when they come together? In the box below are sample excerpts from a demonstration site's needs sensing activities. There are some connections between the vision statement, desired outcomes, steps, and priority concerns. Although they do not match perfectly, they illustrate how a partnership uses prioritizing to bring the concerns of the community to life. This is a creative process and it is not unusual for a partnership to "interrupt" its process with a brainstorm that ignites the group's passion and interest. If this occurs, go with it. Such insights are key to finding practical, exciting ways for the HSC Partnership to address the needs of children and families.

Sample Excerpts from an HSC Partnership's Needs Sensing Activities

Vision Statement: Families are loving, healthy, and active physically, educationally, and politically. A variety of learning strategies is used to support parents as the child's first teacher, as central contributors to their child's health and education throughout childhood and adolescence, and as life-long learners themselves.

Desired Outcomes:

More families as community advocates working to get needed services, water, affordable housing, educational programs and health and social services resulting in an empowered community.

Role models are improved so that the whole family dynamics can change.

All families have access to and use primary/preventive health care.

Steps to Make Changes Happen:

1. Identify ways to build trust among families, schools, and agencies (for example, through the training of staff).
2. Have school and community representatives teach adults new skills (for example, negotiation, accessing services).
3. Model the desired behaviors in order to produce them throughout the community.

1. Teach all parents about child development.
2. Conduct special outreach to teen parents about health care and child development.
3. Teach parenting skills to young adults who are not yet parents.

1. Immunize all children and adults.
2. Emphasize primary care, self care, and self-reliance in seeking health care.
3. Make transportation available to enable families to access care.
4. Bring services into the community.

Priority Concerns

- To build local capacity by educating and training community residents so that they become community resources and provide needed education, health and social services in the community.
- To strengthen parent-child relationships and to develop communication skills.

Developing Collaborative Relationships: Establishing Norms for Collaboration

Partners are beginning to experience benefits from their work together at HSC Partnership meetings and by making linkages across programs. At each meeting, partners have opportunities to celebrate linkages and strengthen positive interaction. The challenges that the partnership faces in undertaking projects together are also becoming clearer. For example, turf issues, personality styles, and competition for resources are issues that surface for most HSC Partnerships. Stage 3 Developing Collaborative Relationships probes further the dynamics of the HSC Partnership and the community environment in which these are working. This strategy helps partnerships address these issues by establishing norms of collaboration.

Norms of collaboration are those behaviors and practices that partners agree to observe in their work together. This discussion expands from the ground rules established in Stage 1 and reflects the partnership's progress during Stage 2 in building group readiness. It is important that the partnership examine its strengths and weaknesses and that communication flows freely. The following are questions that can guide the discussion of norms of collaboration and the purposes underlying each question.

Discussion Questions_

Underlying Purposes

How can we demonstrate our respect for each other and our respective organizations at our partnership meetings?_

Reinforce importance of treating all partners with respect. Identify, address, and resolve problem areas that may be occurring within the partnership.

—
How can we work together to resolve disagreements or any other group conflicts?_

Identify preventively the need for problem solving skills. Set positive guidelines for conflict resolution.

—
What expectations do I have of my partners?_

Clarify and convey expectations. Develop a shared set of expectations.__

—
How will the group make decisions?

—
Discuss consensus building and shared leadership methods and how partnership will bring them to life.

—

Each HSC Partnership will tailor its set of collaboration norms by building on its own strengths and challenges. Discussion about these norms can draw from examples of what is working well for the HSC Partnership and what areas need improvement. These discussions offer partners many opportunities to observe and practice consensus building, group problem solving, and other skills that they will apply in their collaborative undertakings. They also promote effective, honest sharing of perceptions and concerns among the partners.

HSC Partnerships benefit from periodic reflections on their progress to date and on improvements that they need to make in the future. Appendix D includes a sample questionnaire and reflection activity that can be used to guide such activities. Using the partnership's first meeting as a reference point, the partnership can chart progress to date and identify lessons learned from its work together. Interviews and questionnaires completed by partners can inform the future direction by identifying partner's satisfaction with the planning phase to date and by making suggestions for improvement. Such self-appraisals shared with the group build a sense of ownership among partners and promote their willingness to make commitments to collaborative efforts.

The results of partners' reflections and self-appraisals help demonstrate their readiness to take more active roles in the HSC Partnership. The self-appraisal process also can help partners identify gaps in expertise or member representation that may need to be addressed. Information about new roles for partners and recruitment strategies is included in Stage 4 Developing Collaborative Relationships.

Building a Support Network: Publicizing Successes and Assessing Resource Needs of the Partnership

The purpose of Stage 3 Building a Support Network is to find ways to share the outcomes of the planning phase to date with decision makers and the larger community. Publicizing information about an HSC Partnership is an effective way to broaden and deepen its base of support. The partnership's approach expands at this stage, from the one-to-one cultivation of support used in earlier stages, to publicizing activities at a wide variety of public forums.

Publicity can serve many functions. The potential benefits of generating broader publicity about the HSC Partnership include:

- creating greater community awareness of the issues affecting children and families;
- spreading the word about the initial impact of HSC Partnership efforts (linkages, review of resources);

- building a broader network of support and respect for the HSC Partnership among decision makers;
- increasing the impact of the HSC Partnership and its ability to advocate for children and families;
- demonstrating the effectiveness of the HSC Partnership's approach;
- recruiting new members and broadening representation from the community; and
- identifying additional resources and funding opportunities.

Many strategies can be used to raise awareness about the work of an HSC Partnership. Examples of forums in which HSC Partnerships can publicize their work include:

- Local media (newspapers, network and cable TV stations)
- Agency, school, and community newsletters and other publications
- Professional association meetings and conferences
- PTA/PTO meetings and conferences
- Staff development and in-service meetings
- Pre-service sessions at schools of education, social work, public health, nursing, and other departments of colleges, community colleges, and universities (especially those in the community)
- Special events for children and families, ranging from campus open houses, health fairs, and luncheons to parades, tag sales, and carnivals
- Meetings of state and regional education or other service agencies that are interested in collaboration

At this point in the planning phase, it is likely that the partnership has been meeting for several months. Most partners can speak first-hand of linkages sparked by the partnership's work and of the impact that the HSC Partnership approach has had on partners themselves, on their families, and on the community. Information that might be appropriate for an HSC Partnership to publicize includes:

- Outcomes for children and families resulting from linkages among partners;
- Lessons learned from the planning phase in this particular community;

- Breadth of support and involvement of many people in the partnership's special events; and
- Personal and professional growth within individuals as a result of participating in the partnership.

Making presentations is usually a positive experience for partners. Such opportunities help them develop self-confidence and advocacy skills, and raise their level of involvement in and commitment to the HSC Partnership. The poise and effectiveness that partners develop in speaking about the HSC Partnership's efforts are inspiring to the rest of the partners as well as to the audience. The act of preparing presentations or writing articles also helps partners reinforce the impact that the partnership is having on them as well as on the community. These activities strengthen their commitment to the HSC Partnership and reward them for their involvement. Specific activities include the following:

- Use local media resources, such as community colleges, regional educational service centers, and cable television stations. Often these resources can provide reasonably priced services, studios, equipment, and staff to help prepare video presentations for HSC Partnerships.
- Use a team or panel of partners when making speaking engagements. This approach allows the partnership to provide the various perspectives of home, school, and community, and demonstrates the shared nature of the partnership. It also allows for shared recognition and growth opportunities.
- Use parents and community members as speakers at meetings of professional associations and at professional conferences. Their experiences and insights often have a profound impact on the audience.

Some partnerships enjoy organizing events and short-term projects to publicize their collaborative efforts. With a core group of partners in place, it may be helpful for partners to think about recruiting new members to fill short-term needs and a wider variety of roles. Partners can extend invitations to many individuals, ask them to attend meetings for a limited time, help with specific projects, and then exit with thanks and appreciation. In these situations, it is important to keep the vision as the “cement” that unites the partnership’s efforts. This focus will help keep projects from becoming tangential or disruptive to the partnership development process.

Reflections and Feedback

When partners stop to assess their progress during Stage 3, they will consider their success in identifying a common vision for the partnership as well as their continued development of consensus building and other group interaction skills. Some suggested questions for this examination are listed here.

How much common ground emerges in the vision statement? Are there critical areas where common ground is lacking?

Are desired outcomes shared among partners? How might the partnership develop consensus regarding priorities for collaborative action?

How readily do partners build consensus? In what areas do they need further refinement of group interaction skills?

What connections are partners making at and between meetings? Do partners need help to make progress in this area?

Which partners are not attending meetings regularly? What insights are gained from follow up calls or visits to them?

How accessible are the local media? What other opportunities are available for publicizing the successes of the partnership?

Milestones

Stage 3 introduces new levels of specificity to the partnership's work together. Building from a common base of knowledge and group readiness, partners develop a shared agenda for collaborative action. Partners share their new insights with increasingly wider audiences. The HSC Partnership will be ready for Stage 4 when it has:

- developed a vision statement that captures a shared dream of the ideal community for children and families;
- identified partners' desired outcomes and priority concerns about what needs to change in order to move toward the ideal community;
- built consensus and agreement about how partners will work together;
- participated in self-appraisal activities to assess the progress of the partnership; and
- initiated publicity activities to increase the membership, awareness, and resources of the HSC Partnership.

Stage 4: Moving to Collaborative Action

Overview

Stage 4 is a transitional stage for the HSC Partnership that moves it from the planning phase to collaborative action. Partners identify one or two of their most important priority concerns and select activities and strategies to address them collaboratively. As implementation plans emerge, the HSC Partnership recruits new members and develops the shared leadership structure which will be retained after the planning phase. Partners identify local resources and funding opportunities that will support their collaborative

efforts. Partners also discuss how they can act as advocates at work and in the community in order to help others implement collaborative strategies for responding to the needs of children and families.

By participating in Stage 4, the HSC Partnership will gain the following:

- an understanding of the feasibility of its priority concerns;
- insights about a range of potential activities and strategies to apply in its collaborative efforts;
- written descriptions of intended collaborative efforts, needed resources, and roles of partners in the collaborative undertaking;
- opportunities to practice and observe shared leadership and new roles that support the implementation of collaborative efforts;
- opportunities to draw upon the support of decision makers and identify other resources to implement collaborative efforts; and
- insights from assessments of its progress and shared responsibility for its collaborative efforts.

Needs Sensing: Designing Collaborative Efforts

The purpose of needs sensing activities during Stage 4 is to clearly identify the HSC Partnership's ideas for collaborative action. Throughout the planning phase, ideas for collaborative efforts have emerged from the HSC Partnership's discussions. Partners now can design a collaborative project that fits with their shared vision and will likely have an impact in the community. The tasks facing partners are to:

- assess the feasibility of potential collaborative efforts
- gather information about promising practices (for example, by reading and by inviting experts and knowledgeable individuals in the community to share their experiences and ideas); and
- draft written material such as action plans, project descriptions, and work plans that describe the collaborative effort, its strategies, needed resources, and collaborative roles for partners.

The following paragraphs address each of these topics in more detail.

Assessing the Feasibility of Potential Collaborative Efforts

The extent to which the prospective project will be able to do all of these things is reflected in the answers to the questions in the following box. By answering these questions, partners not only assess the feasibility of the proposed project or projects, but also discuss the fundamentals of

collaboration. These fundamentals are reflected in the *Rationale* that is offered for the questions in the same box.

Assessing the Feasibility of Potential HSCP Collaborative Efforts_

Purpose and Guiding Questions_

Moves the community toward their vision. What desired outcome(s) does the priority concern address?

Benefits from a collaborative approach. How will this priority concern benefit from a collaborative approach? Who will benefit, and what are the benefits of using a collaborative approach in addressing this concern?

Acceptable to the community. Is the community likely to support the partnership in this effort?

Requires reasonable resources. What resources can the partnership contribute to the project? What additional support does the partnership need from local sources, new partners, and/or new funders?

Stirs excitement within the partnership. Are partners excited about the possibilities that this project presents in the community?

Rationale

Helps partners keep an “eye on the prize” so that their activities align with their vision and desired outcomes. Projects are strongest when they fit with the partners' vision and desired outcomes so that partners see connections between their past and future work together._

Partners apply what they've learned about linkages and identify who will benefit from collaborative projects that they select to undertake together. __

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Partners also assess whether the collaborative project is politically, socially, and culturally acceptable and worth the effort and resources that it will require. Partners compare and contrast benefits and risks in designing a project.

Projects should involve partners in ongoing, concrete ways. Partners begin to identify the need and opportunities for additional resource requirements. Large, expensive projects should have manageable starting and ending points for partners. _

Undertaking a new project requires a lot of energy and drive, Thus, enthusiasm is essential to launch and bring projects to life. If approaches are met with a lukewarm response from many partners, the project is likely to fizzle. In such cases, keep exploring—a better fit with partners' interests is yet to be found.

Keep in mind that a prospective project for collaborative action should:

- have a clear, strong connection with the partnership's vision;
- benefit from a collaborative approach;
- be likely to receive supported in the community;
- require reasonable resources, and/or the partnership's commitment to securing the necessary resources; and
- stir excitement and enthusiasm within the partnership.

Partners need to discuss, problem solve, and achieve consensus about the one or two projects that seem most feasible. When consensus and enthusiasm emerge about potential collaborative efforts, the HSC Partnership can then identify how it will design and implement a project. A useful starting point is learning about promising practices that can address the partnership's potential collaborative effort and lead to its success.

Gathering Information about Promising Practices

Identifying, seeking, and obtaining information about promising practices is an effective way to guide the partnership in designing its collaborative effort. Partners will use the information to select strategies and activities that can be undertaken collaboratively. The purpose of gathering information about promising practices is to help make the collaborative effort as effective as possible. Building from promising practices can save an HSC Partnership a great deal of time, energy, and resources, as well as increase the chances of having a meaningful impact on the priority concerns being addressed. The concerns and approach of the HSC Partnership as well as needs and resources of the community will ensure that the collaborative effort is unique to the community.

Partners can gather a wealth of information about research and promising practices from several sources (for example, libraries, local school districts, state education agencies, regional educational laboratories, colleges, universities, the National Diffusion Network, and other such organizations). The partnership can also benefit from investigating efforts that are being conducted in disciplines or fields that are less familiar to partners. The following questions and potential sources of information can serve as a guide to ensure that the partnership "casts a wide net" in its efforts to identify and get information about promising practices:

What agencies or organizations are addressing the partnership's priority concern or similar concerns? Examples might include the following:

- *a Head Start or community agency has a small pilot project addressing a similar concern or one aspect of the priority concern;*
- *a community college, college, or university is conducting research or a pilot study about a priority concern;*
- *a regional or state agency is addressing the priority concern; another school district is addressing a similar concern; or*
- *a community-based program addresses the priority concern but serves a different neighborhood or population.*

Who else is working with the target population? Examples might include:

- *community agencies that work with the target population to address different concerns;*
- *regional or state agencies which share a concern about the target population;*
- *another school district that is doing work with a similar target population; or*
- *a community college, college, or university that is conducting research or pilot studies with the target population.*

Partners can invite experts, practitioners, community leaders, and others to speak to them about work with the HSCP target population and/or the priority concern. Speakers might also describe how their programs operate, what they've learned, and offer suggestions about how the HSC Partnership might apply promising practices to address its priority concern. In some cases it may be appropriate for speakers to join the partnership and help partners implement the collaborative effort. Partners also might organize a site visit so that they can see and learn about the program in action. As partners attempt to learn more about promising practices, they might use the following questions as a guide:

- How do the promising practices fit with the partnership's vision, desired outcomes, and priority concerns?
- How do (or could) promising practices utilize a collaborative approach?
- How would the partnership tailor the promising practices to the needs of the community?
- What resources are needed to support such promising practices as a collaborative effort? Is the HSC Partnership willing and able to seek and secure such resources?

Partners can discuss these questions and use the resulting information as a basis to select strategies and activities that become the substance of their collaborative effort. The next step is for partners to capture their insights and commitments to collaborative actions in writing.

Drafting Written Materials

SEDL's field experience suggests that communities benefit a great deal from developing their own descriptions of the collaborative efforts that they will undertake. Because of the wide range of backgrounds and experiences partners bring to this HSCP effort, the partnership often needs guidance to ensure that written products are appropriate and useful. Carefully consider partners' skills, common perspectives, and the intended use of the products when the HSC Partnership develops written materials describing its proposed collaborative efforts. Some HSC Partnerships have members with strong writing skills and benefit from their expertise at this stage. In such situations, aim to ensure that the whole partnership maintains involvement with and ownership of the products and the work to be done.

The products should describe the HSC Partnership's concerns and intended collaborative responses to them in ways that connect with partners' experience and knowledge. Products can be a mix of formal and informal written descriptions that the HSC Partnership can use to document their collaborative efforts over time. Suggestions for written products that have been found useful in documenting HSCP progress include the following:

- ***A project description*** gives a brief overview of the HSC Partnership's priority concern and identifies the promising practices on which the effort is based. The project description outlines the collaborative strategies or activities that the partnership will use to address the concern; describes the target population to be served; and provides the names of contact persons who can provide further information. Project descriptions can be useful because they standardize information that partners use to "get a foot in the door" with decision makers, potential funders, new partners, and others.
- ***An action plan*** delineates information about the collaborative effort and clarifies activities and roles. It describes the scope of the effort by detailing the activities and strategies. It identifies how the effort will operate, including partners' roles and responsibilities, and resources available for the effort. The action plan also identifies expected outcomes and how progress toward them will be measured, with special attention to outcomes for children and families. A timeline usually accompanies the action plan.
- ***A proposed work plan*** is a tool describing tasks that partners assume as they launch the collaborative effort. Its purpose is to identify the organizational and logistical work associated with the collaborative effort. It is usually a working document that partners regularly revise and update as the project progresses. The focus of tasks changes over time,

from planning to implementation. Some partnerships form subcommittees and divide the work by topics (such as recruitment, fundraising, etc.) and develop work plans for each topic.

HSC Partnerships can develop other written information as needed or desired, such as brochures, reports, etc.

The collaborative efforts designed by HSC Partnerships can range from broad-based projects to small-scale, special targeted efforts. The following chart illustrates how two HSC Partnerships have applied needs sensing activities in designing collaborative efforts. The information demonstrates how HSC partners connected their priority concerns and reflected these connections in designing their collaborative efforts.

Designing Collaborative Efforts__

Priority Concern_

To strengthen parent-child relationships and develop communication skills

To build the self-esteem of children in the community

Collaborative Effort_____

A parent-child interaction program, Familias Adelante, designed to improve communication and parenting skills before middle school years of the child

—
An adopt-a-grade project, after school recreation program, and other school activities designed to increase community involvement in the school

A children's summer reading program at the Housing Authority, which involves partners and community resources, and is designed both to improve children's reading skills and to increase community involvement

The HSC Partnership often serves as a catalyst for widespread community action. Communities that form HSC Partnerships tend to renew and strengthen efforts to address the needs of children and families outside as well as within the partnership. Thus, the impact of the HSC Partnership can go far beyond changes brought about by its direct efforts.

Developing Collaborative Relationships: Recruiting New Members and Exploring New Roles for Partners

Developing Collaborative Relationships during Stage 4 involves helping partners to encourage and support each other as they undertake new roles and share responsibility for implementing collaborative efforts. At this stage the partnership does the following:

- identify partners' contributions to collaborative efforts;
- develop shared leadership; and
- develop recruitment strategies to strengthen the partnership's resource base for collaborative action.

Identifying Partners' Contributions to Collaborative Efforts

Now that partners are identifying the collaborative efforts they want to undertake, they can begin to explore the new roles they will assume in these efforts. The following questions can help partners identify how the HSC Partnership will carry out its commitment to shared responsibility for its collaborative efforts:

- What resources are needed to support the collaborative effort?
- What can my agency or organization and I contribute to the effort?
- What can my agency and I do with other partners?
- What additional resources from outside the partnership are needed?
- What are some potential sources for these additional resources?

Through discussion about resources needed for the project, partners identify concrete ways that they can contribute to the collaborative effort. Some suggestions to help make this process a positive, successful experience for partners include the following:

- Partners usually have greater interest in one particular activity or aspect of the collaborative effort. Form subcommittees and encourage partners to participate in topics or work areas that are of greatest interest to them.

- Divide work into "bite-size," manageable pieces and be sensitive to partners' limitations of time and expertise. Develop teams to carry out work when limitations are pressing. A team approach also helps partners overcome shyness, lack of confidence, and limited time that may make them hesitant to take on new roles.
- Some partners will need help letting go of control, as they might see themselves as the most capable, or are uncomfortable with the prospect of turning responsibility over to those not as experienced. Again, a team approach can be an effective way to reduce or alleviate such concerns.
- At meetings, problem solve about barriers that partners encounter as they carry out their work plans so that all partners feel supported. Make meetings a time for work in order to minimize the need for additional work outside of meetings. Occasional special meetings may work well, but be cautious about overloading partners with new responsibilities.
- Provide a supportive environment at meetings for partners to practice new roles and make adjustments, as needed. A supportive environment enables partners to learn about and flourish in new roles, often with new confidence and increased self-esteem.

Developing Shared Leadership

During Stage 4, the HSC Partnership explores how it will share leadership for the implementation phase. SEDL's demonstration sites have used two structures for shared leadership. One is by conducting partnership meetings, ensuring communication among partners, and sharing information with decision makers and the community. The other is by carrying out the collaborative efforts of the partnership. The approaches adopted by an HSC Partnership for each of these leadership opportunities will vary, depending on a number of factors that include the following:

- how partners emerge who are willing to share leadership roles;
- how ready the group is to work with colleagues in new roles;
- what resources are available to assist with logistics and communication costs associated with partnership activities and collaborative efforts; and
- what kinds of community, school, and agency support exist for the HSC Partnership and its collaborative efforts.

The following paragraphs provide further discussion of each of these factors.

Emergence of leaders. HSC Partnerships aim for representation of home, school, and community either formally or informally in developing shared leadership. Cultivate candidates for leadership positions throughout the planning phase. Strategies that help partners build leadership skills include one-to-one grooming, experiences with linkage efforts, and the publicity

efforts of the partnership. At SEDL's demonstration sites, partners did exceptional jobs of assuming new roles and modeling sensitivity and responsiveness to the HSC Partnership as they implemented collaborative efforts. If staff are hired to carry out the collaborative efforts of the HSC Partnership, they need to work with and be sensitive to the partnership. These new staff need to maintain the involvement of partners and draw upon their commitment to the collaborative effort.

Group readiness for shared leadership. In Stage 2 of this booklet group readiness as a factor in partnership development was discussed. Stage 4 of the HSC Partnership builds from this foundation as it devises a structure of shared leadership. Two models for sharing leadership of the HSC Partnership emerged from SEDL's field experiences. The first shared leadership structure is a formal triad of leaders, representing home, school, and community that shares responsibility for the partnership. This core group meets regularly to plan partnership meetings and ensure that collaborative efforts are making progress. The second follows a standard format for partnership meetings and rotates responsibilities for specific items of the meeting agenda. Both models of shared leadership for partnership meetings use committees to accomplish collaborative undertakings. The committees involve small groups of self-selected partners to identify and carry out work plans. Each committee has one or two facilitators or spokespersons who coordinate the work and report progress to the partnership.

Resources for logistics and communication. There are always costs associated with collaboration efforts. It takes enormous amounts of time, effort, and resources to ensure strong communication and involvement of many persons in a collaborative effort. In addition to the time costs associated with attending meetings and preparing summaries, the HSC Partnership needs to find sources of support for the reproduction and mailing costs associated with partnership meetings. Some partnerships rotate responsibility for these costs, while others have one school or agency provide these resources. The generosity and problem solving skills of partners go far in ensuring that the HSC Partnership can carry out its collaborative efforts.

Community, school, and agency support for the HSC Partnership. When conducting a collaborative venture, the HSC Partnership must raise awareness about the needs of children and families and draw support from the community. The partnership's progress is greatest when schools and agencies offer support and resources for the effort. From SEDL's field experiences there emerged an "accordion phenomenon." There were times when support was abundant. Schools and agencies offered extensive resources and communication was strong. At these times, the partnership's progress was tremendous—and then came a "squeeze." Turnover and policy changes in the community, school, and/or agencies affected the level of support the HSC Partnership received from decision makers, which, in turn, slowed the partnership's momentum. This phenomenon is not new or unique to HSC Partnerships. Rather, it reflects the fact that the partnership is

serving as a change agent. Therefore, it is vulnerable to and affected by the community, state and national climate. The planning phase that an HSC Partnership has undertaken can make a difference in how partners respond to such changes. By equipping partners with a common base of knowledge, a shared vision, problem-solving skills, and strong collaborative relationships, they are better able to respond to increasing or decreasing support for collaboration.

Developing Recruitment Strategies

Stage 4 presents an opportune time to re-examine representative membership of the home, school, and community in the partnership. The following chart offers suggestions for recruitment strategies to address common membership needs that arise with HSC Partnerships.

Common Membership Needs__

More community representatives (for example, from child protective services, Head Start, community health clinics, local businesses, etc.)

More parents

More school staff

Special expertise or representation on areas of emerging interest

Maintaining partner involvement

Suggested Recruitment Strategies__

Invite a staff person to give a presentation on his or her agency's services at a partnership meeting. Publicize the partnership's work in local paper._

Challenge partners to each invite one new parent to the next partnership meeting. Give presentations about the partnership at PTA/PTO meetings._

Follow up with superintendents and principals to secure release time for members. Schedule meetings after school.__

Identify potential partners and invite them to give presentations to current partners about the issue._

Follow up to learn why partners are leaving. Report lessons learned to partnership and discuss at partnership meetings. Consistently share written communication with all partners regardless of their attendance patterns.

If recruitment efforts result in the addition of many new members, be sure to take time to fully orient them to the HSC Partnership. Partners also need to assess the impact of many new members on the partnership. They need to ask themselves, “Can we continue the planning phase from this point or do we have a new group which needs to start over at Stage 1?” Most partnerships that bring on many new members benefit from repeating or reworking some activities from earlier stages. Other activities might include special orientation meetings, a buddy system that pairs an old member with a new member, site visits to the new member’s agency to discuss the partnership, and written summaries of the partnership’s progress. In addition, it is important to take time at HSC Partnership meetings to do the following:

- welcome new members and express appreciation for the time they’ve taken to come to meetings, help with special projects, etc.;
- discuss collaboration and the planning phase activity in which the partnership is involved;
- demonstrate the respect and equality afforded all partners; and
- demonstrate the consensus building process that the HSC Partnership follows.

Assimilating new members takes time. Aim to find a balance at partnership meetings between being totally sidetracked by new members, and carrying on “business as usual” without paying attention to new members. The effectiveness of the HSC Partnership hinges on its members, so always keep an “open door” policy.

Building a Support Network: Securing Resources and Advocating for Children and Families

The purpose of Building a Support Network during Stage 4 is to enable the HSC Partnership to move from the planning phase to a new phase: implementing collaborative efforts. Partners now have the vision, skills, and relationships necessary to identify local resources and funding opportunities that can help them implement collaborative efforts. Partners draw upon the support of decision makers that they’ve cultivated during the planning phase. They increase publicity efforts so that the partnership can raise awareness about intended efforts and the need for resources. Partners also discuss how they can act as advocates in the community to help others respond to the needs of children and families. This section discusses two tasks that partners use to pursue this strategy: securing resources; and increasing advocacy efforts.

Securing Resources

Partners’ willingness and ability to build support and secure resources will determine, in part, the scope and effectiveness of the collaborative effort.

Potential sources of support include partners' agencies and organizations, new partners, local businesses, other private organizations, and state or federal funds. Local resource support may be immediately available for the collaborative effort. But in other communities, decision makers may greet partners with mixed responses. Some suggestions to help partnerships handle reservations about HSCP resource support or the unavailability of them include:

- Spend time at partnership meetings identifying the most attractive points of the project. Outline its likely benefits (for each potential supporter, as well as for children and families), as well as sticking points that are likely to arise in discussions with potential supporters. Brainstorm about possible solutions or responses to the likely barriers. Think about alternative ways to approach potential sources if they are undecided or not immediately supportive.
- Consider how to expand or scale back the collaborative effort, depending on the level and timing of resources. Flexibility is key to taking action when new funds are not the primary source of support. The collective problem-solving abilities of the partnership as well as its drive to take action often can do wonders with a “shoestring” budget.
- Identify resources that are alternatives to direct funding. In-kind contributions of staff time, training materials, office space, and coverage in newsletters and other informal publications are examples of wonderful ways to move implementation forward without directly funding the effort.
- Build momentum by publicizing information about emerging supporters. Count every foot in the door—meeting with a key decision maker, an accepted invitation to speak to the partnership, interest from new partners—as a successful and meaningful contribution. Hearing about the partnership from several sources can build support and attractiveness. Think about how applying pressure from various vantage points might help raise resource levels.

The collaborative efforts described here draw almost exclusively from existing funds, in-kind contributions, and shared resources. A new look at funding and other resources in the partnership can be surprisingly productive.

Advocating for Children and Families

Stage 4 expands and changes the focus of the publicity efforts begun in Stage 3. Previous efforts focused on strengthening the HSC Partnership. New efforts need to focus on improving outcomes for children and families in a community. Partners have directly experienced change that enables them to speak clearly to others about the impact of working collaboratively. Parents often take leadership roles in advocacy efforts. They are free to speak out on issues and meet with policy makers in ways that staff of some agencies and organizations are not. Suggested approaches that partners can take in their advocacy efforts include the following:

- Use a variety of ways to inform state and federal legislators about the HSC Partnership's work. Develop personal relationships by writing letters and meeting with them. The HSC Partnership's collaborative response to the needs of children and families can provide valuable insights and concrete examples for other communities.
- Meet regularly with local decision makers (for example, school superintendents, school boards, directors of human service agencies, directors of community health centers) to advocate for policy changes and expanded services that support the vision of the HSC Partnership. Knowing that a diverse group of citizens is monitoring the progress and responsiveness of schools and service providers can help increase the responsiveness of those systems and increase the likelihood of systems changing to support children and families.
- Invite staff of state agencies to attend HSC Partnership meetings. Hearing first-hand about priorities for funding, special projects, and so forth can give partners new insights about potential resources. By demonstrating the strength of the partnership and its collaborative approach in action, the HSC Partnership also gains credibility that it cannot gain from written material.
- State Task Forces and special committees often need representation from parents. Find out how partners in this role can be appointed to these positions. They will make very valuable contributions to improving education and services for children and families.

The agencies, organizations, and programs where partners work often face a different set of challenges in their advocacy efforts. Agency staff often need to advocate for what they've learned "back at the office," both in terms of support for the HSC Partnership and for system changes that collaboration often necessitates. Ideas for building support for collaboration within system settings are as follows:

- Build a support group of those wanting to work collaboratively within the organization. Organize informal brown bag lunches for sharing lessons learned from partnership meetings, or provide places for posting copies of partnership meeting summaries and pertinent articles from journals and other publications.
- Find ways to keep colleagues informed about what's happening in the HSC Partnership and how they can make contributions. Even if only one staff person can attend meetings, their colleagues can be a valuable resource and source of support for the HSC Partnership. For example, they can recruit parents from their client base or classroom contacts to join the HSC Partnership.

- Help colleagues build networks in the community through the partnership and other contacts. Invite partners to come individually to talk about their work with you and your colleagues and find projects you can work on jointly.
- Demonstrate optimism by letting the needs of children and families drive the HSCP work. Find risk levels that are comfortable and actions that can be effective. Be generous with your time and enthusiasm when working to address the needs of children and families in the community.

Reflections and Feedback

As partners move through Stage 4, they will learn to translate the common vision developed in Stage 3 into actual changes in their community. When the partners stop to examine their progress, they will evaluate their ability to truly collaborate and will begin to see what their partnership can produce. Some suggested questions for this examination are listed here.

Are promising practices evident in the activities selected by the partnership? How can the design and approach of selected collaborative activities be strengthened?

How comfortable are partners in assuming new roles? How do other partners respond to them in those new roles? What support do partners need to strengthen their skills, openness, and ability to work collaboratively?

What training and reinforcement do partners need to support the development of leadership and other skills?

How is the partnership ensuring communication with and involvement of people outside of the partnership to enable them to support the partnership and its collaborative activities?

What support for the collaborative activities emerges from decision makers? How can their support be increased?

Milestones

As a result of the planning phase, the HSC Partnership shares a vision and direction to better address the needs of children and families in its community. The HSC Partnership possesses a solid base of information, an action plan, and a support network with which to better serve the community. Partners have a firm foundation and deep commitment from which to take action to improve outcomes for children and families in the community.

The HSC Partnership will complete the planning phase when it has:

- Identified and developed descriptions of how the collaborative efforts will be carried out, what resources will be needed, and what collaborative roles partners will take on.

- Secured the necessary resources to carry out the collaborative efforts.
- identified the HSC Partnership's ongoing role in supporting the implementation of collaborative efforts.
- Developed an action plan to document progress and support partners as they implement collaborative efforts.

Summary

Based on research findings, and on the results of its experience providing ongoing long-term technical assistance to five demonstration sites in the Southwestern Region, SEDL has developed a framework for the planning phase of Home, School, and Community Partnership (HSCP) development. This framework consists of four stages that are typically accomplished over a period of 12 to 18 months. The four stages and the expected outcomes for each stage are briefly outlined, as follows:

Stage 1: Initiating the Partnership. Potential partners begin to engage in a dialogue about the needs of children and families in the community, develop respect for each other's differing viewpoints, and come to understand the concepts of HSC Partnership and collaboration, and what these might mean for their community.

Stage 2: Building the Partnership. Potential partners begin to identify gaps in existing services and resources, prioritize their concerns, strengthen group cohesiveness, participate in joint activities, and develop mechanisms for sharing information and resources.

Stage 3: Developing a Shared Vision. Partners continue to prioritize desired outcomes of their work together and develop a vision which reflects those outcomes. They explore ideas for realizing their vision, and share responsibility for establishing linkages across programs.

Stage 4: Translating Planning into Collaborative Action. Partners identify and assess the feasibility of activities that address their desired outcomes, and develop a plan for implementing one or more feasible activities.

For each stage of the planning process, SEDL staff have identified strategies which help HSC partners accomplish the expected outcomes of that stage. The strategies are briefly defined as follows:

Needs Sensing. This is an information-gathering process where partners collect, synthesize, question, and analyze ideas and information.

Developing Collaborative Relationship. This is a team-building process that helps a group of diverse individuals coalesce, build trust, and achieve consensus to develop shared leadership and decision making.

Building a Support Network. This is a resource-building process that creates and strengthens support for collaboration—support from school and community decision makers, from the general public, and from other sources of financial, volunteer, and in-kind assistance.

In reality, the planning process always operates in a dynamic environment. While the stages and strategies are presented sequentially in this booklet, actual HSC Partnerships will find themselves going in and out of the four stages, as well as shifting back and forth between the three strategies. The length of time and intensity of each stage will vary from partnership to partnership depending upon many factors (for example, the individuals who participate, the changing social and political climate of the community, and the technical assistance provided during the planning process). SEDL staff hope that the stages which this framework identifies will serve as guideposts to developing HSC Partnerships, so that they can more easily find their way through the complex but worthwhile task of forming partnerships to improve the lives of children and families in their communities.

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Appendix A: Technical Assistance Approaches

Since 1991, staff from SEDL's Home School, and Community Partnership (HSCP) Project have provided intensive technical assistance to demonstration sites, and, over time, have established one site in each state of SEDL's five-state region. Many people ask how SEDL identified the communities in which to work. In most cases, the communities themselves invited SEDL to help address long-underserved needs of children and families. Similarities among the communities beyond that, however, are limited. Familiarity with and openness to the concepts of partnership and collaboration varied a great deal between communities. Some communities were rural in nature, while others were located in large urban centers. Some communities had a history of working collaboratively, while others were new to this approach. Some communities experienced strong resistance from decision makers about developing a HSC Partnership, whereas others embraced the idea wholeheartedly.

SEDL's approach to technical assistance was individually tailored for each site; but there were some commonalities. Five staff members divided the responsibilities for conducting a planning phase in the five demonstration sites. SEDL staff worked in teams of two to plan and provide technical assistance for each site. Occasionally, staff members visited and assisted with technical assistance efforts at sites that were not their primary responsibility. All staff members were kept abreast of and offered feedback about each site's progress through regular staff meetings. SEDL's technical assistance in general included:

- Meeting with educational leaders to explore their interest in working with SEDL to form an HSC Partnership;
- Developing a diverse group of partners representing home, school, and community who considered forming an HSC Partnership;
- Securing a commitment from potential partners to participate in a long-term planning phase;
- Organizing and conducting monthly meetings of the partners and disseminating meeting information to partners before and after meetings;
- Establishing ongoing communication with and among partners between meetings (for example, preparing for future meetings, linking existing services); and
- Developing a shared understanding among partners about their roles and responsibilities in the partnership.

Two sites, one in Arkansas and one in Texas were launched in October, 1991. The Louisiana and New Mexico sites were initiated during 1993. An Oklahoma site began its partnership efforts in 1994. The sites are profiled in Appendix B.

Appendix B: Profiles of Demonstration Sites

Background

Since 1991, SEDL's Goal 1 has facilitated and documented the development of five home, school and community partnerships (HSCP) across the Southwestern Region. SEDL launched two sites in 1992. Two additional sites began in 1993, and a fifth site was initiated in 1994. Each of the partnerships differs from the others and together they provide information from a cross section of school identities. The characteristics SEDL considered in seeking this range of representation include: state where the site is located; urban versus rural settings; grade levels involved in the partnership; focal point of the partnership in terms of school versus district versus state level partnership; and the major ethnic groups reflected in the partnership school or schools.

SEDL staff have worked with each site to tailor the planning phase described in this booklet to meet its local needs. The sites are now in different stages of development, based on the length of time they have received technical assistance and the nature of the collaborative efforts that they defined for themselves. Brief descriptions of each site are offered below. Each description provides background about the community served; the HSC partnership's initial direction and goals; major accomplishments; challenges, and the evolution of its membership. Each description closes with a list of partners who have participated with the HSC partnership. The sites are presented in order from oldest site to newest site.

El Paso County, Texas

The Community. El Paso County sprawls for many miles, adjoining Mexico along the Rio Grande River. Except for the city of El Paso, which is located at one edge, the county is dotted by small, rural communities located many miles from each other in a desert terrain. Fabens and Montana Vista, the two communities involved in the project, are each about a 30-minute drive from the city of El Paso and even farther from each other. Fabens is a long established agricultural community of primarily Hispanic residents, many of whom were born and raised in the community. Fabens has experienced tremendous growth over the past few years with immigration from both Mexico and the United States. Risinger Primary school serves about 800 children from preschool through second grade. In contrast, Montana Vista is a newly established community of primarily Mexican immigrants and has established its own economic base. Montana Vista Elementary serves over 1100 children from kindergarten through third grade.

Initial Planning and Direction. The El Paso County HSCP began in 1992 as an outgrowth of SEDL's Early Childhood Transition Project. The Transition Project worked to improve the transition of children and families from the El Paso County Head Start Program at Risinger Primary and Montana Vista Elementary School. The El Paso County Partnership

recognized the need to improve access to and availability of health and social services in these rural El Paso County communities. For its collaborative efforts, the partnership decided to address the need for children and families to receive services from and be taught by adults who live in the community. The partnership sought information about effective programs to help children aspire to higher educational goals and to prepare residents in the community to work in health and education careers.

Major Accomplishments. The partnership has a number of accomplishments in the form of programs that have been created using the resources available to the partners through their respective agencies. These programs are briefly identified here and reflect the accomplishments of a partnership that has moved through Stage 4 of the planning phase.

- Mother-Daughter Program aims to keep girls in school by increasing their educational goals and self-confidence to achieve those goals and involves their mothers as primary mentors in the process
- *Familias Adelante* is an expansion of the Mother-Daughter concept in that it works with the entire family to provide information that is vital to its health and education
- Certification of Volunteer Community Health Workers trains local residents in basic health and nutrition issues and places them in service centers to teach and provide services to the community
- Teaching credential opportunities for substitute teachers uses the distance learning technologies available through the college and universities in El Paso to offer college classes and credit to local residents who are substitute teachers

Challenges. The partners have had the challenge of looking for creative ways to continue their networking meetings and monitoring of all of the projects after SEDL staff leave the partnership. This includes writing the meeting summaries, disseminating information among the partners, and exploring additional resources to support the partnership effort. Although the partners have assumed leadership in shaping the agendas, setting up meeting logistics, and facilitating parts of their monthly three-hour meetings, they are all doing this in addition to their 8:00 to 5:00 responsibilities. An additional challenge is to increase the participation of parents in the partnership.

Membership. This partnership is now a strong networking organization within El Paso County with membership from both of the elementary schools, social service providers in the area, institutions of higher education, and other large organizations from the city of El Paso. The partnership is expanding to include the middle schools in their two communities and welcomes newcomers from all areas of the communities.

West Memphis, Arkansas

The Community. West Memphis is located in the Mississippi Delta part of the state of Arkansas approximately 20 miles west of Memphis, Tennessee. The Delta region is generally characterized by extreme poverty and associated problems such as low education levels. This particular community of about 28,000 people is plagued by high rates of unemployment, violent crime, illiteracy, substance abuse, infant mortality, and teen pregnancy. The focus of the HSC partnership is the Jackson Elementary School community which serves approximately 400 children in grades kindergarten through sixth. Its residents are predominantly African American, low-income, and still segregated by cultural mores.

Initial Planning and Direction. The West Memphis HSC demonstration site is an outgrowth of a networking and fact-finding trip to the Mississippi Delta taken by SEDL's Goal 1 and Goal 2 staff in spring, 1992. Since October 1992, partners have met at least monthly. As a result of the planning process in West Memphis, the HSC partnership has chosen to focus on increasing the self-esteem of children at the elementary school.

Major Accomplishments. This partnership has found maximum use of the resources available in the wider community as it moved through Stage 4 to collaborative action. Their success in applying available resources has resulted in both ongoing structures for involving parents and community in education and annual events. The major accomplishments of the partnership are described below.

- L. R. Jackson PTA chapter was implemented by the partnership and now operates as one of the demonstration site's partners.
- Teacher Appreciation Week involves the PTA Room Mothers and HSC partners in showing appreciation for all of the school's teachers during a designated week.
- Adopt-A-Grade program recruits local businesses and leaders to support individual grade levels at the school by providing resources to those teachers, classrooms, and students.
- Great Expectations training for L. R. Jackson teachers during an in service conference and a summer institute have improved teacher morale and dedication.
- End of Year Awards program recognizes the achievement of teachers and students during the school year.
- Social services coordination by a social worker who serves the students and families of the school.

Challenges. The partners have been challenged by various obstacles to the objectives they set for reaching their goals. These challenges reflect the difficulties caused by conflicting political interests within the community. The situation was more difficult early in the partnership's formation when partners were learning about more effective communication and delegating responsibilities. Over time, the leadership team has taken responsibility for meeting these challenges on behalf of the partnership and the result has created a tighter bond among them and a real sense of unity in their ideas and problem solving ability.

Membership. This HSC Partnership has maintained a strong balance of home, school, and community representation in both its general membership and its three-member leadership team. The leadership team is made up of one community leader, one parent from the school, and one teacher.

New Orleans, Louisiana

The Community. Mahalia Jackson elementary school represents SEDL's first urban HSC partnership. The school is a beautiful historical site in the heart of central city New Orleans in a neighborhood that is over run with all of the inner city problems that are common today. Despite the characteristics and factors of the heavily populated, impoverished and violence-laden streets surrounding the school, it has an impressive attendance percentage. The school offers prekindergarten through 5th grade instruction to 539 students. The students are all African American, 98% qualify for free/reduced lunch, and live in close proximity to the school.

Initial Planning and Direction. After a series of discussions involving the regional educational service center and central office staff, the New Orleans Public Schools selected the Mahalia Jackson Elementary School and its community as the HSC partnership site for Louisiana. The HSC partnership held its first official meeting in April 1994. With strong leadership from an innovative principal, the HSC partnership has set goals and developed a mission statement to work collaboratively in preparing students for success, not merely survival.

Major Accomplishments. This partnership is still in Stage 4 of the planning phase and is preparing to move to collaborative action. Thus, the major accomplishments reflect a young HSCP that is still considering the best way to address the concerns they have identified in their school community. These accomplishments are described in the following paragraphs.

- The neighborhood where this school is located and its immediate community have become aware of the school and its conditions due to participation in the HSC Partnership.
- The Parent Survey was organized and conducted by the partnership to determine the parents' views of what the school can do to assist the

parents, better serve the students, and involve the parents in the school and the education of their children.

- Mahalia Jackson Jumps is an annual celebration of the partnership to provide general information and other resources to the community, to remind the neighborhood of the partnership's purpose, and to recruit additional partners.

Challenges. A continuing issue at the Louisiana site is maintaining and increasing partnership participation since the unexpected illness of the principal in October when the partnership was still in early stages of formation. This principal had a charismatic presence that encouraged participation from teachers and parents. During her extended leave of absence that participation diminished significantly. Additionally, her absence has had a direct impact on planning and implementation of projects, development of a leadership structure and selection of leadership.

Membership. The HSC partnership used its parent survey as a recruitment tool and has worked to involve more parents and school staff in the partnership. This partnership has had its strongest participation by the community that surrounds Mahalia Jackson Elementary school. Of equal impact has been the participation of education professionals from the city of New Orleans and the state of Louisiana.

New Mexico

The Community. The New Mexico demonstration site is actually a network of eight communities, located throughout the state, that represents the state's cultural diversity. The eight communities are: Farmington, Albuquerque, Pecos Valley, San Felipe, Cuba, Belen, Los Padillas, and Las Cruces. These sites are both rural and urban with significant numbers of Hispanic and Native American student populations. As a whole, New Mexico suffers high rates of poverty and the problems associated with it such as teen pregnancy and unemployment all of which are present in the eight communities where the partnerships operate.

Initial Planning and Direction. In early 1994, Goal 1 staff began working with state departments of Education and Children, Youth, and Families to improve continuity of services for children and their families as they move from Head Start into elementary school. After several months, SEDL and the two state departments agreed to collaboratively provide technical assistance to facilitators who represent city and state-level agencies and who work directly with the eight Comprehensive Transition Partnership sites. The eight local sites were initiated with an intensive training institute conducted by Goal 1 staff in June, 1994. SEDL staff provide monthly technical assistance to the facilitators and team leaders who work with the eight partnership transition sites. The facilitators and team leaders reviewed the needs, milestones, and challenges of the partnership work at the local

transition sites. Goal 1 staff visited most of the sites and joined the facilitators in providing guidance for the partnership work in the individual projects. This two tiered approach, at both state and local levels, has provided new insights to HSCP development.

Major Accomplishments. The major accomplishments of this effort have been at both the state and local levels and are described in the following text.

State Level Accomplishments

- Development of a vision statement and three strategies for strengthening their transition plan so that it provides continuity for children and their families as they move from pre-school programs into the elementary schools.
- Conducted June Institute where the eight sites were brought together with the facilitators to develop their 1995-96 plan for their Comprehensive Transition Partnership Projects.
- Evolved facilitators to liaison positions between local projects and state coordinators to serve as resources and provide guidance and leadership for site team leaders.

Local Level Accomplishments at One or More Sites

- Increased communication both within partnership sites and between sites to improve delivery of education and social services.
- Increase the transition activities between Kindergarten and elementary school with summer activities, open house at elementary schools, etc.
- Established new services such as family resource centers and parent involvement programs.
- Initiated grassroots level understanding of systemic reform in education including roles for family and community in that reform.

Challenges. Across the eight sites partners identified their common challenges as: developing effective documentation, increasing parent participation, and clarifying partnership goals and objectives.

In addition to identifying the challenges, partners continued to identify strategies to meet these challenges. These strategies focused on increasing communication and continuing training and technical assistance services. Specific ideas revolved around providing more written materials in the form of fliers, newsletters, information packets and guidebooks with information about transition projects, institutes, upcoming work planned at the sites, and topics of interest such as parent involvement and community resources.

Additional ideas concerned bringing together various combinations of teams, team leaders, administrators and others for meetings.

Membership. The HSCP membership at the state facilitators' level has been predominantly representative of state agencies, school districts, and city agencies. General institutes and local sites include parents, Head Start staff, elementary school staff and community representatives. At each of the local sites, the partnerships work to maintain a balance of home, school, and community in their membership.

Oklahoma City, Oklahoma

The Community. Oklahoma City, the capital of the state of Oklahoma, is a city of moderate size that identifies closely with its historic cowboy culture. A handful of public and private institutions of higher education are located in the city and its suburbs, along with a range of entertainment opportunities from professional sports to performing arts. In contrast, this city contends with the issue of poverty and its various effects on the community, family and particularly its youth. The public school enroll significant numbers of African Americans, in particular, as well as Hispanics and Native Americans.

Initial Planning and Direction. During Spring and Summer of 1994, Goal 1 staff met and corresponded with Oklahoma State Department of Education staff. By September, 1994, Oklahoma City Public Schools was identified as a strong possibility for the Oklahoma site and in October, 1994 Goal 1 staff began meeting with district administrators and selected the middle schools as the fifth HSCP demonstration site. This school district-wide partnership has continued to make progress in establishing itself by involving the 10 middle schools in Oklahoma City in monthly meetings with full partnership from each middle school beginning in January, 1995. During the early meetings the partners identified five greatest concerns that involve the middle schools as a whole and these were: safety; parental involvement; linking home, school, and community; understanding the middle school concept and students; and identifying additional funding and other resources. In addition to being the only district-wide partnership, this site is the only one that has included students in its meetings.

Major Accomplishments. The major accomplishments of this partnership are typical of those achieved by a partnership that is still in formation. This group has not yet reached the fourth stage of planning, however, their accomplishments indicate significant progress toward that stage.

- Identified five priority needs of middle schools across the city thereby defining common ground for their work together.
- Formed Launch Event Planning Committee with strong representation of home, school, and community from the core group of the partnership.

- Developed a Mission Statement for the partnership, which further defined their common ground.
- Increased understanding of middle school concept by attending the Oklahoma Association for Secondary School Principals state conference on middle schools and engaging guest speakers.

Challenges. The most significant challenge of this HSCP demonstration site has been maintaining a balance among the ten middle schools in terms of participation in and support for the partnership. While all ten schools participate, they have varying degrees of activity and involvement. Additionally, the partnership canceled its meeting following the bombing of the federal building in Oklahoma City. This created a set back for this newest partnership as the entire city strived to process the impact of this event. During the May meeting, partners required discussion of the impact of the tragedy at their schools and worked to re-initiate their momentum within the partnership before summer break. The positive attitude of the partners allowed for a productive May meeting and indications of continued commitment to the partnership, although the momentum was difficult to regain as summer approached.

Membership. The HSC partnership has had particularly strong participation by teachers from all ten schools along with support and participation by the principals. The participation of parents and community members has been strong with some schools, but not with all ten schools. The core group of partners does include several parents and community members as well as school staff members.

Appendix C: A Vision Setting Activity

(Facilitator)

Goal: To help participants visualize an ideal situation that leads to expected outcomes

Group Size: All members of a partnership

Handouts: *Creating a Dream Statement* activity
La Mera Papa drawing*

Time: Approximately one and one-half hours

Materials: Markers/crayons; newsprint or poster board, tape

Physical

Setting: A room with tables to accommodate five participants each

Process:

1. After dividing the group into groups of five participants, the facilitator instructs the teams to relax and prepare for a period of "quiet time." Hand out the *Creating a Dream Statement* activity and read aloud the instructions. Ask if there are any questions. Explain that Step 1 will take about 5-10 minutes to complete and will be spent imaging what their community would look like if specific needs were fully addressed.
2. After five minutes, ask the teams to begin **Step 2: Individual Activity**. *Allow 15 minutes to complete this step.*
3. Instruct the groups to begin **Steps 3-4: Team Activity**. Encourage everyone to participate and to observe good listening and communication courtesies. Remind them to designate a spokesperson for the general session report. *Allow 30 minutes for this step.*
4. Have a spokesperson from each team present its list of ideas to the entire group. Group items so that the list is manageable. For example, note similarities and differences between teams and consolidate. Make sure all three segments of partnership are noted: home, school, and community. Focus discussion on primary issues discussed. For example, the vast majority of themes may be concerned with health and social services. Finally, consolidate these statements into a paragraph or two to create a "dream statement." *This step will take approximately 30 minutes, depending on the size of the group.*

**Can be hand drawn or computer drawn. Should be reproduced on 8 1/2 x 11 sheet of paper to give participants sufficient space to complete Step 2.*

(Participant)

Team Activity: Creating a Dream Statement (*La Mera Papa)**

Goal: To develop a vision statement that reflects the mission of the home, school, community partnership

Purpose: To allow team members to develop a list of ideas that they feel reflects an ideal picture of their community

Individual Activity

Step 1: Spend the next few minutes of quiet time imagining what your community would look like if specific needs were fully addressed. What would be different or strengthened for children? for families? for community agencies? for schools? for neighborhoods?

Step 2: Draw a picture of what your new and improved vision looks like on the inside of the potato (*La Mera Papa*). Use symbols, objects, people, and any other type of illustration that you think shows what your ideal community looks like. If you run out of illustrations, use one or two-word phrases in your drawing to describe your vision.

Team Activity

Step 3: In your team, share your *Mera Papa* ideas with others by describing the representation of symbols and details in your illustration.

Step 4: As a group, synthesize all of the ideas shared by each person in a paragraph or two to create a dream statement. Your goal is to have a statement that reflects the richness of ideas generated by your group. Select a spokesperson to present the team's ideas at the general session.

*"*La Mera Papa*" literally translates into "The Real Potato" but is also another way of saying "The Real Thing," or "The Bottom Line" in Spanish.

Appendix D: Sample Questionnaire for Reflection Activity

Reflecting on the expected outcomes and steps generated in today's discussion as a reference point, please respond to the following questions.

- 1. What are your thoughts, ideas, or suggestions about activities or approaches that the partnership should consider for the next meeting?**

- 2. What gaps in persons or resources do you think the partnership should address in developing its future meetings?**

- 3. What contributions would you like to make to prepare for the next meeting?**

- 4. Is there any other feedback about the partnership you would like to offer at this time?**