

**Appendix A**  
**Community Engagement Study Group**  
**Notes from October 15-17, 2009**

**#1. CHALLENGES – BRAINSTORMED LIST OF KEY ISSUES TO CONSIDER**

Challenge 1—Stakeholders have different levels of commitment to the community

For some participants, their work in a group might be a part of their job. An example is the possible role of a university professor in a group. It is a part of their job. They get tired. They have had a long day. They go back home. They are on the clock. For other participants, they are not on the clock. The effort is their life.

Challenge 2—Insuring that all stakeholders contribute – roles and responsibilities for all

Stakeholders have different talents and possibilities. What can each participant contribute?  
Stakeholders have different skills and talents and possibilities. Some can afford to provide food. Others cannot. Some can help with childcare and others cannot.

Challenge 3—Logistical Issues

Logistical issues. Some are under your control and others are not.

Finding dependable and usable space for meetings is an example.

Establishing a regular and workable meeting time.

Transportation to and from the events.

Challenge 4—Gaining understanding sufficient depth of understanding of each other

Different cultural perspectives

Providing sufficient time to learn about each other

Translating in circumstances where more than one language is spoken.

Using oral language strategies when reading skills are limited

Avoiding education-ese. Acronyms and unfamiliar terms create misunderstanding.

Careful ongoing listening – needs can change over time

Challenge 5—Finding sufficient time to do engagement work

Challenge 6--Dealing with egos

Challenge 7—Gathering and interpreting appropriate research, data, information, knowledge

Challenge 8—Extending the work beyond the life of a funding source (i.e. grant)

Need to develop useful materials which can be used for months/years beyond the initial effort.

Challenge 9—Leadership issues

Sometimes the individuals who initiate the group must assume a leadership role until others are ready to assume leadership roles.

One goal might be to transfer leadership to community members, parents, etc.

Challenge 10—Addressing and resolving conflict and disagreement

What processes can be created ahead of time to deal with inevitable conflict situations?

What is the plan when some group members choose to leave the group?

Plan for dealing with individuals within and outside determined to create or perpetuate conflict.

Can individuals who are causing problems within the group be given more responsibility within the group? Will they respond to the opportunity to contribute in a positive way?

How can problems originating from the outside be effectively addressed?

How important are establishing working together norms/ground rules/a code of conflict?

Challenge 11—Community engagement initiatives that originate outside of education

Can education leaders resist the inclination to “lead” the initiative? Can education leaders fulfill other roles within an engagement group?

What happens when educators are viewed as peripheral contributors (help by providing college credit, provide space for meetings, etc.)?

What happens when educators, originally viewed as peripheral to an initiative, find themselves being asked to assume an increasing role or a different role as they interact within the group?

What happens when educators/education are not invited to the table to participate in initiatives convened by non-educators?

Challenge 12—Competing Community Engagement Groups

What happens when groups with similar goals are competing for finite resources, etc.?

How possible it is to bring competing groups together around common purposes?

Challenge 13 –The role of self-interest in community engagement

How do we achieve enlightened self-interest where participants have personal needs met but also are willing to contribute to the common good of all?

Losing Self to Find others

Challenge 14: Defining what “community engagement” means.

Challenge 15: Must identify a common problem, issue, or need.

Challenge 16: Need for Determining/Auditing of available

Challenge 17: Important Need of Effective Strategies for Sharing Progress/Decisions

Challenge 18: Getting A Good Start – Beginning Strategies

Challenge 19: Developing Effective “working together” Strategies/Processes

Challenge 20: Creating Momentum – Making Progress

## **#2: Debriefing the Keynote Panel Presentation from Thursday Night**

- Hank Levin: “Communities must transform their own communities. Communities must be given the power to transform their own culture and their own communities.”
- John Goodlad: “To accomplish the Agenda of the NNER, we must more fully engage the community in this work.”
- Debbie Meier: “Saying I don’t know must be okay and accepted and encouraged even. We have to be able to admit what we don’t know and to also set aside what we do know when necessary.”
- John Goodlad: “You will not have good schools unless the community is involved.”

## **#3: Preview of Goal for DAY THREE/SESSION THREE**

- The goal for tomorrow’s session is to create an action plan/set of recommendations

### **Emerging Recommendations/Action Plans:**

Recommendation 1: The NNER Governing Council/Executive Board should declare a new vision – language that replaces the tripartite language with language that declares the a 4<sup>th</sup> partner – the COMMUNITY.

- a. Does this mean expanding understanding of the term educators to include community members as educators too?
- b. What does it mean to lose yourself (educators) in order to find others
- c. What does it mean that many educators, especially university level educators, do not “live” in the community?
- d. How do we navigate the challenge of language which declares or implies that there are “educators” and there is also the “community?”
- e. Do educators have more to lose or more to gain if they begin to more fully reach out to the community? What is the role of educators in reaching out to the community?
- f. What is the future role for educators if they do not reach out to the community?

**Community Engagement Study Group**  
**Insights from the NNER Tripartite Council (Wednesday October 14, 2009)**

- The challenge of defining what “community engagement” means.
- Must identify a common problem, issue, or need.
- Developing a memorandum of understanding. Develop a shared vision.
- Must create strategies to involve the community—pulling in the 4<sup>th</sup> partner.
- Most of the examples were how educators reached out to the community to fulfill educator’s needs. This is not true community engagement.
- The Developing Networks book describes work of Kellogg Grant Site work with disenfranchised populations.
- Available resources need to be audited.
- The good and bad of personality driven engagement initiatives.
- Explore the possibility of school districts funding a community liaison position (Greg C. at Illinois)
- SAMSA Funding?
- Systems of Care – Juvenile Justice.
- Meet in a neutral site (i.e. performing arts center, museum, church)
- How to involve school board members?
- Opening up high schools to the community.
- The community needs to “pony up.”
- Must determine leadership team
  - Who should be the lead player?
  - Need a chief worrier and a make it happen person.
  - Conveners could be non-educators
- Making sure that everyone contributes something
- Auditing of available resources – what is here and what don’t we have.
- Personality-driven initiatives
- Must identify an authentic issue to be addressed
- Achieving a shared purpose is critical.
- Determining useful structures for working together

## Community Engagement Study Group

Thursday, October 15, 2009

Group members introduced themselves and talked about what they have been doing related to community engagement. Responses varied from STEM work with labor and business; to K-12, community college, and higher ed around the teaching of math, science, English, and social studies and hoping to add community members to this work; to efforts internationally to discuss democratic engagement, to local rural efforts, to community forums to listen carefully to the community and what they need to support their children and schools—where the community members set the goals; to developing relationships with community organizations; and to work with community members to plan the closing of the achievement gap.

Notes from the discussion:

What is community engagement?

- Individuals and groups seek solutions they can live with
- Does the work go somewhere? Is something happening? What is the *action*?
- Involving dissident voices
- Authentic listening and action that is based on the input
- In social work, it entails empowerment; in public health, it entails collective efficacy for children
- Participants have equal value
- Is the term even meaningful? Is its meaning so ambiguous that it can mean totally different things to different groups and thus lose its meaning entirely?
- The nature of the goal—does it rally ends of the spectrum?
- If the goal is small—the process is less important.
- When the system and stakeholders are complex and diverse, the process becomes critical
- How much diversity in a group can keep work moving forward vs. its keeping work from moving forward?
- Initial efforts—people who can listen, who are respected, who are trustworthy—is this need for starting
- Peers at the table
- Community engagement—you don't work with but you become part of the community

Difficulties

- Some need to lose self to find the we/us
- Difficult for those who are paid to know/lead
- No blueprint since communities are unique
- Can educators become the learners and learn from communities around them? WHY?
- Educators/educators can't do the work of educating along
- There are real problems/issues that need solutions
- PROBLEM:
- Educators are not seen as engaged
- School-centered, not child-centered
- How work?? Whose table are we gathering around?

Dilemma:

- As communities are engaged, what happens to educators' research knowledge?
- How find balance—how do we bring data to the mix?
- How does the community become well-informed? Data is critical.
- Meaningful engagement is what we're striving for.

Elements of community engagement:

- Genuine problem/purpose bounded such that it can be solved (soft project)
- Stakeholders are there for real meaning and real benefit
- Problem/Purpose is so complex that it takes multiple stakeholders to; solve
- Leaders come from multiple parties
- Developing connected knowledge
- Data and personal perspectives
- Process is critical
- Stakeholders must be as diverse as community
- Neutral facilitator
- Inclusive and open process
- Cultural brokers/community guides
- Neutral intermediary organizers/community guides
- Neutral intermediary organizations with credibility across groups
- Boundary crossers

What it is not:

- Contrived
- Persuaded