Community Engagement and Renewing Education

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> The political and business leaders who have taken on the mantle of "school reform"… have let us down. Their linear input-output model of change has proven itself bankrupt through repeated failure. The time has come for a new model—born of inquiry and grassroots trial—new players, and the dawning of a new day for our schools. The time has come for the centers of conversation, policy, and action to be in the towns and hamlets of this broad land.
> *(John I. Goodlad, 2000, p. v)*

It seems that everyone wants to improve education and there appear to be three general approaches to the task: (1) top down system reform; (2) replace the system with home schooling, vouchers, or some other form of choice or privatization of the enterprise; (3) or produce continuing improvement by engaging local community members in a partnership with local educators.

We are all familiar with the first approach. Policy makers from distant perches decide what should be learned, how it should be learned, what tools should be used to aide learning, and what measures should be applied to determine whether students and educators

are successful. Ever since we learned in the 1980s that the "nation is at risk" this approach has dominated official state and federal policy, most recently in the form of federal No Child Left Behind legislation. It should be apparent after 25 years (long enough for two entire generations of students to go through the nation's schools) that this approach does not work.

The second approach, while not being given the level of official recognition afforded the first, has had its supporters for many years. It is often advocated by the same people who want to impose greater top down control on the existing system. Solutions such as home schooling are responsive to those close to the instruction but promote private interests to the detriment of the common good. At best they even have a record of mixed success in accomplishing the private goals of individual growth. Other choice initiatives benefit a select group of students but leave behind schools filled with less motivated students who do not have the same level of adult support.

The third approach has promise if it is adequately supported and not corrupted by narrow interests within the local community or external forces from the state and federal levels. It enables educational initiatives to be responsive to individual needs while attending to learning that is important to the community. Broad engagement of the members of the extended school community is the first requirement for successful implementation of this approach. Second, to be successful those taking this approach need understanding of, commitment to, and skill in pursuing the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. This paper reviews the nature of school renewal and its connection to the Agenda for Education in a Democracy then discusses the essential role of educator and community member collaboration in school renewal initiatives.

Approaches To Improving Schooling

Few dispute that schools in the United States are in need of substantial improvement. However, differences arise when propositions for making these improvements are offered. As we consider the different approaches being advocated, it is helpful to borrow

from John Goodlad a simple metaphor of a garden which may need to be reformed, replaced, or nourished for continuing productivity.

It seems that in some important ways schools are like gardens. Like overgrown, weed-invested gardens, some schools need to be reformed—returned to some original state of cleanliness, order, and safety— before anything else can happen. Other schools, like a garden located where there is no water or sun, are so badly situated that they may need to be replaced.   However, in most instances neither approach is the most appropriate for the benefit of either a garden or the students in a school and neither approach will provide benefits to students over a long term.

During the past decade, so-called systemic school reform with its introduction of high standards and high-stakes assessments has become the favored approach to educational problems. However, when it is discovered (as inevitably it must be) that these reform interventions are insufficient, the question becomes whether replacement (choice) or renewal should be the next step. During the 2000, 2004, and 2008 presidential campaigns, both parties urged the adoption of some form of "choice." Congressional approval in 2001 of the educational legislation labeled as the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) Act and Supreme Court action in 2002 approving of the use of public vouchers to support student attendance at religious schools have reflected support for this course of action. While infatuation with NCLB has waned, charter schools and other approaches to choice continue to dominate the conversation following the 2008 Presidential election. In many instances, reform advocates support both choice and the adoption of standards for students and for schools that are very different entities. This is ironic because the concept of choice implies that there are a variety of approaches that can be taken, while the standards movement offers only one answer, one level of achievement that is appropriate for all students. Just as prescribing the same approach to improving the productivity of a garden in Maine's coastal climate and one in the sunny regions of California's interior valleys makes little sense, it is unwise to propose identical solutions to improve schools serving students in diverse locales.

It is evident from the continuing concerns about school that the emphasis on reform and replacement or choice has not produced the desired improvement in educating America's youths. The third approach, renewal, functions most satisfactorily if there is a common framework for those engaged in the work. The agenda provided by Goodlad and his colleagues at the Institute for Educational Inquiry supports the ideal that school renewal—where the members of a local school community learn to assess their work and that of their students and determine next steps in the ongoing improvement process—is most likely to lead to sustained and sustainable quality schooling for all students. Proponents of the agenda believe that there needs to be a focus on the purpose of schooling, a focus usually absent from discussions of school improvement. And they believe that the purpose that should be central to renewal is that of developing all students' capacity to actively participate in the nation's social and political democracy.

Agenda For Education In A Democracy

The core values held by those seeking to improve schools influence their approach to improvement. One set of such values—Goodlad's Agenda for Education in a Democracy (AED)—incorporates three major elements: a four-part mission that serves as grounding for the work, a basic renewal strategy, and conditions that are necessary to implementing the strategy.

- <u>Mission.</u> Effective school renewal is mission driven. As noted previously, there are four mission components that are central to the Agenda: (1) enculturating the young into a social and political democracy, (2) introducing the young to the human conversation (providing access to knowledge for all children and youths), (3) practicing a nurturing pedagogy, and (4) ensuring responsible stewardship of educational institutions.

- • <u>Strategy.</u> Effective school renewal identifies key strategies to bring about change. The Agenda utilizes the overarching strategy of simultaneously renewing schools and the education of educators.
- • <u>Conditions.</u> Effective school renewal identifies the guiding conditions necessary for change and renewal. The Agenda's conditions include able leaders and a healthy learning community.

The three major elements are described more completely in the sections below.

Element One: The Four-Part Mission

The four components of the mission provide the foundation for this agenda. The discussion that follows elaborates on those components and their relationship to the renewing education.

Enculturating the Young into a Social and Political Democracy

The first component addresses the purposes of schooling. Any institution that lacks clarity regarding its purpose or mission will have trouble, and many schools operate without any clear understanding of why they exist. Schools in American society have three general purposes: (1) developing students' individual talents; (2) preparing students for economic success; and (3) developing students as citizens. Of these three, the central responsibility (and one that incorporates the other two) is that of enculturating the young into a social and political democracy.

The primary purpose of schools in our nation must be to prepare children to assume productive roles as members of a social and political democracy. As Goodlad (1990) noted in *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, "From their earliest beginnings, our tax-supported schools were viewed as necessary for the induction of the young into the culture" (p. 20). In varying ways, many renewal initiatives seek to advance this purpose. Schools pursue this purpose as they help students develop an understanding of what a social and political democracy is through direct study of history, political sci-

ence, and other social sciences. Schools also advance this purpose when they establish a culture that is consistent with democratic principles.

Sound school renewal initiatives are based on a vision that includes supporting the development of a good and just society. They recognize that it is critically important to this nation that schooling be grounded in principles of social justice and equity. Moreover, they advocate strengthening the capacity of schools to develop caring human relationships. This requires schools to simultaneously develop humane individuals and to ensure that these individuals have the capacity and the will to work with each other for the common good.

When Goodlad and associates speak of "enculturation," they mean to convey the idea of preparing citizens for a "cultural democracy" (Banks, 1997). They are not speaking of "assimilation" or "melting pot" approaches that would cause the loss of important group identities as defined by race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, etc. but they are expressing the value of community as well as individuality

Introducing the Young to the Human Conversation (Providing Access to Knowledge for All Children and Youths)

In *The Moral Dimensions of Teaching*, Goodlad (1990) notes that "opportunities to gain access to the most generally useful knowledge are maldistributed in most schools, with poor and minority children and youths on the short end of the distribution" (p. 22). Guiton and Oakes (1995) are among many that have made similar observations. Favored children often have ready access to higher forms of mathematics, while others are exposed repeatedly to poorly taught remedial courses. Students from more privileged backgrounds read challenging literature and write thoughtful essays, while their less-advantaged counterparts are subjected to tedious drills and fill-in-the-blank workbooks.

Effective school renewal initiatives build on their commitment to enculturate children for life in a social and political democracy

as they work to change conditions of schooling to ensure access to knowledge for all children. A school that ensures access to knowledge has for all students (1) teachers that are well qualified; (2) equipment and materials that are needed for learning; (3) a curriculum that matches the standards on which students and the school are being assessed and/or that is necessary for success in life regardless of the assessments; and (4) a physical plant that conveys a sense of importance and a sense of safety to all students.

Only teachers who are knowledgeable themselves can provide children access to knowledge. Therefore, renewing schools hire teachers who have successfully completed a strong general education curriculum, and they support continued growth by teachers as proficient scholars in the disciplines they teach. Renewing schools also develop curricula that demand high performance from all students. They work to eliminate destructive tracking practices and to establish a school culture characterized by social equality.

Practicing a Nurturing Pedagogy

Generally, teachers teach as they have been taught. Too often they have a limited instructional repertoire and fail to understand that nurturing requires the simultaneous application of high expectations and caring. Effective school renewal initiatives help teachers develop many instructional techniques. They also promote teachers' understanding of children's personal, cultural, and developmental needs. They foster the implementation of effective structures and teaching strategies in the schools with which they work.

Teachers who are involved in these initiatives understand both the art and the science of teaching pertaining to the academic disciplines with which they work. For example, some demonstrate their proficiency as they implement an exemplary science curriculum. Others find new ways to work with parents or to help children refine literacy skills. In such varied ways, the educators involved with these initiatives display the proficiencies required to help all children learn well.

Teachers and other educators engaged in school renewal also understand the art and science of teaching as they pertain to helping students learn. Good teachers understand that all students come to the learning situation with a wealth of knowledge; these teachers build on that foundation rather than assuming that their task is merely to pour new knowledge into empty vessels.

Ensuring Responsible Stewardship of Our Educational Institutions
Schools are good when teachers and other members of the school community exercise responsible stewardship, working continually to promote the changes required to improve student learning. Teachers in renewing schools take responsibility for much more than their individual classrooms. Michael Fullan (1991) recognizes this when he notes that in order for schools to be successful in their renewal efforts, "individuals, regardless of their institutions, will have to take affirmative action to make positive changes in their own situations, affecting as many as possible around them" (p. 354).

The educators and community members who participate effectively in the renewal of schools are stewards who take such actions. Stewards in schools help the institutions sustain their commitment to their purpose as institutions serving the public good. As stewards they recognize that improving individual performance (in the classroom, in the counseling office, or in any other aspect of the school) is not enough by itself. Instead, they know that their work has to include renewal of school-wide policy, practice, and structure. They have to be leaders, keepers, and nurturers of core values regardless of their assigned roles.

Element Two: Simultaneous Renewal Strategy
As the fundamental strategy of the AED, simultaneous renewal seeks implementation of renewal in both schools and institutions preparing teachers. The strategy is based on the simple premise that one cannot have better schools without good teachers, and one cannot have good teachers without better schools in which their initial and continuing education occurs (Goodlad, 1994).

Educators in schools help prepare new teachers as they engage in stewardship of their own settings. They collaborate with college and university faculty in preparing these new teachers to be effective in the classroom and in working with issues affecting the broader school community. They do not leave research to people in universities but engage continually in reflective practice. Moreover, they challenge their colleagues in institutions of higher education to be reflective about their own practices.

Element Three: Necessary Conditions for Successful School Renewal

While some conditions are helpful to renewal efforts, others are vital to such efforts, including the engagement of leaders who are able problem solvers, effective decision makers, and change agents in a diverse social and political democratic learning community. Within the learning community, there needs to be a culture that values reflection and feedback from multiple perspectives. There needs to be a culture of democratic decision making, where negotiation and dissent are valued. In order for members of this learning community to make wise decisions, there also needs to be a rich and thick information base regarding student performance. Successful renewing schools implement a process known as *DDAE*: engaging in Discussion, making Decisions, Acting and Evaluating (Goodlad, 1994, Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley, and Goodlad, 2004). Developed by Goodlad and colleagues in the 1970s, this process is enhanced when an emphasis is placed on seeking out and reflecting on in-depth information concerning the issue at hand. This recursive process is not always followed in a linear fashion. For instance, sometimes discussion leads to seeking more information, a decision may require more discussion, and evaluation may immediately lead to new decisions or back to more discussion.

Finally, there need to be sufficient financial and human resources. In all, Goodlad and his colleagues have identified some 60 conditions, many associated with teacher education. Some of these conditions are stated in postulate form (Goodlad, 1990, 1994).

The research bases for these conditions and the other elements of the Agenda are reported in *A Place Called School* (Goodlad, 1984

& 2004) and *Teachers for Our Nation's Schools* (Goodlad, 1990). They are elaborated on in E*ducational Renewal: Better Teachers, Better Schools* (Goodlad, 1994) and *Education for Everyone: Agenda for Education in a Democracy* (Goodlad, Mantle-Bromley & Goodlad, 2004) and other publications by Goodlad and his colleagues.

Approaches To School Improvement And The Components Of The Mission For Implementing Goodlad's Agenda

Advocates of renewal emphasize enculturating the young for life in a social and political democracy as the primary purpose for schooling. In contrast, those who apply reform, particularly since 1990, tend to see the primary purpose of schooling as ensuring economic success for the country by preparing students to satisfy economic needs. This difference exists partially because the means of renewal are more consistent with developing citizens, while reform, by its nature, is not an example of democratic behavior.

Advocates of replacement or choice seldom address the purpose of schooling, apparently assuming that free competition will ensure good quality schooling, whatever the purpose may be. In fact, choice is essentially value free and can be applied to students enrolled in a school that furthers access to knowledge or one that provides opportunities for the elite to be segregated from the "common folk." Frequently, advocates of choice claim that they will increase access for selected groups of students. Advocates claim that they produce significant gains for students excluded from access to knowledge by conventional schools. However, replacing one school with another can lead to schools that encourage effective, caring pedagogy or support the least creative, most ineffective, and least humane learning conditions. Choice may lead to students enrolling in a school where everyone associated with the community is a true steward of the school, or it may lead to circumstances where teachers and even local administrators are excluded from any decisions about curriculum or instructional strategies. Similarly, choice can be implemented so as to relate to any of the purposes of schooling.

It can be implemented by those who wish to focus on the economic preparedness of students or those who wish to develop individual talents, just as it can be implemented by those striving to develop citizens for a democratic society. However, in many instances, the main emphasis by choice advocates has been preparing students for a future role in the economy.

Reform approaches may concentrate on adopting pre-determined pedagogical approaches, while proponents of renewal are more likely to advocate that professionals assume responsibility for their own growth.

There is little need for stewardship by faculty members or others within the school if the approach is that of reform, because in each instance outsiders are making decisions rather than those within the school. Those who select the renewal approach stress the importance of effective initial preparation and continuing professional growth by educators.

One word of caution is required here. It is not possible to tell which approach is being employed from the name assigned to an initiative. Some agencies practicing renewal may use "reform" to describe their work. Many who advocate choice suggest that their approach is one of reform or renewal of education.

In any event, it is important to note that each of the four components described above can be examined in moral terms—characterized by principles of right and wrong. It is wrong, for example, to prepare some but not all children for democratic participation. It is immoral to exclude certain children from powerful learning experiences. It is unethical when teachers knowingly use ineffective pedagogy. And it is wrong when educators behave as if their work stops at their classroom or office door. Thus, the four components of the Agenda's mission construct moral dimensions—delineating that which is good and right for our nation's youths.

Engaging Community And Educators In Renewing Schooling

Collaboration by educators and community members grounded in the Agenda for Education in a Democracy is necessary for suc-

cessful school renewal. Recent experiences in NNER settings provide insight regarding the characteristics required for such engagement.

Engagement and the Developing Network Initiative
    In the Preface to *Engaging with the Community: Developing Networks of Responsibility to Educate America's Youths* (2006), John Goodlad observed:

> Interestingly, what educators, parents, and large numbers of other adults want for the children we must all learn to live with—personal, social, vocational, and intellectual development—squares with what education is. They must now come together in the simultaneous renewal of both our elementary, secondary, and tertiary educational institutions and our democracy. For nearly two decades, the Institute for Educational Inquiry, supported by a clutch of philanthropic foundations, has worked with a network of school-university partnerships, the National Network for Educational Renewal, in advancing an inquiry-based initiative of such renewal: the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. It became increasingly apparent as work progressed that we will not have schools and a democracy that continuously remake themselves unless the American people envision the need, develop the will, and begin the conversation.…

> Three of my colleagues decided several years ago that the strategy built into the Agenda for simultaneously renewing schools and teacher-preparing programs was missing a partner: the people who pay the taxes and in other ways support our schools. As political scientist Benjamin Barber points out, schools serve a public purpose: They create a public. Educators and the lay public need to be jointly engaged in defining the characteristics of a responsible democratic public and ensuring for

everyone the education necessary to individual, collective, and environmental well-being. The challenge is not one to be left to our political and corporate leaders. Colleagues Mona Bailey, Corinne Mantle-Bromley, and Carol Wilson worked long hours developing a proposal—not a blueprint—for building into the infrastructure of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy a strategy that offered promise of engaging the previously missing partner. With funding provided by the W. K. Kellogg Foundation, they then embarked on a three-year journey of both anticipated and unanticipated experiences and extraordinarily gratifying learning. (p. v)

The purpose of the Developing Networks (DN) Initiative was to increase the capacity of a group of communities from across the United States to constructively address their own educational issues by developing networks of diverse and engaged leaders from education and from the broader local community. In order to accomplish this overarching goal, the Institute for Educational Inquiry (IEI) supported selected communities affiliated with the National Network for Educational Renewal to:

1. Implement leadership programs where participants share knowledge, develop collaborative leadership skills, create scenarios, and form action plans.
2. Implement and evaluate approved action plans designed to increase the network of those responsible for education and address local educational needs.
3. Disseminate learnings and resulting models of collaboration to local, regional, and national audiences.

Twelve teams located in 10 communities engaged in this initiative. Eight of the teams carried out their work over three years and four teams worked together for two years after learning from the first group. They received technical assistance from the IEI led by initiative co-directors Mona Bailey, Carol Wilson, and Cori Mantle-

Bromley and from local facilitators. Many of the lessons learned
from this effort are evident in the IEI publication *Engaging with
the Community: Developing Networks of Responsibility to Educate
America's Youths*, (2006).

Ann Foster (2006), the original evaluator for the work, made the
following observation as she summarized her views regarding the
initiative:

> In contrast to short-sighted and internally focused
> school reform movements that address isolated as-
> pects of schooling, the DN approach to looking at
> school changes is founded on long-term community
> engagement. This includes community groups con-
> sisting of stakeholders: people who are concerned
> about the education of the youths in their commu-
> nity. These stakeholders include people with formal
> positions of power and influence and those whose
> voices are not usually heard in community process-
> es but for whom the outcomes have a direct impact
> (Chrislip, 2002, p. 74). The group looks at schools in
> relation to the larger context and from the commu-
> nity and school experiences of each participant. This
> engagement is different from that which comes as a
> result of groups being formally charged with specific
> goals and actions. By reflecting the real experiences
> and aspirations of the community, the process uncov-
> ers some standing assumptions and raises different
> questions—questions that relate the schools to the
> larger community in real and specific ways. Each
> stakeholder gathering in each setting unfolds differ-
> ently, emerging from the habits and regularities of
> the communities. Disparate factors such as factory
> or plant schedules, harvest seasons, weather, driving
> distance, child care, school events, university classes,
> requirements for translation, cultural backgrounds of
> the diverse members of the community, and compen-

sation for lost work time are among the factors that determine the process and interactions. (p. 20)

Sustaining Engagement of Educators and the Community

Participants in this initiative gave particular attention to the question of what is required to sustain such work. Clark (2006) concluded from their study that six considerations are required if community and educators are to sustain efforts over time.

First, participants must be clear concerning the moral grounding for the work and must use it to focus their work. This is consistent with the previously mentioned importance of the Agenda for Education in a Democracy. Being clear regarding moral grounding requires participants to engage in substantial study, reflection, and dialogue. It should not be imposed on a group; rather, commitment to a common set of core values or purposes and mission should emerge from deliberations by group members. Also, agreeing on common purposes requires participants to understand their different cultural backgrounds and yet treat each other as individuals rather than as stereotypical representatives of a culture.

Second, sustaining strong leadership is a key ingredient for successful community-educator collaboration. The presence of a "chief worrier" who is skilled as a collaborative leader is a must. However, leadership is a multidimensional notion involving people in a variety of roles. People in traditional power positions—such as superintendents, school board members, mayors, city council members, deans, university presidents, and regents—need to be supportive of the work. Beyond that, those who are initially committed in leadership roles must take responsibility for nurturing new people in leadership roles, helping them focus on the overarching goals of the group. As the leadership of the engaged group changes, there also needs to be a continuing commitment of tripartite (community, school, and university) members of the group through ongoing participation in face-to-face meetings. Therefore, the group needs to provide for ongoing development of the leadership understandings and skills required for this collaborative work.

Third, teams of knowledgeable and committed individuals willing and able to engage energetically are vital to the continuing success of any such endeavor. There is a long history of empirical evidence that demonstrates that the composition of a group makes a significant difference in the quality of the decisions the group makes (Clark, 1970). The people engaged in the work need to include those whose voices are not commonly heard as well as those who are more often engaged in such enterprises. The initiative needs to help ensure that participants possess the skills and understandings necessary to analyze situations, to collaborate with each other, and to engage others in the work. This can be done through a combination of recruiting people to the group and providing those involved with continuing opportunities to learn. Current students should be engaged in the work because they provide an important perspective on present conditions and because such experiences can help them grow as future participants in democratic processes. In addition to engaging the right combination of people, processes need to be in place to continually invite more stakeholders and build more social capital. Strong, multiple means of communications must be employed.

Fourth, for the work to be sustained, reliable resources must be identified. Money is essential but is not the only resource that must be plentiful. In-kind contributions are also important. For example, employers need to make arrangements that allow community members and educators to be released from their routine employment to engage with each other.

Fifth, critical friends need to be cultivated. Groups need the assistance of an "outsider" who is sufficiently knowledgeable about their work to raise challenging questions and suggest alternatives to the ideas generated by the group. This individual may be a professional organization-development specialist or simply an individual who understands that his/her task is to support the thinking of the collaborators and not to impose ideas upon them.

Sixth, accomplishments must be identified clearly and celebrated. No endeavor is apt to last for long if it fails to evaluate and document its accomplishments and celebrate them in a public way so that

not only direct participants but observers of the work recognize that results have been achieved. In order to identify accomplishments, an effective system of tracking and communicating information about the work of the group is necessary. What are the purposes of the group? Who is involved? What have they done? What have been the outcomes of the work—intended and unintended?

The Developing Networks initiative focused for the most part on building community-wide engagement. Such collaboration provides the context in which individual schools can engage in renewal. More information about engaging educators and community in creating the context for school renewal comes from the Annenberg Institute for School Reform at Brown University which has focused on developing what it calls "smart districts." Foley and Sigler (2009) provide a good description of the responsibilities of the central administration in such districts emphasizing their role in supporting schools and partnerships with key community stakeholders.

The School as the Center of Renewal

Meanwhile, the school should be the center of renewal work and the general principles of educators' collaboration with the community pertain to the work at that level. Beyond the development of a supportive context, collaborators at the school use their common understanding of the purpose of their school and focus on the specific capabilities of the school to address identifiable student needs.

Recently I had the privilege of presenting an award to the HOʻOKULĀIWI community, school, and university partnership for the vitalization of public education in a native Hawaiian community. As I learned about their work, I recognized that they are an exceptional example of educator-school cooperation as they practice true engagement of all the parties that are essential to successfully engage in renewing education.

The partnership includes representatives from the local community, the state department of education, and the University of Hawaii including its center for Hawaiian Language and school of Hawaiian Knowledge. The partners pay attention to local needs as they give

attention to educational practices, curriculum, leadership, and inquiry.

As a result of their work, an educational program has emerged that features opportunities for the students to learn about their culture and language as well as gain proficiency in subjects valued by the broader world. Student achievement in reading and math, while still not at the level desired by either the local community or the state, provides one of the most vivid indicators of the value of this approach. Between 2002 and 2007 student test scores in these subjects improved substantially every year except one. During that one year, an outside curriculum and instructional program was imposed on the school with implementation being monitored outside the partnership. Student scores declined that year (as did teacher morale,) but improved the following year when the partnership was again allowed to implement its locally developed practices.

Meanwhile the program strengthens the preparation of teachers helping them understand the unique needs of the community, advances inquiry regarding student learning and appropriate teaching strategies, and serves as a living example of democratic collaboration for its participants.

Recognizing the success of the program the legislature and local philanthropies allocated 2.7 million dollars to continue the work of the partnership during the next biennium. This success in obtaining resources provides the final evidence of the potential of working closely with the community to improve schooling at the local level.

Not every effort to engage local partners in renewal will produce the kind of added resources obtained by this group, but the chances are good that if school and university educators work closely and continually with local communities the children will benefit.

Conclusion

Emory Hagins, a community leader from Portal, Georgia, provided a succinct summary of the value of approaching school improvement by engaging educators and local community members together rather than relying on top-down reform or various versions

of choice. Hagins made the following observation about the results of collaboration between educators and community members:

> With our community coming together—the people in the community, the schools,and the university—and building on the Agenda for Education in a Democracy, we can overcome the problems in our community and educate all our youths. (IEI, 2006, p. 23)

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