Classroom Negotiations: Implementing New Strategies for Learning

by

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ABSTRACT

The study looks at the development of the Community Service Learning program at the middle school level as it contributes to school wide reform efforts in the Boston Public Schools. The development of classroom projects are reviewed as they relate to existing systems within the schools. From these observations, a series of obstacles and supports within the schools are identified. The case studies are used to evaluate the success of the program in terms of implementing new strategies for learning.

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# Table Of Contents

Chapter One: Defining the Problem

- A Historical Perspective 6
- A Departure From Traditional Practice 8
- New Strategies for Learning 9
- A History of Innovation 10
- Expanding the Collaboration 11
- Changing the Incentives 13
- A Focus on Teachers 14
- Evaluating the Process 15
- Research Methodology 15

Chapter Two: Working as a Group

- The Framework 18
- In preparation 20
- Building Teams 21
- Setting the Stage 24
- Developing a Community Service Learning Project 25
- Identifying Supports and Obstacles 26
- Back to School 27
- Appendix: Community Service Learning and Citywide Learning Standards 30
- Appendix: Excerpt from Vecinos in Community Service Learning 31
- Appendix: Competencies for Success in Career and School 34
- Appendix: A Focus on Children 36

Chapter Three: Building on a Solid Foundation

- Changing the System 37
- Working as a Team 38
- Supporting Learning 40
- Learning from Experience 41
- Bringing It All Together 43
Chapter Four: Organizing Around Learning

Starting With Standards 46
Bringing Everyone to the Table 48
Responding to Change 49
Getting Involved 50
Starting Small 51
Teaching the Teacher 52
Putting It Together 53
Reaching a Balance 54
Classroom Rules 55
Distinct Products 56
Appendix 58

Chapter Five: Maintaining a Competitive Advantage 59

A History of Collaboration 59
New Relationships 59
Peripheral Learning 61
Making Learning More Relevant 62
Developing a Project 63
Choosing a Starting Point 63
Appendix 65

Chapter Six: Closing the Gap 66

Parallel Tasks 66
Opportunity Costs 67
Learning from Experience 67
Engaging a Broader Community 68

References 70
Chapter One: Defining the Problem

A Historical Perspective

Schools are the concerns of educators, policy makers, politicians, businesses, community leaders, families, and citizens. This broad range of support has been the source of innovation as well as the cause of fragmentation in public education. Strategies for educational reform have come and gone over the years and as a result teachers are ambivalent to embrace new curricula. While the many actors involved in educational reform have felt the impact of past reform efforts, it is the teachers who have had to take responsibility for negotiating these strategies within their classroom.

For over a century, educational strategies have maintained the same organizational pattern. Teachers have structured their curricula around a single academic discipline, exposing their students to a series of independent lesson plans. Historically, the connections between academic disciplines has not been explored and learning has not been placed within a larger context. Reform efforts have focused on theoretical approaches to new curricula without rethinking the way in which educational services are delivered. Assessment practices have reinforced this strategy. The result has been a pressure to “teach to the test”. A Boston teacher comments¹:

So much priority is put on the Stanford 9. That’s how they judge us. They give us a list of test scores by homeroom. If your kids aren’t keeping up with the rest of the school there is going to be a problem. All the teachers go out and buy their own books to get their students ready. Anything we do that might be new and

¹ The interviews in Chapter 1 will remain anonymous. Several teachers requested that portions of their interview remain off the record. The comments were directed at the Boston Public School System and were not intended to implicate an individual school. Therefore the identity of the teachers will remain anonymous in order to disassociate their comments from their school.
innovative in our classroom takes away from our preparation for
the Stanford 9.²

The education system is structured so that teachers and students must engage in
parallel tasks; learning for real world applications and learning for the test. Schools
function as independent institutions, presumably preparing students for work and further
learning without a great deal of input from businesses or institutions of higher education
as well as a lack of input from other schools. As a result, educational standards are out of
sync with the demands of the workplace rendering a high school diploma insufficient for
entry into the workforce.³

Teachers often report that they are rarely given the opportunity to engage in
activities outside their classroom. Their understanding of educational needs is the result
of their academic training and the specific requirements derived from assessment
strategies such as the Stanford 9. Without worksite observation and access to
professional development teachers cannot provide the most relevant curricula because
they are unable to gauge the requirements of the workplace. The isolation which has
occurred has left a gap between the needs of the teachers, the needs of the student, and the
needs of the workplace.

² "The Stanford 9th Edition Achievement tests in reading and mathematics have been adopted as our
nationally standardized norm-referenced test to be used for the next several years as we develop our testing
strategy more fully. This replaces the Metropolitan Achievement Test, which had been used in Boston for
many years." A Focus on Children
³ Richard Murnane and Frank Levy, Teaching the New Basic Skills.
A Departure From Traditional Practice

New strategies for education are needed to engage students and teachers in contextual learning. The general track which most high schools offer does not successfully prepare all students. “Critics of conventional education have long pointed out its inequities, and these criticisms have been louder in the current period because of increases in the numbers of low-income, minority, and non-English speaking students.”

The interconnection between academic training and experiential learning, some argue, will provide the new tools necessary to succeed in the workplace namely flexibility, self motivation, critical thinking, and independence. The National Community Service Trust Act of 1993 calls for strategies which increase the relevance and effectiveness of academic instruction. The Federal School-to-Work Opportunities Act of 1994 calls for an environment in which students learn and engage in productive work.

One strategy geared toward integrated learning is project based learning. Project based learning has the potential to engage different types of students while avoiding classifications such as “college bound/non-college bound” or ‘general/vocational track”. By eliminating these tracks, students are provided with more options and flexibility. “The emphasis should be on keeping options open. Through exposure to different work environments and different kinds of jobs, and through structured reflection on these experiences, young people can come to know themselves better and to make informed career plans.” This strategy is geared at all students and suggests change within the overall system.

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4 Norton Grubb, “The New Vocationalism”.
New Strategies for Learning

Creating opportunities for all students is integral to the agenda for Boston Public Schools. A Focus on Children, the Comprehensive Reform Plan (1996) identifies the primary goal for the school system:

**Improve teaching and learning to enable all students to achieve high standards of performance.**

The strategy for reaching this goal include five elements:

1. Establish high standards and curricula, with assessments aligned to them to improve teaching and learning in the classroom.
2. Provide leadership development for all staff as a critical leverage point for school improvement.
3. Plan and carry out whole-school change that leads to high student achievement and clear accountability.
4. Support a broad-based literacy effort so that all students are ready for school.
5. Increase the use of technology for effective teaching and learning.

The development of these elements within the classroom will require additional resources within the system in order to assist teachers as they connect new learning strategies with new school-wide assessment practices. Underlying these five elements is an assessment requirement. Through assessments, the progress of all students can be measured in order to maintain a level of competency which is consistent throughout the school system and is relevant to the expectations and tasks which are needed for work and further learning.

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6 “Schools do not need to add more new programs. We must rethink the way in which staff work together around a common mission of improved teaching and learning. We must change curricula, schedules, and methods of teaching. We must emphasize a team approach to instruction. We must be data-driven and results-oriented in our decisions. We must fully involve community partners in school-based decision-making. This is the process we are calling whole-school change.”-- Focus on Children, A Comprehensive Reform Plan for the Boston Public Schools, August 1996.
A History of Innovation

The Private Industry Council has assisted the Boston Public Schools in creating new strategies for learning over the last 15 years through the vision of the Boston Compact. The Boston Compact originated in 1982 with an agreement signed by business leaders, politicians, and school leaders in a collaborative effort to improve educational opportunities in Boston. The institutional support of outside parties changed the operational structure of the school system.

The Boston Private Industry Council was given the responsibility of overseeing the activities surrounding the Compact. Along with a team of key officials (including the Superintendent and the Mayor), the Private Industry Council continues to participate in the definition of goals and measures within Boston Public Schools. Keith Westridge, Director of Pro Tech, Boston Private Industry Council comments:

What we are trying to do is look at [learning] in the context of academic rigor and relevance. I think the piece that is missing for most people whether kindergarten, middle school, high school or beyond is the relevance piece. They don’t know why they are learning what they are learning, they don’t know how they’re going to apply what they’re learning. If we can build that into the architecture of how we engage kids K-16 and beyond then I think we can get to the point where students are motivated and more focused because they know why they’re doing it. Kids are tired of sitting in classrooms and learning things that are important to learn

7 The Compact has gone through three versions over a fifteen year period. Each Compact represents a more significant contribution to education. The Compacts initial efforts were focused on a commitment by the schools to raise the skills achievement as well as improving daily attendance, and reducing drop out rates. In exchange, business committed to provide better access to jobs for graduates and create summer job opportunities. Each version of the Compact has built on past lessons as well as expanding on the commitment of this citywide partnership.

8 “ProTech is a multiyear School to Career program that combines school and work-based classroom learning experiences with paid work experiences to prepare students for occupations in six industries: health care, financial services, utilities/communications, environmental services, business services and restaurant hospitality. More than 450 ProTech students in seven Boston high schools spend their junior and senior years of high school and at least two years in college learning and developing basic, technical, and work-readiness skills in one of many targeted occupations.” -- Focus on Children, A Comprehensive Reform Plan for the Boston Public Schools, August 1996.
however they're not quite sure how they're connected to their real life experience other than the fact that they've got to get a grade to get out of there to pursue what they want to pursue.

Initially, the partnership created opportunities for selected students through work site activities and mentor relationships. Building on this experience, the Compact goals have begun to penetrate the internal organization of the schools through efforts to implement new standards and new strategies for learning.

Expanding the Collaboration

In 1996 the Boston Public School System adopted the School to Career strategy as part of the K-12 curriculum. The Boston Public Schools, along with the School to Career Office and the Private Industry Council, are facing a new set of challenges in reaching a larger population and a population in which the connection between school and work is less immediate.

The School to Career curriculum (including Community Service Learning) is a strategy for engaging a broader community in the process of student achievement and the definition of educational goals. The implication is that the school community is no longer confined within the school. The neighborhood, including local businesses and community groups become a source for information and exploration. The goal of this relationship is to introduce a broader framework in which to implement educational reform. The pedagogic approach of school to career strategies combine practical applications within an academic framework in order to achieve a learning experience
which is relevant to the student’s future. The impetus for the reform movement is intended to engage a more diverse population by expanding and diversifying the educational opportunities available.

School to Career has focused largely on 11th and 12th grade students, where the link between work and learning is immediate. Efforts to reach a younger population will require program designers to address a new set of challenges. The middle school curriculum is in the process of development. Current programs are focused on community service learning, job shadowing, career exploration, and mentoring experiences. The connections between these programs is possible but has not been made explicit in the classroom.

Making explicit connections between the multiple programs which fall under the umbrella of school to career will be fundamental to this reform strategy. The Community Service Learning project is intended to draw on a range of programs which already exist within the system as well as engaging a broader community in the learning process. The coordination of partners and contributing agencies, existing programs, new assessment strategies and new curriculum guidelines creates extra work for the teachers who engage in the program. In order to make Community Service Learning attractive to teachers, the projects must make learning in the classroom more meaningful as well as complementing efforts to raise students’ performance in the form of better test scores. The program has

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9 Many of these programs were in place prior to the middle school “roll out” of the School to Career curriculum. The origins of the Community Service Learning program belong to the Impact II program which has provided training for teachers throughout the system. Communities and Schools for Career Success (CS2) is a program which provides services to support students and their families. There is overlap in terms of funding, human resources, and evaluation practices between the existing programs and the new Community Service Learning program.
the potential to provide assistance to help teachers meet the new demands of the classroom.

**Changing the Incentives**

There is a need for more supports for teachers and better incentives for participation in project based learning. There is also a need to make better and clearer connections between the goals of the program (relevant learning) and the goals of the reform (learning that is measurably better). Teachers that participate in project based learning are often guided by pressure from within the school or by a desire to be better teachers, yet program participation is generally experienced as an added burden.

While partnerships may exist on a system-wide level there is a need to create better connections within the classroom. When partnerships are developed and project based learning is introduced in the classroom, the goal of the collaboration must be clearly defined to complement the mission of the school and the goals of the teachers. A teacher comments:

We have to learn to sort out the programs that are going to benefit our kids from the ones that will drain our time and resources. We’ve gotten better about turning things down. You really have to be clear about what your agenda is and why you are involved in a project. Otherwise you end up with too many programs and it’s all unfocused.

The goals, vision, and execution of projects should not occur in isolation from other activities within the school or within the school system. There should be a central resource where the coordination of classroom practices can be managed. The Private
Industry Council has provided this assistance in collaboration with the School to Career office.10

A Focus on Teachers

As Boston introduces School to Career as a school wide initiative the communication between teachers, administrators, and community partners will be a necessity for developing models for implementation. Teacher development is a strategy for creating a stronger connection between the schools and a broader community. Susan Lang, Middle School Coordinator, Private Industry Council comments:

What has happened historically, both I think at the high school and now at the middle school level is very fragmented. There are lots of different and very positive activities that are going on but nobody really knows what everybody else is doing from students to teachers to business partners to the principal...the principal can see the larger picture but the whole School-to-Career effort works much better when everybody is at the table and everybody knows what’s going on so there’s a lot more cross over and coordination....so that people are doubling up and you are reaching every kid.

The roll out of this effort in conjunction with norm referenced testing will provide an opportunity for the Private Industry Council and the School to Career office to assess the success of their intervention.

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10 The Boston Public School system has an office devoted to School-to-Career in addition to the support of the Boston Private Industry Council. The Private Industry Council is responsible for developing the business side of the relationship and the School to Career office is responsible for developing the school side. The development of the goals and requirements of the school to career programs (including Community Service Learning) must come from the Boston Public Schools. These goals are currently in the process of being developed in conjunction with the city wide learning standards. The Private Industry Council, the Boston Compact Measurement team, and Jobs For the Future have all collaborated on the development of the goals and assessment tools for the systemwide school to career roll out.
Evaluating the Process

This study will focus on the development of the Community Service Learning project as a School to Career strategy for the middle school level. Does Community Service Learning create a more successful learning environment? As the programs are implemented in different classrooms with different teachers, are the goals of the program consistent? Can the benefits of the program be built into a system-wide approach to teaching and learning?

A School to Career Training workshop took place on March 1997. This workshop provided an orientation to the five School-to-Career middle schools which were selected in 1996. The workshop will be reviewed in Chapter Two in order to access the school wide supports which are currently in place. Chapters Three through Five will explore the process of project development within distinct school settings, identifying institutional supports and obstacles. These chapters will focus on the Timilty Middle School, the Wilson Middle School, and the McCormack Middle School through the lens of the teachers. Chapter Six will explore the implications of these supports and obstacles in the context of the overall changes confronting Boston Public Schools.

Research Methodology

The case study method was followed to understand the development of a Community Service Learning project. The process of teachers convening to carry out a Community Service Learning planning activity was documented. In addition the attitudes and perceptions of the participants regarding the Community Service Learning workshop
were explored. This was done by reviewing archival material and empirical literature on school reform, and through observation both at the workshop and at the school. 

Teachers were asked to discuss their experience with Community Service Learning. The 1994 Plan for Integrating Community Service Learning in the Boston Public Schools, provides an official definition for Community Service Learning:

Community Service Learning involves students in real-life settings where they apply academic knowledge and previous experience to meet real community needs. Community Service Learning is a method by which students learn and develop active participation in thoughtfully organized service experiences that:

- Provide service on a voluntary basis
- Meet actual community needs
- Involve collaboration with the school and community
- Are integrated into students’ regular curriculum
- Provide structured time for students’ to think, talk and write about their service experiences
- Enhance what is taught in school by extending learning beyond the classroom
- Foster the sense of caring for others

Within the structure of the workshop, teachers were not presented with a singular definition such as the one listed above. Instead, teachers were given a series of models and guidelines which had commonalities as well as contradictions (see Chapter Two). The programs were developed with the assumption that:

There is no right model for Community Service Learning. Schools and teachers are encouraged and assisted to experiment and share experiences with one another.... Professional development for Community Service Learning will be consistent with best practice of Community Service Learning, that is the preparation will to the extent possible be both experiential and reflective.  

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The 1994 Plan for Integrating Community Service Learning in the Boston Public Schools
The intentional absence of stringent guidelines left room for innovation as well as confusion and neglect with regard to the assigned task. Through a series of interviews, teachers were asked to discuss their experience in the workshop as well as identifying the supports and obstacles which they discovered in the process of implementation.

The depiction of the school is based on the teachers perception as well as additional information which was provided through interviews with members of the Private Industry Council and the School to Career Office. The study is not intended to be a comprehensive evaluation of the school. Instead, the schools are discussed in the context of the teachers experience in developing a Community Service Learning project.
Chapter Two: Working as a Group
School to Career Training

_The Framework_

A workshop was held in March of 1997 to introduce Community Service Learning to selected teachers within the Boston Public Schools. Nearly twenty teachers from five middle schools were brought together to work with their colleagues to develop Community Service Learning projects to take back to their classroom. The commitment involved three full day workshops over a three week period. In this time, teachers developed projects which incorporated their business partner and the staff from the supporting agencies, the Private Industry Council and the School to Career office. The goals and objectives of the training were:

- to introduce the history and definition of Community Service Learning;
- to distinguish the similarities and differences between School to Career and Community Service Learning;
- to learn how to work in partnership with community agencies, students and teachers to create meaningful Community Service Learning projects;
- to examine the relationship among Community Service Learning, School to Career, and the system-wide learning standards and competencies;
- to learn team building activities and use them in the process;
- to create a Community Service Learning project which the participants can take back and start implementing at their schools;
- to give and receive feedback from each other on the ideas they bring;
- to develop a group of people who can continue to support each other and grow together in the School to Career/Community Service Learning work they do;
- to incorporate recognition and reflection into Community Service Learning projects.

The ideal program was described as a web of subjects and services linked thematically to the citywide learning standards. The program design was guided by

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12 See Appendix for an example of Community Service Learning using the theme Traffic Safety.
precedents within the Boston Public Schools including Impact II Teacher Network which has conducted teacher training, *Vecinos in Community Service Learning*, the *Competencies for Success in Career and School*\(^{13}\) developed for the high school population, and the new city-wide learning standards described in *A Focus on Children*.\(^ {14}\)

The Community Service Learning/School to Career middle school effort was viewed as a new strategy by some staff members. Susan Lang, Middle School Coordinator at the Private Industry Council, comments:

> Hopefully we are learning from some of the mistakes that we made this year both in bringing on middle schools [as part of the school to career effort] and helping them a little bit more with the planning process, helping them to understand just what it means to be a school to career middle school. I think we are still in the process of figuring that out and we’re half way through the school year.

For other members of the staff, Community Service Learning was an old program with a new name. Maria Harris, School to Career coordinator comments:

> You already have people [in the system] who have done Impact II. This is just a new group. It might be called something different but it’s the same idea. Eventually everyone will be exposed. If you are a good middle school you are doing school to career. You don’t have the label but you’re doing project based learning, innovative scheduling, you’re finding a way of engaging students. It’s good teaching no matter what you call it.

While goals and models were presented to teachers, the form of the workshop was largely a departure from any existing structure. The intention was to utilize the

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\(^{13}\) See Appendix for excerpts from *Vecinos in Community Service Learning*, the *Competencies for Success in Career and School*, *A Focus on Children*.

\(^{14}\) *Teens as Community Resources* was a source of funding for Community Service Learning in past years. The grants for this program are now administered through the Boston Private Industry Council.
knowledge of participating teachers to create a series of new models for the middle school level.

In preparation

The workshop was in the planning stages for nearly a year. Staff changes and issues of coordination stalled the process. Beginning in the spring of 1996 a Request For Proposal was sent out to middle schools to adopt a School to Career focus. Five of the eight middle schools which applied were selected as School to Career schools. They were given $6,000 in the first year for implementation, and $10,000 the following year for program development. The budget for 1997-98 has not been determined, nor has the length of time schools will receive funding.

Planning for the 1996-97 school year began in the Spring. Meetings were held once a month for three months. The summer of 1996 was scheduled as a planning period for these schools. A lack of coordination and structure for planning time resulted in minimal progress in the summer months. By September, schools were required to have their plan and budget for review by the School to Career office. This did not happen.

The money was allocated to the schools, and the schools in turn spent the money. There were no guidelines for how the money was to be spent nor was there any formal review of those funding choices.

The plans were submitted during the fall semester after the money had been distributed. Leadership had changed in the School to Career office. Elsa Montano-
Arroyo, the current middle school coordinator, recalls the difficulty of trying to establish guidelines and expectations in the middle of the school year once the money had already been released.

Communication with the schools was structured through an additional position. One teacher within each of the schools was selected as lead teacher. The teachers are compensated for their additional responsibilities through a $6,000 pay increase. The lead teachers are responsible for attending weekly meetings with the School to Career Office and the Private Industry Council.\textsuperscript{15} Attendance is inconsistent. Bringing separate schools together to share ideas is not something that happens often in the school system. The workshop was another opportunity to introduce collaboration amongst teachers from different schools.

\textit{Building Teams}

The first day of the workshop, teachers were asked to sit with other members of their schools. For some groups this was an opportunity to discuss the progress of projects already in progress, other groups used the time to get to know the teachers from their school. There were a range of participants, some came voluntarily, others were volunteered by their superiors.

The criteria for choosing teacher representatives were not consistent among the schools. Taking teachers out of the classroom is a difficult commitment for any principal. The choice about who to involve is an indication about the priorities of the school. For

\textsuperscript{15} The lead teacher position has not yet been renewed for 1997-98.
some principals the priority was the daily routine within the school. This meant sending the less experienced teachers to the workshop so that a higher level of order could be maintained within the school. For other principals, their priority rests in the future of their school. They valued the planning time and viewed it as an opportunity.

Two teachers were chosen to represent the Timilty Middle School. The principal knew that these teachers had worked well as a team in the past. He also knew that they were committed to the idea of Community Service Learning. Last year they planned four Community Service Learning projects. Among the projects, they initiated the clean up of John Elliot Square (which is directly in front of the school). The project involved students and teachers at different grade levels and among different subjects. The project continues this year and now has financial support from the City of Boston. The principal felt that he could send two active teachers to the workshop, confident that they would disseminate the information among their colleagues.

The Wilson Middle School sent four teachers to participate in the workshop. Some of the teachers were interested in learning new teaching styles while others were interested in learning more about Community Service Learning and School to Career. The principal felt that each teacher would be able to make the project work within their classroom.

The Edwards Middle School made the decision to group their teachers according to grade and academic cluster. These teachers share a common planning time and work with a common set of students. This team had a relationship and was able to build on the experiences they shared in their previous collaborations.
The McCormack principal, confronted a difficult decision in choosing a team of teachers. The choice was between the social studies cluster and the technical arts cluster. The social studies curriculum required teachers to work on either a Community Service Learning project or a class newsletter. The choice was made to work on the newsletter. The school had recently adopted School to Career as their strategy for learning yet they had made the choice not to participate in a Community Service Learning project. The workshop was an opportunity for the social studies cluster to develop a project and begin the planning process for the following year. The social studies team was not sent to the workshop. The week before the workshop there was an incident in the school which required disciplinary action. The principal made the decision that the primary academic teachers needed to be in the building to restore a level of order. The textile art teacher, the wood shop teacher, and a student support staff member were sent to the workshop instead. The decision was made on a Friday. The workshop took place on a Monday.

The Curly Middle School had similar last minute staff changes. Teachers were not told until the last minute. As one teacher describes:

I wasn't given much time to think about it and I didn't understand the commitment. If things were explained thoroughly and followed through there would be a different effect. If I had made a conscious decision to become involved, I would have had a better attitude.

The teachers from the Curly represented different grade levels, different subjects, and worked on different floors at different ends of the building. The decision to bring together a team which had not worked together in the past and would not be working together in the future created a serious obstacle in approaching their task.
Last minute selections for the workshop made it impossible for staff from the Private Industry Council and the School to Career office to help teachers to begin the process of developing a project prior to the workshop. Undefined criteria left many teachers confused about why they were participating at all. The more focus teams brought to the workshop the greater success they had with developing projects with integrated curricula.

Setting the Stage

The day began with brainstorming activities and discussion. Teachers were asked to sit with their “team” members. Examples of Community Service Learning projects were presented to the group. Teachers discussed different learning styles, and different approaches to teaching.

Planning time was scheduled for groups to begin their project development. This time was especially important for groups that did not have built in planning time during the school day. The schools that were accustomed to group planning time were able to jump into the process of working as a team.

The teachers from the Timilty had come to the workshop with an idea for their project. They were able to spend their time developing their plan in detail. Other groups struggled to define the community they would serve. Many of the teachers were not familiar with their business partner and were unable to envision their project without that
connection. Other groups were not accustomed to team work and the group dynamics presented a problem.

The teams were not given an opportunity to share their progress with the overall group. This created a level of anxiety for some teams who felt this “secrecy” created a competitive dynamic. Other teams felt they had not developed their ideas enough to share them with others.

*Developing a Community Service Learning Project*

Teachers spent the second day with their business partners. Most of the schools were paired with health care providers. The intention of choosing similar partners was to foster similarities between the projects. The schools would then be able to collaborate and work through shared obstacles.

Teachers responded overwhelmingly that meeting with their partner was the most valuable piece of the workshop. The Curly Middle School had not had a strong business partner in the past yet teachers returned to the School to Career office enthusiastic about their meeting. The Edwards Middle School was enthusiastic about their partnership but felt that time constraints would pose a significant obstacle to their project development. Their solution to this obstacle was to pilot a smaller project which would be applied to the entire school the following year. The Wilson Middle School was concerned about what they had to contribute to their partnership. They decided their goal for the project would be to develop a process which could be replicated within their school. They
viewed their project as a way to show their colleagues within the school that Community Service Learning can be implemented within the requirements of the curriculum.

The Timilty and the McCormack worked within partnerships which were more fully developed. The Timilty made plans to extend an existing Community Service Learning project. The planning process focused on making a more integrated link with the curriculum. The project was designed to engage all grade levels and include several academic disciplines. The McCormack Middle School also decided to develop an existing project. Teachers viewed the project as a step within a larger process.

The meetings provided an opportunity for teachers to spend time with their partners. For many teachers, this was an opportunity they would not have had without the workshop. Teachers began to engage the obstacles which were grounded in real projects. Concerns about time limitations and curriculum requirements were raised during working sessions. Despite the limitations which were identified, the teachers were positive about the long term potential for the partnerships and the projects.

Identifying Supports and Obstacles

Day three provided a forum in which common concerns were established. The conversations were about actual projects and therefore the discussion was enriched. Teachers were more engaged in their team work because they had real problems to resolve. The groups made presentations to one another. The discussions which followed the presentations were grounded in real projects. This helped to break down the barriers
which had been an obstacle in the beginning of the workshop. As a group, the teachers identified the following challenges in developing their projects:

- Time
- Money/Budget
- Preparation for Stanford 9
- Staff Buy In
- Scope of Project
- Technology Limitations
- Developing Relationships
- Common Planning Time

Sharing common concerns provided a starting point for future work. The workshop provided the schools with an orientation to Community Service Learning. Every team had a plan for a project at the end of the three days. Teachers had made contacts with other teachers, with staff from the School to Career office and the Private Industry Council, and with their business partners. Teachers had the opportunity to take time out of class to plan their curriculum.

*Back to School*

The workshop provided tools for teachers to build projects within their classroom but these teachers need additional support systems in order to create projects which relate to the city wide learning standards, the goals of the Boston Public School System, and the broader community.

Within the schools, the support of students, teachers, and the principal became essential in making these projects an integrated part of the curriculum and a unified part of the school identity. Principals can provide additional support in the form of common
planning time, curriculum development, and additional professional development. Teachers can provide support by sharing their experiences in the classroom with other teachers as well as engaging in joint activities which encourage interdisciplinary activities.

The role of the Private Industry Council and the School to Career office is to facilitate communication within the schools, with the community partners, and amongst the five School to Career middle schools. Community partners provide a “real world” perspective which informs the learning within the classroom. Support is necessary to integrate these lessons into the structure of the Boston Public Schools curriculum.

In this initial phase of development, schools were encouraged to define their own project, including the community they would serve, the connection to the curriculum, and the evaluation of the program. The Private Industry Council and the School to Career office viewed the projects as an exploratory exercise in which the range of experiences could be recorded and evaluated in the process of developing more definitive goals and measures for the School to Career/ Community Service Learning program at the Middle School level.

The development of the program will depend on the Private Industry Council and the School to Career office and their ability to define a common set of goals for the schools. The flexibility of the program can provide an opportunity for teachers to engage their students in new and more relevant strategies for learning. The program can also create a new layer of bureaucracy which teachers experience as an added burden. The
resolution between the opportunity to be innovative and the need to be accountable to a set of standards will be critical to the success of the program.

The following three chapters will explore distinct approaches to the organization of the school, the role of leadership, and the character of the curriculum as they relate to developing Community Service Learning projects within the School to Career curriculum for the ultimate goal of school reform.
Appendix: Community Service Learning and Citywide Learning Standards

- Collaborate on art, research, writing, tutoring
- Form teams of bilingual, non-bilingual, special education students
- Engage in multicultural activities
- Engage in historical and social issues analysis and decision-making
- Identify local traffic hazards
- Produce safety education to help resolve problem
- Write editorials on traffic safety information
- Explore neighborhoods at Children's Museum
- Participate in Officer Friendly Program and MBTA Transit Program
- Continue yearlong traffic safety inquiry
- Decide on safety theme
- Plan cross-grade tutoring
- Include traffic safety symbols in class quilt
- Donate quilt to school
- Take neighborhood walks
- Identify safe, unsafe play areas
- Share info with grade 1
- Participate in Officer Friendly Program and MBTA Transit Program
- Continue yearlong traffic safety inquiry
- Decide on safety theme
- Plan cross-grade tutoring
- Include traffic safety symbols in class quilt
- Donate quilt to school
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Appendix: Excerpt from Vecinos in Community Service Learning

Four Stages of Community Service Learning

Like all good methods of teaching and learning, Community Service Learning requires developmental components based on national “Standards of Quality for School-based Service-Learning” from the Alliance for Service Learning in Educational Reform (ASLER).

**Preparation:** Plan and visualize needs, theme, action

**Stage 1**

Boston Teacher-Student V/CSL Teams **identify skills and interests** when they
- Introduce reasons for service learning and its effects on participants and community
- Design, complete, share background surveys and results

Boston Teacher-Student V/CSL Teams **access community needs** when they
- Brainstorm personal experiences
- Take community awareness pre-tests
- Study articles on community problems
- Poll family and community members
- Read relevant fiction or nonfiction
- Map resources and local service agencies

Boston Teacher-Student V/CSL Teams **develop service learning plans** when they
- Reach consensus on problem areas
- Interview community experts
- Plan and schedule service including: **direct action** (face to face) and/or **indirect action** (classroom based)
- Contact and include potential collaborators (Youthcorps, Human Service Agencies)
- Conduct orientation: write introductory letters, role play, view pertinent videos

**Service:** Implementation action plan

**Stage 2**

Boston Teacher-Student V/CSL Teams **serve directly** when they
- Tutor cross-grade, cross-school, cross-generational literacy projects
- Visit the elderly; share news and skills
- Perform for residents of veterans hospitals, nursing homes, center for the blind
- Clean vacant lots, cemeteries, bodies of water
- Plant, maintain school gardens
- Grow fragrant bulbs for visually handicapped
- Recycle school paper, lunchroom food waste
- Prepare, serve meals at homeless shelter
- Sponsor voter registration campaigns
- Invite Israeli Arab and Jewish students to classroom exchanges on non-violence

Boston Teacher-Student V/CSL Teams **serve indirectly** when they
- Blaze new Boston Women's Heritage Trails
- Organize food, clothing, eyeglass drives
- Conduct food drives for homeless animals
- Send cards, tapes, photos to homebound, hospitalized, or institutionalized residents
- Make quilts for children with AIDS
- Publish books for pediatric ward
- Walk for Hunger, Walk for AIDS
- List local health centers and service agencies; share with community
- Compile food pyramid information; share with neighborhood senior centers
- Collect books for South African schools
- Donate student art, student-made books to local libraries and day care centers
- Distribute MWRA conservation brochures
- Lobby business and elected leaders for specific community improvements
- Enter Crime Watch poster contests
- Publicize hazards of smoking and drugs
- Produce project-related videos; share with peers, younger students, community members

**Integrated Learning:** Infuse service into curriculum

*stage 3*

Boston Teacher-Student V/CSL Teams integrate learning with service when they

- **Think, Question, and Communicate**
  Through group process exercises articulating student roles in problems and solutions
  Through frequent writing - journals, essays, articles, autobiographies, biographies, letters, shared oral histories, poems
  Through oral expression - discussions, forums, debates, interviews, assembly talks, presentations to diverse audiences
  Through telecommunication correspondence

- **Gain and Apply Knowledge**
  Through reading and reporting on literature relevant to real world experiences
  Through collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data on service learning issues
  Through investigating scientific, historical, social, implications of community problems

- **Work and Contribute in Meaningful, Purposeful Ways**
  Through examining and articulating ways to improve and expand service learning
  Through designing democratic solutions for community problems
  Through applying practices that address needs in Education, Environment, Health, Human Needs, Public Safety
**Assessment:** Evaluate and celebrate

Boston Teacher-Student V/CSL Teams use **performance-based assessments** from the BPS Citywide Learning Standards and its Habits of Mind and Work when they practice

**Curiosity and Critical Thinking**
Through classroom quizzes, tests, evaluation, results, peer review, responses at open forums, e.g. School Based and Citywide Expositions

- **Respect for Diversity**
  Through collaboratively produced student performances, videos, books, newsletters, displays, exhibitions

Through building diverse teams that solve problems together

- **Consideration and Compassion**
  Through pre-post inventories, surveys, and observed behavior toward self and community

- **Collaboration**
  Through collected observations, anecdotes, letters, questionnaire responses

- **Self-Direction**
  Through CSL records, folders, portfolios

- **Perseverance**
  Through evaluations: teachers, peers, self

Through advocacy to identify and resolve community issues

- **Initiative**
  Through presentations of CSL approaches, data, testimony at conferences and institutes

- **Courage**
  Through CSL dissemination to peers, community leaders, legislators, media

- **Responsibility**
  Through lifelong involvement and adherence to the goals and civic rights and responsibilities
1. Communicate and Understand Ideas and Information\textsuperscript{16}
   - write and speak correctly and clearly
   - listen and read with understanding and persistence
   - relate ideas communicated in one medium (text) into another (speech)
   - shape messages for different audiences, and for different purposes

2. Collect, Analyze, and Organize Information
   - identify need for data or information and the means to obtain it
   - organize, process, and file data into a usable format (paper or electronic)
   - research various topics or ideas and summarize findings
   - understand and employ relevant library and computer technologies to acquire, analyze, and communicate information
   - select and sort out useful information, evaluating its relevance and accuracy

3. Identify and Solve Problems
   - explain how a given process (chemical reaction, workflow) works
   - identify problems in a process gone wrong and recognize their source
   - pose solutions or strategies capable of fixing the problem(s)
   - reflect on a given strategy and evaluate its effectiveness

4. Understand and Work within Complex Systems
   - explaining the purpose of an organization or department
   - explain the relationship between various work teams and organizations
   - understand the hierarchy within an organization, the relations of unions and other worker organizations and the rights and responsibilities each worker has
   - work through and understand “all aspects” of a given work organization

5. Use Mathematical Ideas and Techniques
   - identify and perform basic calculations required by different work tasks
   - perform intermediate mathematics (percentages, fractions, etc.) accurately
   - research various topics or ideas and summarize findings
   - apply concepts of algebra, geometry, and statistics to work where appropriate
   - communicate estimations, comparisons, and similar analytical judgments clearly and accurately

6. Use Technology

\textsuperscript{16} Compiled by the Boston Private Industry Council’s Work-based Learning Plan Committee which consisted of Jobs for the Future, Boston Public Schools, and employees involved in the School-to Work Partnership. Sources of the Competencies include: New Standards Applied Learning Framework, SCANS, Cornell Youth and Work Program, General National Vocational Qualifications (in United Kingdom) and Project C3 in Fort Worth, TX.
• use a wide range of technologies, including computers
• adapt to different work situations by using different tools
• train other workers on various technologies

7. Initiate and Complete Entire Activity
• apply the skills in the first six competencies to the initiation through completion of a full, complex work task
• identify work that needs to be done, suggest ways to accomplish the job, and take responsibility for implementing suggestions
• develop a plan to complete a complex assignment or project
• prioritize the relative importance of tasks and allocate resources accordingly
• ask questions to clarify assignments and seek help when needed
• manage or allocate time to complete various work tasks
• follow through and evaluate problems and successes to achieve high quality

8. Act Professionally
• demonstrate commitment to an employer and its client by observing common rules of respect and decorum
• show up for work regularly and on time
• dress and behave in a manner appropriate to the specific workplace
• develop a sense of professional ethics based on guidelines established by employer and act upon the principled values of right and wrong
• observe safety rules and client confidentiality where appropriate

9. Interact with Others
• work professionally and respectfully with co-workers, supervisors, clients, students and others
• participate in teams and complete tasks within the same structure
• learn about, accept, and work with people from diverse backgrounds
• take direction from team leaders and provide constructive feedback on the team’s work

10. Learn and Teach on an Ongoing Basis
• identify and achieve a skill set appropriate to individual needs and desires
• change that skill set over time as responsibilities and work settings change
• train others in tasks and competencies

11. Take Responsibility for Career and Life Choices
• manage time between work, school, and other commitments to allow satisfactory performance on all fronts
• demonstrate direction and purpose in choices for education and career, as evidenced by a personally defined set of values
• develop a career plan that shows ambition, realism, and high self-worth
• demonstrate a strong moral compass and self-respect in decisions and actions made
Appendix: A Focus on Children

Boston Public Schools Citywide Learning Standards\textsuperscript{17}
Eighth Grade Social Studies Community Service Learning Project

In preparing (service) students will:
- Gather information about the classroom/organization
- Identify:
  - Issues/concerns of the classroom organization
  - Needs of the classroom organization
  - Goal(s) s/he hopes to achieve
  - One or more key questions s/he will answer
  - Tasks s/he will complete
  - Resources to implement and complete project

In completing (service) students will:
- Follow through on plans and commitments
- Maintain a journal of his/her experiences

In presenting (service) projects, students will:
- Read three articles or one book related to the project and incorporate these readings into his/her paper and presentation
- Complete a three page paper on his/her personal reflections, learning, and accomplishments
- Make a presentation to class (and ideally to parents)

\textsuperscript{17} The Boston Public Schools Citywide Learning Standards are referenced in A Focus on Children and outlined in Community Service Learning in the Boston Public Schools, 1996.
Chapter Three: Building on a Solid Foundation
The Timilty School

_The James P. Timilty is a city wide magnet school with an enrollment of over 550 middle school students. The student body is 46 percent African American, 39 percent Hispanic, 11 percent white, 3 percent Asian, and under 1 percent Native American, 24 percent of the students have special educational needs, and 23 percent are enrolled in the bilingual education program._

_Changing the System_

The Timilty Middle School is a well known success story in Boston Public Schools. In the early 1980’s the Timilty faced the same problems as most of Boston Public Schools; low test scores, high suspension rates and a bad reputation. Students and teachers were demoralized by budget cuts and caught in the disorder of desegregation. While most schools in Boston did not have a strategy for change, the Timilty was the exception.

In 1986 the then-superintendent Laval Wilson launched three Project Promise schools. The Timilty was selected (and is the only remaining Project Promise school). The premise for the program was that students need to spend more time in school. The hours of the Timilty were extended by 90 minutes, Monday through Thursday, a regular day on Friday (with classes ending at 1:40 p.m.) and a half day on Saturday (which no longer exists due to budget cuts). Overall there was a 37% increase in the amount of time students spent in class. The new schedule allowed for more planning time for teachers. The additional two class periods were devoted to math and reading, doubling the time spent on basic skills each day.
As part of the transition, teachers were given the option to transfer to another school. Those teachers who choose to stay were asked to reapply. The teachers who were not chosen to stay at the Timilty were relocated to other schools. The increase in teaching hours was offset by an increase in salary ($5,000 to $10,000 per year). Out of the original faculty, 21 out of 29 teachers remained at the Timilty. The teachers that remained had made a commitment to the program and the organization of the school. The school began to operate with a common interest and teachers began to build a culture of cooperation.

The Timilty values teachers and teacher input. Team teaching and curriculum innovation is part of the culture at the Timilty. Teachers are enthusiastic to share their ideas with their colleagues. Daily planning time allows for teachers to coordinate schedules and develop related curriculum.

Working as a Team

Mrs. Vasallo and Mrs. Taylor came to the workshop as a working team. They had taught together in the past and they were enthusiastic about expanding their collaboration. Earlier in the year they had written a grant for a Community Service Learning project which the students had developed. Students were interested in sharing their “Courage Papers”\(^{18}\). These papers are written every year by all sixth grade students in the Boston

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\(^{18}\) Sample Courage papers are included in Appendix A.
Public Schools as part of the Max Warburg Courage Program. The papers reflect the problems of an urban population.

Students were interested in participating in a Community Service Learning project and suggested that they might read their papers to other kids who were struggling with similar issues. As a group they chose to work with the pediatric unit at Mass General Hospital (MGH). Many of them had worked with MGH staff on other Timilty/MGH programs, others had gone to MGH as patients. They viewed the Timilty as part of their extended community.

Mrs. Vasallo and Mrs. Taylor wrote a grant for the program. The money was used to purchase books for the patients and pay for transportation between the Timilty and MGH. As the project progressed, students were interested in expanding the effort to include other subjects as well as reaching a larger group of kids. Many of them had developed science projects with a mentor at MGH that focused on medical issues. This prompted an interest in developing a library of medical information geared toward children. They hoped to work with teachers and professionals at MGH in gathering information for children in the intensive care unit. The students were happy with the idea but they were concerned with making it available to as many kids as possible.

The class decided to develop a “Courage Web Site”. The Web site would incorporate existing programs (such as the Science Fair Mentor program and the Courage

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19 The Max Warburg Courage Program is a part of the Boston Public Schools Character Education Program. “Community Service Learning activities represent the practical application and implementation of the values that are emphasized in the current and projected BPS Character Education programs, including Voices of Love and Freedom, Operation Outreach-USA, Max Warburg Courage Program, Boston Women’s Heritage Trail Perseverance Program, Louis D. Brown Peace Program and Facing History and Ourselves. These programs in turn reflect the values and goals of the Community Service Learning programs.”
papers) and provide opportunities for cross disciplinary study amongst different age
groups. Students were excited about incorporating technology in the project.

Mrs. Vasallo recognized the opportunity to incorporate this project with another
school wide project, “Kids to College”. She spoke with the cluster principal, Mr. Pope,
about working with a school with a technology focus rather than visiting a local woman’s
college as scheduled. She made alternative plans to visit MIT, where students would be
exposed to state of the art equipment as well as college age students. Mrs. Vasallo
comments:

It’s important to be creative and relate the different programs
because there can be too many programs going on at once. It’s
overwhelming for teachers and it’s overwhelming for students.

Mrs. Vasallo and Mrs. Taylor had worked with businesses and institutions in the
past and they were comfortable working as a team. They knew the importance of setting
clear goals, making personal contacts, and maintaining routine communication among all
parties.

Supporting Learning

Participating in a teacher externship made sense to Mrs. Vasallo and Mrs. Taylor.
Professional development is a part of their daily experience. Within each cluster, teachers
meet for two periods a day to share their ideas, brainstorm, make presentations, or learn
from guest speakers. Fridays allow for a four hour block of common planning time.
Many schools do not have any common planning time for teachers. Scheduled planning time allows teachers to plan weekly instruction and discuss their students’ progress.

The organizational structure of the school supports these activities. The school is organized into three clusters or “teams”. The clusters are organized by grade. Cluster leaders do not have permanent teaching responsibilities. Instead, they are available to facilitate curriculum development and interdisciplinary lesson planning, organize special activities including field trips and internships, maintain regular contact with parents, and act as a link to the administrative team.

The teams work together to develop interdisciplinary curricula which is responsive to their students needs. Flexible scheduling is essential to supporting the philosophy of interdisciplinary learning. Teachers are encouraged to teach in teams allowing students to approach an issue from more than one perspective. Writing is incorporated into every class and students write an average of 60 papers in a year. Teams work to identify added lessons to make sure all students are performing at an equally high level. An “exit” reading exam is required of all eighth graders and provides an incentive for both teachers and students to maintain a level of excellence.

Learning from Experience

The Timilty has piloted many programs over the years. Many have been successful, others have not, but teachers and administrators have learned to be flexible and they have learned from their collective experiences. Felicia Robb, the administrative
support specialist who did the majority of the community coordinating from 1989-96 describes her teacher externship in the summer of 1990:

I spent a summer at Mass General with two teachers to develop a series of programs (The Explorers Program, The Sciences Fair Program, The Timilty Health Fair) and I remember [in the beginning] one of the teachers said, ‘How do we get in touch with the people we want to see?’ and I had to explain, you pick up the phone and you make an appointment and then you set a meeting time and you meet with them. You don’t stop them in the hall and say, ‘I had this idea....’, which is what you do in teaching. It’s a different culture....

Most teachers have not had exposure to worksettings other than the school. This can be very intimidating and it can create barriers to effective teaching.

When we began to work with staff from MGH, the MGH volunteer coordinator wanted us to write up descriptions of the projects and we thought, “why?” everyone knows what a mentor is, we want someone to have the kids shadow for three hours. “You want us to explain that?” and she said, ‘yes’. And she was right because what we did is we developed a form. We stated: What we want them to do? When did we want them to do it? For how long? What was the purpose? What was the time commitment? And once we created that form, anybody who was interested we would send that directly and they could say, ‘I can do this.’ or ‘I can’t do that.’ ‘I have rounds on Wednesdays.’ ‘This is too much.’ She was so right.

Teachers are an important resource for other teachers. Sharing experiences about the learning which takes place outside of the school creates an environment which is responsive and flexible. As teachers engage in partnerships with outside agencies, they are better able to make their teaching more relevant to the “real world”.

The Timilty is a learning environment, for teachers and for students. Mrs. Vasallo:

Just like we’re allowed to take risks their allowed to take risks. Students and teachers alike are encouraged to be
experimental and resourceful. The Timilty isn’t like most schools. If you need something and the school can’t get it for you, teachers go out and get it for themselves. I know how to ask businesses for things I need in the classroom. I feel like I’ve learned to network, to follow things up with a phone call. You learn by watching, it’s a different culture.

Innovation and independent actions are encouraged through scheduling, professional support and additional staffing. Teachers have access to resources outside the school and are encouraged to use them.

*Bringing It All Together*

The Community Service Learning project at the Timilty was strengthened by the activities which were already in place in the school. The project connected with the Character Education program through the Max Warburg Courage Curriculum, extended the partnership with MGH, and incorporated the “Kids to College” program. Community Service Learning is not an add on in the school, it is integrated into the curriculum. The program is another resource toward strengthening project based learning.

Mrs. Vasallo and Mrs. Taylor have created a new theme for project based learning at the Timilty. The connections which they have developed will benefit all of the teachers in the school.
The project is a step toward building a system which engages the entire school population in an integrated curriculum which is based on standards defined by the Boston Public Schools.
Appendix

Courage Papers

I would define courage as having the strength to move on during bad times. Courage is looking for the good when you are surrounded by sadness. I think I have been courageous since the time I was nine months old.

I was born two months premature and I was not a very healthy baby. The doctors at Beth Israel Hospital told my parents that I had Cystic Fibrosis. Cystic Fibrosis is a disease that affects the lungs and stomach. My mom took the news very badly and feared that I would die. Well, I did not die, but sometimes I feel as if I have spent my whole life trying to keep that from happening. I have been through many periods in my life where the hospital was more home to me than my house was. I miss my family and my friends. Yet somehow I am still here. I guess I am a survivor.

Every month I have to go into the hospital to get an IV. I also have to take about twenty pills a day. One of the treatments that I have is “clapping” and it’s done three times a day. I have to lie on an indented pillow while someone slaps my back to remove the mucus from my lungs. It is very uncomfortable and incredibly boring but I know it helps me stay healthy. I know I need to find the strength to get through it. Sometimes it is hard to stay positive. I am tired of all the things I have to do to stay well. I dream of being like others my age and I get angry because I can not. It’s a lonely feeling to battle a terminal illness and yet I know I am not alone. I guess this is why I am writing my story. I want to help other kids that have similar illnesses to have the courage to go on.

I am eleven years old and still living with Cystic Fibrosis. Each day I find more and more courage to fight it. I have learned to take each day as they come. I enjoy the moments when I am just like every other kid in the sixth grade except that I, of course, have courage.

Mrs. Vasallo’s class, Timilty Middle School

Sometimes bad things happen to us when we are even to young to understand them. Courage is facing the unknown even when you are afraid. I have had courage since I was two years old. That was when my family found out that I had diabetes. When I was old enough to know that I had to do and eat things differently than other kids, I was frightened and sad. I did not understand why I had to get a shot every day and always having to check my blood sugar. I was most afraid that my friends would not accept me if they knew I was different. I did not want people to tease me or make fun of me because I had diabetes.

As I got older I learned that my friends would accept me no matter what and that diabetes was just something that I had to learn to live with. I learned to be thankful that I did not have another type of illness that would have made my life even more difficult. I realized that diabetes had given me courage and that I was actually stronger and not weaker than most kids my age.

Mrs. Vasallo and Ms Medina’s class, Timilty Middle School

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Chapter Four: Organizing Around Learning
Woodrow Wilson Middle School

The Woodrow Wilson Middle School has an enrollment of over 582 middle school students. The student body is 82 percent African American, 6 percent Hispanic, 7 percent white, 5 percent Asian, and under 1 percent Native American, 14 percent of the students have special educational needs, and 20 percent are enrolled in the bilingual education program.

Starting With Standards

The Wilson Middle School is focused on developing strategies to integrate the new citywide learning standards defined by the Boston Public Schools with the methodology of project based learning. New English Language Arts Standards have been adopted for the 1996-97 school year in the Boston Public Schools. Teachers are focused on developing reading, writing, speaking and listening skills in coordination with those standards.

The shift toward project based learning at the Wilson Middle School has made the Community Service Learning project a logical step in the process of curriculum development. Ms. Charles, a language arts teacher, comments:

The way the curriculum is set up, the way we teach, it’s all supposed to bring them in. The novels are student centered. The activities are student centered. Each students voice is important. Community Service Learning is a supplement to the curriculum.

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20 "Project-based learning is a powerful way to change how teachers teach, providing them with methods for teaching all students together regardless of ability levels. Students learn in different ways; they learn to solve problems in groups and independently; and decrease their reliance on hearing the “answers” only from a text book or teacher. Project-based learning facilitates longer term and deeper learning by students.” Excerpt from A Focus on Children, Boston Public Schools, 1996.

21 The Citywide learning standards for 1996-97 are focused on the language arts curriculum. The language arts curriculum requirements include reading 4 novels and writing an essay per novel. In addition, they must read 10 other selections including prereading, reading, and post reading activities. They will also complete 10 Type 5 essays. A Focus on Children, Boston Public Schools, 1996.
Their learning it in the classroom and then they have a place to apply it. Their exposed to the outside world. It’s a matter of taking it from theory to practice. I don’t think it should be a project. It should be an interwoven part of what we do with a product at the end. Ultimately it will be a series of products that occur over the year.

Developing a system requires a shared vision. The Wilson is in the process of defining goals in order to provide structure for teachers as they develop their individual programs in coordination with the city wide learning standards.

It is our goal to involve parents, students, teachers, administrators, and community partners in developing strategies to implement whole school change. To determine our strengths and challenge areas, a survey of all students, teachers, and parents will be conducted each year. Our school community will use this information to design a Comprehensive School Improvement Plan over the next five years. Our primary goal is to improve student achievement at high levels of performance. Students will be expected to meet new learning standards that will demand that they work harder and demonstrate achievement in more challenging ways. 22

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<td>Curriculum Coordination Practices</td>
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**Above Figure:** Teacher Survey, 1995-96 Academic Year, Woodrow Wilson Middle School.

Participation in an on-going evaluation process insures a responsive climate at the Wilson. Everyone in the school is engaged in the process of restructuring.

*Bringing Everyone to the Table*

Developing an integrated curriculum requires communication, coordination, and a vision of the process as well as the product. The principal at the Wilson provides the structure for this developmental process. Ms. Charles comments:

[The principal] has done a really good job of presenting the new standards to the staff, helping teachers to appreciate the value of the new standards, and giving them a chance to vent their frustrations. She keeps everyone on track. She’s really a mediator.

Teachers are given the opportunity to express their concerns and work through obstacles. For senior teachers, there are opportunities to share their experiences and shape changes within the school. For younger teachers, there are resources to guide their teaching. Ms. Charles comments:

Most people are twenty years my senior so they’ve seen new programs come and go. They’ve seen other Superintendents try to make their mark. When I came in there was no skeleton, no structure, I was on my own. I didn’t have the lesson plans to refer to that senior teachers had. Then Payzant came in and introduced the restructuring which we are in the process of implementing and it gave me a structure to follow.

I understand why they were disheartened. They’re used to people coming in and changing everything and not asking their opinion. They’re used to the idea that things will change again.

I’m prepared for things to change in 5 years. If I wasn’t I would end up leaving the system, leaving teaching. But I know this is all new information and it will continue to change and I’m aware of that. I’m developing my style.
While teachers are not assured that this will mark the final change in the effort to
reform schools there is a sense that these changes will contribute to the quality of their
teaching and will therefore create an permanent change in their classroom.

Responding to Change

New strategies for education have prompted change in the organizational structure
of the school. The Wilson has recently adopted block scheduling in order make project
based learning a real possibility in the daily activity of the school. Block scheduling
extends the length of the classroom period, and reduces the overall number of classes a
student attends. Ms. Charles, a language arts teacher, comments:

The block scheduling gives you the opportunity to get real work
done. These kids are really active. It takes 10 minutes to settle
them down and 10 minutes to get them ready to leave. It doesn’t
leave you much time to teach in a 45 minute period. Now we have
60 to 90 minutes. There’s a lot more you can achieve.

Block scheduling allows teachers to create smaller “communities of learners”. Small
teacher teams are used to reduce the size of large grade level classrooms. Students attend
fewer classes each day (3-4 core classes). As a result, their homework is more focused
and monitored by a smaller group of teachers. Fewer classes and more staff attention
reduces the stress and confusion for teachers and students. The structure provides
opportunities for interdisciplinary, project-based learning. The flexibility of the schedule
allows teachers to experiment with new strategies for learning.

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Getting Involved

The teachers who are developing Community Service Learning projects at the Wilson have different levels of experience teaching. Some teachers have been in the system for nearly 30 years, others are still considered new teachers. This is Ms. Charles’ second year teaching full time. She worked as a substitute teacher for two years prior to her current position as a language arts teacher. Her colleague, Mrs. Roberts describes her participation as valuable to the team.

Ms. Charles was the first to become involved in the Community Service Learning program. Her energy and her willingness to try new things is important. She is really taking the lead in making the program a part of the new curriculum.

Mrs. Roberts explains her own involvement:

My background is guidance and counseling. I wanted to know about Community Service Learning. No one explained it to me. I didn’t know what form it would take. I got involved because I feel that these children need a sense of work. They need to know why they are going to school. Some of them may end up in the health field because of what they are exposed to in my class. It’s an opportunity for them to meet a professional and follow through on an interest.

The range of experiences amongst the teachers and the diverse expectations for the projects, allow for multiple approaches in the implementation process. The range of products which will result from this diversity will create a series of opportunities for future work. The more options there are, the more likely teachers will be to adopt the program. The participation of highly motivated teachers is a necessity for implementation in the early stages of project development.
Starting Small

The opportunity to develop projects amongst small groups of teachers within the school is essential. The teachers who are committed to the project are able to work through the start up problems and integrate the project into the curriculum. Mr. Imbrogna comments:

If we involved everybody in every project we would be spread too thin. We need to use small bodies of our school community. In the past you had these projects and they just die out. They lose enthusiasm and it just falls apart.

Mrs. Bond responds:

You can work it into the curriculum or it can become an extra. There are a lot of things going on in the system right now; the new superintendent, learning standards, block scheduling, portfolio's/end of the year products, school to work, and infusing art. For me it's the organizing tool and these are the building blocks, but I'm new.

Mrs. Roberts adds:

Some of us have to see where you are going with it. When you are not as experienced you are willing to take risks. As a veteran I know what the hurdles are. I know the risks.

The range of responses amongst the teachers who were involved in the workshop is an indication of the range of attitudes amongst teachers within the school system. Pilot programs developed by small teams of teachers who are committed to the concept of Community Service Learning provide an opportunity to strengthen the program and anticipate obstacles which will arise at a larger scale. Programs will become less time consuming for teachers the longer they are used in the classroom. Teachers who are less
willing to experiment with Community Service Learning are more likely to adopt the curriculum after it has been implemented successfully in other classrooms.

Teaching the Teacher

The workshop provided an opportunity for the teachers to participate in an active learning environment. As a team, they were comfortable reflecting on their role in the classroom. They were excited about learning new strategies for teaching. The teachers from the Wilson were looking for an opportunity to develop new strategies for engaging their students. Ms. Charles explains:

My first three months of teaching I came to class everyday and said, “Let’s talk about the elements of fiction”, and they just stared at me. Then I realized that that wasn’t going to work so I tried a different approach. I brought in a videotape of Charlie Brown. We watched it and broke the story down little by little. Then they had the concept of story development and when we started reading it was easier for them to apply those concepts. They’re visual learners. It’s difficult to give them key questions to answer when they don’t understand the definitions you are using in the question. I’ve had to learn to try different methods and explore the different ways kids learn.

The workshop provided teachers like Ms. Charles the opportunity to explore alternative teaching styles and share their experience with other teachers. The workshop was not an end in itself, it was the beginning of a process. Mrs. Roberts explains:

We had to really do things for ourselves. They just pointed things out to us and as teachers and thoughtful adults we were able to develop our ideas. Teachers get a spark, and run with it and then it turns into a fire.
Teachers were exposed to innovative strategies but the goals and definition of the program remained unstructured. Therefore, developing these strategies within the classroom remained the burden of the teacher. This approach relies on exceptional teachers or visionary leaders. The potential for creating a sustainable program is limited through this approach.

*Putting It Together*

The four teachers from the Wilson came back from the workshop with the goal of developing related projects for two groups of students, a sixth grade class and an eighth grade class. Mrs. Roberts, a language arts teacher and Mr. Imbroga, a social studies teacher work with students in the sixth grade on career development as it relates to health issues. Students will work with a professional mentor to learn about careers related to the health industry. Together, the teachers developed a questionnaire which students will use in the interview process.  

Ms. Charles and Mr. Cochran will work together with the eight graders, creating a link between the language arts curriculum and the science curriculum. The project will last for six weeks and each teacher will devote one day a week to the project. In Ms. Charles’ class students selected health issues which are important to them and their families. As a class they decided to cover six topics: rape, aids, teen pregnancy, drugs, domestic violence, and smoking. These topics will also be covered in Mr. Cochran’s class through lectures and exercises.

24 The questionnaire is listed in the appendix.
The projects include writing, research, and oral presentations. The written portion of the projects will be developed by following the Collins Writing Program\textsuperscript{25}. This program is the designated curriculum for the language arts program. The students will complete a series of written exercises:

- Type 1: Brainstorming
- Type 2: Tests
- Type 3: Rough Draft
- Type 4: Peer Editing
- Type 5: Publishable Work

Integrating the project with the standards for the Boston Public Schools will increase the longevity of the program. When the program is not perceived as an “extra”, there is an increased willingness to incorporate the curricula into the classroom.

\textit{Reaching a Balance}

Ms. Charles is balancing competing tasks. As a teacher she has to communicate specific information to her students, she also has to keep her students in school. If she fails to keep her students engaged in learning, the information which they are required to learn becomes irrelevant. The success of a lesson plan is often dependent on the students' willingness to cooperate and behave.

I can come in one day and they’re fine. The next day I come in and I do the exact same thing and they react in a completely different way....These kids can be flaky, extremely nice, extremely cruel, they’re very hormonal, they’re trying to find themselves, they’re loud, full of energy and totally unpredictable.

\textsuperscript{25} The Collins Writing Program is part of the Core Curriculum for Boston Public Schools.
Ms. Charles struggles to deliver the required material in a way that keeps her students engaged. The result is an unspoken bargain or “treaty”. 

Ms. Charles’ class had difficulty reading at the pace prescribed by the new language arts requirements. In order to keep up with the curricula she restructured the tasks. Each student was required to focus on an assigned chapter of the book. The students then made presentations which were recorded on videotape. As a class they “read” the book.

Sometimes you have to be creative to make the exercise work. Bringing in new media was a way of getting them engaged. They felt proud of the product. There was a real sense of accomplishment in the end.

Ms. Charles is concerned with making learning enjoyable for her students. A project based methodology allows her to fulfill her treaty with her students.

When I’m teaching them I can’t let them know their learning. They think their goofing off but really I am using the exercises to reinforce the concepts they have been learning all semester.

A struggle for control of the classroom results in a bargaining process in which the information is delivered, yet the intensity is lessened and the risk of failure for the students is diluted.

Classroom Rules

Mrs. Roberts is tough on her students. She is not interested in being popular. She is interested in teaching her students respect and providing them with as many opportunities as possible. She describes her students behavior at the beginning of the

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26 The concept of “treaties” was first developed in *The Shopping Mall High School*. 
semester as out of control. She demands order, and rules define the structure of her classroom. Mrs. Roberts is engaging in a different type of treaty. Students are required to follow directions in exchange for avoiding conflict in the classroom.

The project is structured to include parents, a professional mentor, and the student. All parties are held accountable. Mrs.Roberts requires that everyone who is involved in the project is reachable by phone. “If there is a problem I need to know about it so we can work past it and continue to make progress.”

Parents are responsible for helping their children connect with a mentor. Mrs. Roberts feels that this is an important part of her students development. She maintains regular contact with parent and feels strongly that their participation is valuable and necessary.

Many of the parents don’t think I like their children because I call home all the time. This isn’t true. I do like their kids and that’s why I continue to be so hard on them. I want them to learn to behave, to have respect, these are all qualities they will need to succeed in the world.

Mrs. Roberts works with her students every day on the project. She feels that her students won’t benefit from a project based experience without extensive preparation.

**Distinct Products**

Both teachers will use project based learning to meet the defined standards within the classroom. The work in each classroom is distinctive from the other. The teachers
are using the same resources, and the same starting point but their individual style will shape the way in which the information is communicated.

Without a clear set of expectations for these projects, the responsibility for defining outcomes remains the burden of the teacher. Without real measures in place, both teachers and students are inclined to engage in “treaties” which make the classroom more manageable.
Appendix

1. How many years did it take for you to become_________?
2. What were the greatest challenges in becoming_________?
3. In what setting do you work?
4. Who are the people that you interact with on the job?
5. Who are the colleagues on the job?
6. What things do you do on the job?
7. What are the likes and dislikes of the job?
8. What are the hours that you work?
9. What benefits do you get?
10. Do you have continuing educational advantages?
11. What are the advantages and disadvantages of your job?
12. What opportunity do you have for promotion?
13. How do you dress for your job?
14. What behaviors are expected of you on the job?
15. What is the salary of this job?
16. List the name of 3 persons who are in this career? Briefly say what you know about them.
17. What other jobs can you do with your professional training?
18. What advice would you give me if I wanted to do this profession?
19. What is the most rewarding experience that you have had?
20. Do you plan to spend the rest of your working years doing this job? Why or why not?
Chapter Five: Maintaining a Competitive Advantage
McCormack Middle School

The John W. McCormack Middle School has an enrollment of almost 700 middle school students. The student body is 46 percent African American, 27 percent Hispanic, 22 percent white, 4 percent Asian, and 0 percent Native American, 22 percent of the students have special educational needs, and 16 percent are enrolled in the bilingual education program.

A History of Collaboration

The McCormack Middle School is known in Boston as an academically strong school. The school is a neighbor to the University of Massachusetts, the Bank of Boston, and the Kennedy Library. These institutions are involved in the school through a variety of activities. The McCormack has been involved in School to Career activities for over a decade. The Bank of Boston has been the school’s primary partner.

Students at the McCormack know their business partners. There are over 250 volunteers from the Bank of Boston each year. The program involves over 700 students in partnership activities including tutoring, “pen pals”, a job simulation exercise at the bank (eighth grade students), and a job fair. They are aware of their neighbors presence in the building.

New Relationships

The Bank of Boston is in the process of merging with Bay Bank. There have been changes in the goals and interests of the controlling entities at the bank. The downtown office has expressed an interest in broadening the partnership to include other schools.
This is good news for the school system but not necessarily for the McCormack. Expanding the partnership within the city may mean diverting attention away from the McCormack.

The McCormack was a pioneer in creating activities for partnerships. The mentor relationship, job shadowing, and career days were in place at the McCormack at the time when they were being developed as system wide activities for Boston Public Schools through the Boston Private Industry Council. The McCormack is no longer leading the innovative work in the School to Career movement. They are not widely recognized for their early work. Their initial success was overshadowed by the success of the system.

Changes at the Bank of Boston will accelerate the need for change at the McCormack. As the Bank of Boston engages in activities with other schools, the McCormack’s relationship with the bank will be less unique than in the past. At one time, the McCormack’s partnership with the bank differentiated it from other schools. With very few changes in the program, and a growing number of innovative partnerships throughout Boston Public Schools, the McCormack is losing its competitive advantage.

Having the competitive advantage in a school system is a reality. Schools are ranked by the academic success of their students as well as the programs and environment which they can offer students and their families. Being an innovative school can attract financial and political support.

The McCormack maintains their standing as academically strong, but has gained a reputation as “too academic”. The school has not made changes in their programs over
the years and therefore their success is confined to a limited set of measures. As Boston Public Schools incorporates the new citywide learning standards and project based learning strategies defined in *Focus on Children: A Comprehensive Reform Plan for the Boston Public Schools* the McCormack will have greater incentives to expand their curriculum to include new strategies for learning.

*Peripheral Learning*

The McCormack serves a large population. As a result, each student has very few direct experiences with the Bank of Boston. Career development is largely explored through the curriculum of the school. School to Career is taught in the Industrial Arts cluster. For most of the year students are learning home economics, food and woodworking shop. A six week module is devoted to the School to Career curriculum.

Mrs. McArthur, the home economics teacher, works with her students to develop a resume, a cover letter, and an application for employment. The assignment is directed at jobs that 14 year olds might apply for; day care counseling, newspaper delivery person, day care worker, grocery bagger, baby-sitter. The students are excited about the idea of making their own money. The focus is on work and not a career.

The students have had exposure to potential careers through a game called “The Career Game”.²⁷ Students document their interests, and identify their strengths and weaknesses through a questionnaire. The answers are then run through a computer which lists a number of career possibilities.

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²⁷ A sample of the “Career Explorations Game” is provided in the Appendix.
The students are learning about careers but the learning takes place in isolation from the workplace. The bank has helped to develop curricula, they have committed volunteers to the school, yet the experience is still in a traditional context in which first hand observation is not taking place. The jobs they are able to imagine are based on their experience as teenagers not through observation.

**Making Learning More Relevant**

The McCormack was designated a School to Career middle school last year. There has been very little change in the classroom. The McCormack already had an established School to Career curriculum in place which was developed with the Bank of Boston. The curriculum is not integrated with the other activities in the building, the learning is confined to the classroom. While students are learning about work, exposure to the workplace remains on the fringe of the core curriculum.

The social studies team had the opportunity to develop a Community Service Learning project. Instead they chose to work on a newsletter (see Chapter Two). As a result, the project will be executed by the Industrial Arts teachers. This changes the nature of the task and the quality of the learning. When a hands on approach is applied to a hands on environment, there is very little need for change or innovation.
Developing a Project

Mr. Rollinson and Mrs. McArthur will integrate their Community Service Learning project into the School to Career module. The project will involve constructing a bulletin board for the school and keeping an updated list of community projects. The construction of the bulletin board will take place in Mr. Rollinson’s class. The information gathering will take place in Mrs. McArthur’s class. The Bank of Boston will be a resource for information on community projects.

The project is intended to re-engage the school community by developing a central resource for Community Service Learning projects. The bulletin board will allow teachers to access information on their own.

Community Service Learning is not a part of the School to Career curriculum at the McCormack nor is it part of the school identity. The bulletin board is intended to expose teachers and students to this dimension of the School to Career methodology. The project encourages teachers to expand their classroom activities to incorporate new strategies.

Choosing a Starting Point

The McCormack teachers are working to change the environment in which they teach. Maria Harris, School to Career coordinator, comments:

If they can create a tool to access the information, than it will be up to the teachers to define how it can augment the curriculum. Teachers are engaged in designing a new system this year. Next year they will be able to take it to another level.
The Community Service Learning project is not creating a new experience for students. Instead, the focus is on changing the experience of teachers. The assessment tool for the project was developed by a social studies teacher who was initially targeted to participate in the workshop. Success will be defined by the number of teachers who choose to develop a Community Service Learning project instead of producing a newsletter next year.

Teachers were asked to define their own evaluation process, to define the “community” they would serve for their project, and to decide collectively how it would contribute to building a School to Career curriculum. In the absence of a set of goals or expectations, the focus of their project has shifted away from the students. While long term restructuring efforts will improve the experience of teachers (and by extension the students) the project does not address many of the qualities of Community Service Learning.

The presence of more established expectations and goals might have led teachers to engage in a project which contributed to the school environment as well as creating a strong link between project based learning, the curriculum, and real world experiences.
Appendix

A Sample of “The Career Game”

YOUR INTERESTS
Here’s a list of things that you might enjoy doing. Put a √ next to the ones that sound like fun to you, even if you’ve tried them before. For example, if you think you’d like to use tools, mark a √ in its box. If you think you wouldn’t like to use tools, leave the box blank. Each response is color coded, 15 of the 96 interests are listed below as a sample.

Use Tools yellow
Figure Out a Problem orange
Give Directions red
Run for Class Office purple
Plan Events blue
Sing on a Stage green
Fix a Car yellow
Learn about Diseases orange
Interview People red
Save Money purple
Make Lists blue
Take Pictures green
Build Models yellow
Study Planets orange
Join a Club red

Each response is color coded. A list of careers is given for each color.

If you scored high in Orange, you might enjoy a career that challenges your mind.
If you scored high in Red, you might enjoy a career that lets you work closely with people.
If you scored high in Purple, you might enjoy a career that lets you become a leader.
If you scored high in Blue, you might enjoy a career that lets you keep things organized.

“Blue” careers are listed as a sample.

Construction Details, Bank Teller, Cashier, Air Traffic Controller, Bookkeeper, Postal Worker, Planner, Medical Records, Investigator, Librarian, Dental Assistant, Secretary, Accountant, Museum Curator, Analyst, Legal Assistant, Police Officer, Inspector.
Chapter Six: Closing the Gap

*Parallel Tasks*

Innovative classroom strategies are being implemented at the same time that the Boston Public School system is defining citywide learning strategies. The introduction of Community Service Learning during this process has resulted in a series of isolated projects which are dependent on any support systems that might already be in place within the schools. Those schools that have common planning time, flexible scheduling, motivated individuals, and/or external resources in place are at an advantage in implementing this program.

Without a specific direction or a defined product, each school must look to their own resources and build on existing strengths. In some cases, the product is comprehensive, engaging the entire school community as well creating meaningful links to the new learning standards. In other cases, the program remains on the fringe of the existing school culture. Without curricula which is linked to the standards, the responsibility of making meaningful changes in the classroom remains the burden of the teachers. The gap between program development and the implementation of new assessment tools makes participation in the program an added burden. The program has the potential to provide structure for the overall changes within the Boston Public Schools but at this time lacks the technical assistance to support this transformation.
Opportunity Costs

The schools that lack a vision or commitment to this methodology are not likely to benefit from the program because there are too many risks involved in introducing change. If the school is not committed to the program, financial resources and staff time would be better spent on other areas of program development. In many cases, resources are used to supplement existing programs rather than supporting change within the school. Better connections to the overall changes confronting the system will make participation in the project more attractive to teachers and principals. Until better connections are made, participation in the program will be uneven among schools and inconsistent within the classroom.

Learning from Experience

The approach of the Private Industry Council and the School to Career Office towards middle school development has been largely exploratory up until this point. Five schools were chosen to create a series of models or possibilities for the purpose of supporting the goals of the larger system. Teachers were brought together to develop Community Service Learning projects but the basic framework of the program was never made explicit. Teachers were exposed to concepts and ideas about Community Service Learning but there was a minimal focus on the process by which they could connect with partners and with staff from the supporting agencies in order to complete the project. The workshop and the implementation of the project illuminated the need to make better connections between the concept and the end product.
Teachers felt:

- disconnected from the process;
- unclear about the goals of the program;
- unclear about the incentives for participating in the program;
- they were not assisted in making connections to the new learning standards;
- the program added to their sense of feeling overwhelmed;
- the support provided did not engage the real obstacles which are in place in the classroom.

Engaging a Broader Community

As the program is broadened to engage a larger population the projects must have a clearer connection to the changes which are taking place within the overall school system. The role of the Private Industry Council and the School to Career office as a resource for technical support will be essential to the effectiveness of the program as a support for the structural changes underway within the system.

Boston has demonstrated a real commitment to raising standards. *A Focus on Children: A Comprehensive Reform Plan for the Boston Public Schools* reflects the vision of the Boston Compact, as well as the efforts of the Private Industry Council and the School to Career office. The changes underway in Boston Public Schools are geared toward creating an environment which is responsive to the workplace, the community, the students, and teachers. The Community Service Learning curriculum can act as a
methodology for teaching students and teachers to respond to the values defined by the school system.

The success of School to Career and Community Service Learning at a system wide level is dependent on closing the gap between the expectations defined by the Boston Public Schools and the activities which take place in the classroom. Program design must address the supports which are needed in the classroom to meet the demands of new educational standards.
References


List of Interviews

*Private Industry Council*

Neil Sullivan, Director of the Private Industry Council  
Keith Westridge, Director of Project ProTech  
* Susan Lang, School to Career Director at the Middle School level  
* Bill Church, School to Career Coordinator at the Middle School level  
* Keith Love, School to Career Coordinator at the Middle School level

*Boston Public Schools*

Thomas Payzant, Superintendent of Boston Public Schools  
* Maria Harris, School to Career Coordinator  
* Elsa Montano-Arroyo, School to Career Coordinator K-12

*Timilty Middle School*

* Lisa Vasallo, Teacher  
Sandra Taylor, Teacher  
Barbara Torres, Science Coordinator MGH/Timilty  
* Felicia Robb, Administrative Support Specialist, 1989-96

*Wilson Middle School*

Sheryl Bond, Teacher  
* Willete Charles, Teacher  
Joseph Imbrogna, Teacher  
* Gloria Roberts, Teacher

*McCormack Middle School*

* Lorraine McArthur, Teacher  
* Bob Rollinson, Teacher  
Karen Mallory, Councilor

* Interviews were on going and conducted over several months in the Spring of 1997.