Community Partnerships

Introduction

The Ohio Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement (OCCMSI) aims to help you maximize and leverage family and community resources for learning, healthy development and academic achievement. As you know by now, this model relies heavily on community partnerships.

The other core components in this new model – academic learning, youth development, family engagement and support, and health and social services – provide opportunities for partnerships. You also will see this chapter extends the discussions of the family engagement and health and social services chapters in important ways. For example, traditional approaches to school-community partnerships often focus on parents and public sector providers – mental health, health, counseling, child welfare, alcohol and substance abuse – as key strategies for reducing barriers to learning. "Traditional", as we use it, does not mean inferior or unnecessary; these partnerships are vital to student's learning and academic achievement and school success.
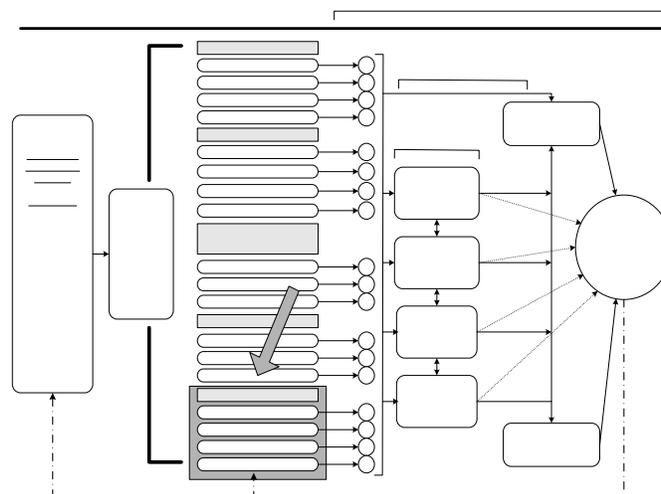
It also is important to emphasize community partnerships and collaborative leadership are interrelated. When we separate them in our model, we do so to make sure you understood each of them; and you know what to do in order to implement them successfully. In brief, partnership development is a common thread that weaves together these core components and other parts of the improvement model.

Given the importance of community partnerships across the board within the model, this chapter guides you to other under-developed and untapped partnerships, ones that can enhance and magnify many of the traditional ones. It also pays special attention to the development of a partnership system – a formal way to identify good partners and operate multiple partnerships that improve results.

As we noted in the getting started chapter, we advocate for the mobilization of a community's assets – individuals, local associations and organizations, and local institutions – in support of school improvement; that is why it is called a community collaboration model for school improvement. We encourage the identification and engagement of an entire community's "gifts" to get to better outcomes for schools, community organizations, families and children.

What do we mean by community partnerships?

Our definition of a community partnership includes every formal arrangement a school can make with an individual, association, private sector organization or public institution to provide a program, service or resource that will help support student achievement. That said, you should not interpret this inclusive definition to mean that "anything goes" in the name of partnerships.

Potential community partnerships are bounded only by your imagination. If you consider all of your community's resources as potentially available for helping you and your school succeed and improve, your partnerships may range from relationships with individuals to relationships with corporations and businesses. Kretzmann and McKnight (1993) discuss a number of real-life school-community relationship examples:

- A school works with a local park to offer a summer family sports program, and the schools agrees to send flyers to other schools, churches and various organizations informing community residents of the types of sports activities available;

- The principal of a school works with a local library and other neighborhood organizations to create an anti-gang initiative in order to provide tighter security and special buses to ensure the safety of the students; after establishing this contact, the principal is invited to speak at the opening of the library's new computer facility;

- Local police officers offer to provide student and teacher training in conflict resolution to four schools in the community; now, when a conflict arises on the school playground, designated students work with both parties to discover amicable solutions to the problem;

- In cooperation with a local hospital, two high schools develop school-based health clinics; one of these now has an infant and child development center, while the other has a WIC and a counseling center;

- A large corporation decides to honor four local students with outstanding attendance records by awarding them $500 scholarships to be used for higher education, and next year the corporation plans to give a special award to the student with the most impressive community involvement record;

- Students at an elementary school are matched with local businesses for summer internships, which enable the businesses to tap into the skills of local youth and give the students a place to earn some money outside of school; and

- Neighbors and residents mobilize together with the school to address community safety issues; they provide cross-walk coverage in the area around the school both before and after school and mobilize neighborhood block watches to guard against crime and community disorganization.

Outcomes associated with community partnerships

Outcomes associated with community partnerships potentially cut across all the areas noted in Table 2.2 (in the getting started chapter). Table 9.1 summarizes some of the evidence indicating that community partnerships lead to good outcomes.

Table 9.1: Outcomes associated with community partnerships	
Improvements in:	**Reductions in:**
• Academic achievement (e.g., in reading and math), opportunities for learning, and related indicators of educational success (attendance, student turnover) • Low income students, many of color, gain more access to challenging academic programs and bilingual instruction • Safer schools, including students' getting to and from school • Graduation rates • Social and emotional development of youth • Positive school climate • Resources • Opportunities to participate (for staff, teachers and youth) • Parent and family engagement • Efficiency in running programs • Service learning opportunities • School levy passage • Opportunities for youth involvement in pro-social activities • Community reinforcement of youth involvement in pro-social activities • Communities seeing youth as valuable assets • Communities having higher expectations for youth • Community trust in schools	• Isolation of individuals and organizations • Apathy towards being involved • In class size and school size • Duplication of services • Student transience

From: Benson & Harkavy, 2002; Blank, Melaville, & Shah, 2003; Briar-Lawson, 2000; Gold, Simon, & Brown, 2002; Greenberg, Weissberg, O'Brien, Zins, Fredericks, Resnik, & Elias, 2003; Halpern, 2003; Hatch, 1998a, 1998b; Henderson & Mapp, 2002; Keith, 1996; Lawson & Briar-Lawson, 1997; Lopez, 2003; Mediratta, Fruchter, & Lewis, 2002; Melaville, 1999; Quinn, 2003; Saks, 2000; Strand, Marullo, Cutforth, Stoecker, Donohue et al., 2003; Turning Points, 2004; Villarreal & Bookmyer, 2004.

This research clearly suggests that schools, families, community agencies and local higher education institutions gain from solid, community partnerships, especially ones that secure broad, yet focused community engagement. In summary, community partnerships:

- Raise the visibility of local issues and programs, while getting persons and organizations mutually committed;
- Help participants set priorities for the sharing of resources;
- Unleash new talents and resources to address old and new problems and opportunities;
- Gain new resources and make better use of existing resources; and
- Improve results, especially for schools.

Key design principles and strategies in community partnerships

As we noted in the collaborative leadership chapter, partnership development must be done planfully and carefully. In this chapter, we use the research on partnership development, community development and community building to define key design principles and strategies for school leaders.

What follows is the checklist (Table 9.2) that highlights the overarching design principles and strategies for successful programs. This checklist is not as straight forward in this chapter as it was in other chapters. It has been slightly revised to reflect the fact that community partnerships are not necessarily programs, although they could be programs. It is modified to take into account this need. Following this checklist is a table (Table 9.3) that describes the key design principles and strategies within community partnerships.

Table 9.2: Modified check list of overarching design principles and/or strategies for successful programs and partnerships
☐ Partnerships operate programs that are designed to create intended results
☐ The logic behind the partnership makes sense as the services link to outcomes
☐ The partnership uses multiple strategies to accomplish its goals (comprehensive)
☐ Partnerships are evaluation-driven and continuously improved upon
☐ Partnerships and the programs they operate are research-supported and theoretically-sound
☐ Programs operated by partner organizations use a variety of teaching and learning strategies
☐ Partnerships and their programs have sufficient dosage
☐ Partnerships and their programs are implemented the way it was originally designed
☐ Staff who operate programs as part of the partnership are well-trained in the program design
☐ Participants have a "say so" in how the program and partnership are structured and implemented
☐ The partnership and its programs are tailored to meet individual and community needs
☐ The partnership and its programs are appropriately timed and located
☐ The partnership and its programs are implemented in culturally competent ways
☐ The partnership and its programs are family-centered and -supportive
☐ Strategies foster self-determination and personal control
☐ Participants are empowered
☐ Participants' strengths are built upon in the partnership and its programs
☐ Positive relationships and bonding are created
☐ The partnership and its program activities are enjoyable and meaningful to participants
☐ Those facilitating the partnership and its programs are engaging

Table 9.3: Design principles and/or strategies for community partnerships	
Principle and strategy	**What this looks like**
Intentional and focused	
Strategic	• Partnerships strategically recruit, engage and retain the "right" partners • Partners are developed based on their clear link to one or more of the conditions (barriers to learning) you found in the conditions and resources assessment • Partners are developed based on their ability to help with creating the outcomes you need to achieve and improve

Table 9.3: Design principles and/or strategies for community partnerships	
Principle and strategy	**What this looks like**
Strategic continued	• The partnership is not agenda driven and is instead driven by community aspirations and needs • Partnerships allow for time in between meetings to make informed judgments (i.e., thoughtfulness) • Partnerships use "targeting strategies" as they identify and prioritize special sub-populations, as opposed to trying to reach everyone
Logical	• Strategies for partnership development operate from a well-conceived and operationalized plan • The plan for developing partnerships is supported by research • Partnerships and the programs associated with them are intentional and focused on addressing unmet needs; there is a link between what is being done and what is needed
Unity in purpose and consensus	• All partners see the big picture • All partners see how their work relies on the success of others • All partners understand how their efforts fit together • Partners endorse, reinforce and promote the school community's vision and mission
Core responsibilities	
Accountable	• The school community experiences greater benefits because of the partnerships (i.e., the conditions are better addressed in the end) • Partners are accountable for their contributions • Partners stay true to their agency missions • Partners take into consideration the qualities and assets they bring to the partnership • Partners are committed to the partnership • Partners create formal contracts and Memorandums of Understanding (MOUs) to improve efficiency, effectiveness and accountabilities
Results oriented	• Partnerships are developed and sustained with their eye on desired outcomes • Partners feel accountable for results • Strategies that emerge as a result of the partnership are research supported and documented • Partners are willing to re-tweak or discard programs and services that do not work • Partners measure progress and achievements • Partners, individually and collectively, are focused on results, and they are committed to getting and using good information to get results, learn and improve
Sustainable	• Partnerships are developed based on their clear link to one or more of the barriers to learning you found in the conditions and resources assessment • Partners are *solid,* have "sticking power" and "staying power" • Partnerships must be long lasting and yielding benefits over the long haul after you have left • The sum is better than its parts • Partnerships are more than one meeting • Partnerships avoid "quick fixes"

Table 9.3: Design principles and/or strategies for community partnerships

Principle and strategy	What this looks like
Win-win arrangements	
Mutually beneficial	• Partners' needs and goals are met • Every partner is able to see how the partnership enables them to achieve their missions and goals (i.e., how the partnership helps them) • Every partner is able to see how the partnership helps them demonstrate their accountabilities • The school community experiences greater benefits because of the partnership (i.e., the conditions are better addressed in the end)
Both independent and interdependent	• Partners are able to work together and also work independently • Situations where partners are solely dependent upon each other are avoided (i.e., "don't put all their eggs in one basket") • Partners have their own missions, programs and identities while simultaneously sharing ones within the partnership
Reciprocity	• Partners are able to share their resources • There is a process in place by which partners both share and receive resources • There is give and take within the partnership
Synergy	• Partners are energized as they interact • Partners and partnerships use creativity, and develop innovative programs and services
Structural considerations	
Collaborative leadership	• Participants take charge of the project and have a say-so in what happens and develops • The group takes charge of the partnership, rather than letting one individual or agency take ownership and responsibility • Collaborative leadership teams are established that guide the vision and mission of the school community • Leadership ensures the right things are done and things are done right
Intermediary people and/or organizations	• A single person or intermediary organization who is "neutral" serves as the facilitator of the partnership • Local, indigenous "community guides" facilitate the entry of outsiders into tightly knit local communities; these individuals provide input into how to best mobilize the community and its resources
Policy/power connections	• Partnerships connect with and influence official decisions • The community provides input to inform local decision making and partnership direction • Partnerships serve as an influential group because of the power in numbers • Partnerships have an influence on policy, rules, norms, etc., within the community • Partnerships include people with informal and formal power and influence
Grounded in the community	
History and awareness	• Partnerships are grounded in community history, the history of previous partnerships, and past strengths, limitations and achievements

Table 9.3: Design principles and/or strategies for community partnerships	
Principle and strategy	**What this looks like**
History and awareness continued	• Partnerships are culturally responsive and grounded in local traditions • Partnerships aim to know more about the community and its resources so they may better plan and develop strategic visions • The community and its stakeholders are involved early in the process of partnership development • The partnership identifies specific areas and neighborhood blocks, their social histories and local cultures, using this knowledge to recruit people and plan programs and services
Norms and values	• Partnerships establish firm norms, rules, principles and values that guide people's interactions • Partners develop a "no finger-pointing and/or blaming" rule that operates when problems arise • Partners know how to resolve disagreements and grievances • Communities establish strong positive social norms for pro-social behavior, health and well-being • Communities and partnerships reinforce and promote knowledge, attitudes and behaviors supportive of health and well-being • Communities reinforce and promote the value of working together • Culture, social networks, institutions and community values shape and channel the direction of the partnerships
Driven by community stakeholders	• The group takes charge of the partnership, rather than letting one individual or agency take ownership and responsibility • Partnerships involve all sectors of the community • Members are actively engaged in the partnership and planning • Partners guide the partnership's direction and focus • Community has a role to play in developing local school and community policy and direction • Local residents have an influence over the partnership's direction and purpose • Partnerships engage local residents, especially the most vulnerable ones, as co-teachers and co-leaders in your operations
Focused on building connections	
Engaging strategies	• Partnerships serve as the mechanism for sharing good news; make your partnership's and its members' good news contagious • Partnerships use "seeking strategies" (actively finding and recruiting people instead of waiting for them to come to you); they do not expect people to come to them • Partnerships go beyond the local neighborhoods and find, organize and mobilize dedicated people who reside elsewhere and draw on the resources, power, authority and social networks
Communication	• Partners receive, and have access to, accurate information • Information is shared routinely and effectively • There are effective referral and exchange mechanisms among partners • Partners know "who to call" for certain needs and issues • Partnerships build community awareness and knowledge through communication and learning networks
Relationships	• Partners trust each other

Table 9.3: Design principles and/or strategies for community partnerships	
Principle and strategy	**What this looks like**
Relationships continued	• Partners are credible, legitimate and dependable • There are limited risks in working with partners • Partnerships allow for processing time to build relationships (i.e., social gatherings, fun activities, celebrations, etc.)
Welcoming environment	• Partnerships offer opportunities for people to gather at convenient and comfortable locations and at a variety of convenient times • All partners are encouraged to be actively involved in the partnership • All partners have a voice • Partnerships uses democratic leadership processes, as opposed to autocratic ones, within the partnership process • All partners realize there will never be enough professionals, and welcome others and alternative designs and strategies when addressing community issues • Partners avoid blaming and deficit-based language, and build from strengths and aspirations of all

From: Anderson-Butcher & Ashton, 2002; Blank, et al., 2003; Briar-Lawson & Lawson, 1997; Cahn & Rowe, 1996; Chadwick, 2004; Ife, 1999; Knowledge Works, 2004; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Lawson, in press; Lawson, Anderson-Butcher, Peterson, & Barkdull, 2003; Larsen, Harlan, Bolin, Hackett, Hope, Kirby, Nelson, Rex, Wolf, 2004; Murray & Weissbroud, 2003; Shirley, 1997; Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierannunzi, 2001.

Other considerations in community partnerships

These design principles and strategies for community partnerships provide direction for schools and communities in relation to their partnership planning. Further detail is provided here in relation to designing strategic partnerships, operating from a well-conceived plan, recruiting partnership, and aiming for sustainability. At the end, a brief overview is provided in relation to community building, a common partnership strategy used in school communities across the nation.

Partnerships are strategic

The above emphasis on "strategic" and "intentional" partnerships is important. Partnerships are strategic when you have recruited, engaged and retained the "right" partners. The underlying reasoning is as follows.

Partnerships are not automatically beneficial. Some yield more benefits than others. Unfortunately, some partnerships tap people's time, energy, commitments and resources, but they do not yield any tangible benefits. You need to ensure your partnership improves the core results for your school community, starting with academic achievement and healthy development (Murray & Weissbroud, 2003).

Furthermore, there are many candidates for partnerships, and they are not all alike. Some people and organizations will not be good partners. For example, some representatives will approach you because you have money and other resources they want and need, or because you have a grant. These undesirable "partners" will leave you when the money is gone, or when the grant ends. You, and others working closely with you, need to make important choices. You will need to be strategic in the selection of your partners.

It is important your partners share the vision and mission for your school, if not at the beginning, then later as you work with them. It also is important they demonstrate a commitment and a capacity to be a good partner. The point is, *choosing good partners is one of the most important parts of partnership development*.

We have provided two figures to jump start your thinking and planning. Table 9.4 provides questions you can and should ask about potential partners.

Table 9.4: A partnership planning checklist
☐　Which condition(s) identified in your needs and resources assessment does this partner address?
☐　What population(s) does the organization (prospective partner) serve?
☐　Can it recruit, serve and retain other populations, especially ones you can not serve?
☐　Does this prospective partner offer unique and important benefits to kids and families? Does a partnership with it promise to improve learning, academic achievement and success in school?
☐　Does it have local competitors? If so, how will you choose among them?
☐　Does it have a good reputation? Is it credible? Are you willing to have its reputation affect your reputation?
☐　Are you willing to refer people to this organization?
☐　Will you lose other partners if you partner with this organization? If so, is it worth it?
☐　Is this prospective partner a results-oriented organization? If so, what results does it emphasize? If not, what does the organization pride itself in doing and accomplishing?
☐　Does the prospective partner have a clear, compelling mission and concrete, attainable goals?
☐　Does the prospective partner endorse your vision? If not, can the partner be convinced to "buy in" to this vision?
☐　Does it have a set of operating principles and values that guide its work? Are these principles, values and goals, and this mission consistent with yours?
☐　Does the prospective partner have enough resources to accomplish its mission?
☐　Is the prospective partner known for sharing resources and, all in all, cooperating and collaborating with others? Will you share resources with it?
☐　Is the prospective partner dependable and trustworthy?
☐　Are there risks associated with a partnership with this organization? Are these risks acceptable? Are they manageable?
☐　What do you stand to gain by partnering? To lose? Are the benefits worth it?

Choosing your partners

Table 9.5 presents examples of potential partners. These examples are just a few of those that may be available to you in your community.

This table also has two other features. It identifies potential school benefits, indicating that the partnership promises to be strategic. It also identifies what the partner organization gets in return. You can use these benefits when you recruit them. In short, many partnerships are cemented by enlightened self interest – the partnership meets needs and satisfies priorities – and reciprocity – the give and take of partnerships. Solid partnerships derive from these benefits.

Table 9.5: Examples of school–community partnerships

Community resource	Potential school benefits	Potential partner benefits
Church or other religious institution	Space for a literacy program, after-school youth center	Materials for a youth center, clothes for a resale shop
College or university	Tutoring and mentoring summer program, future teachers, alternative high school	Space, employment for students
Local residents	Security guards, volunteers, donations, special skills	Employment opportunities, classes, newsletters, volunteer opportunities
Businesses	Donations, scholarships, mentoring, service learning opportunities	Future employees, interns and apprentices
Chamber of Commerce	Access to the business community, mentoring, training, volunteers	Well-trained workforce, publicity
Bakeries or restaurants	Food for events, help establishing catering enterprises	Catering opportunities, publicity
Media	Good publicity for events, assistance in mobilizing the community	Access to news events, public service opportunities
Artists and cultural institutions	Mentors, judges for contests, facilitators for projects	Display space, artist in residence opportunities, publicity
Library	Access to resources, space, specialized content skills	Support for library programs, access to kids and parents (patrons)
Senior citizen's groups	Tutoring, mentoring, transportation, event volunteers, child-care resources	Access to school space, educational programs, holiday meals
Banks	Money, connections to outside funders, grant-writing skills	Public service opportunities, publicity
Police	Assistance with crime prevention, mentoring	Development of relationships with youth
Various community events – festivals	Community exposure, support for school-community relationships	Volunteers, participants
Community education	Access to special training like sewing, model building, car maintenance, budgeting, public speaking	Access to participants
Daycare centers	Student exposure to young children, service-learning opportunities	Volunteer help from students, possible space
Policy makers	Influence over local decisions and policies, especially ones impacting schools (levies, etc.)	Exposure, platforms
Government	Influence over funding streams and priorities for delivery of services, etc.	More effective use of funding and resources because they are more responsive to local needs
Councils and boards (i.e., Family and Children First Councils, School Boards, etc.)	Influence over policies, funding streams, etc.	More effective use of funding and resources; better aligned policies
Citizen and community groups (i.e., neighborhood associations, racial and/or ethnic groups)	Mobilization of key constituents in support of school directions	Ability to better serve their community via the school

From: Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Stone, Henig, Jones, & Pierrannuzi, 2001.

You can see from these examples that potential community partnerships are limited only by your imagination and, of course, by the resources available in your local community. Even small communities have, upon closer inspection, many untapped resources that a school could effectively engage to support students and families.

Your ability to build effective community partnerships hinges on how you approach the related tasks. All potential community partners and resources are busy with their own mandates and expectations. Letting these potential partners know you know they are busy and that you are asking for their assistance in partnering with your program only after careful thought will be important perspective.

As you approach potential community partners, use the idea that there are four, inter-related driving forces that make school community partnerships crucial:

- Student and family conditions, including assets, risks and needs;
- Good student and family outcomes, including the trouble everyone has in getting them when they operate alone;
- Resource shortfalls and stresses everyone faces AND the opportunity to pool and maximize them; and
- Duplication, fragmentation and needless competition that get in the way of everyday operations and do not serve children, families and communities.

Stress the idea that these driving forces are the foundation for effective partnerships. Argue that all school-community partnerships start with shared recognition of unmet needs, outcomes that are not achieved, gaps in programs and services, and untapped opportunities to do innovative, exciting work.

Table 9.6 provides further direction about the activities your school and your potential community partners can undertake to get started on the road to partnership building (Jehl, Blank, & McCloud, 2001).

Expanded Thinking About Partnerships

In this guide, partnerships refer to *strategic*, *solid* working relationships with other providers of programs and services. Most of these other providers are organizations such as Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs. However, youth, parents and families also provide programs and services, and they are experts in determining their own needs, wants and aspirations. Therefore, partnerships with them are every bit as important as the ones with professional providers and organizations. (This point also is emphasized in the family engagement section of this guide.)

By expanding your thinking about partnerships you may be able to increase resources available to you in non-conventional, but strategically important ways. For example, businesses and corporations, colleges and universities, and faith-based organizations all have a vested interest in good academic outcomes and may be more than willing to engage in productive partnerships.

Table 9.6: Examples of activities for connecting schools and community partners		
Key activities	**For educators**	**For community leaders**
FIND OUT about each others' interests, needs, aspirations and resources.	**Find out** about the neighborhoods where your students live. What are the local issues? What assets are out there? What resources do they offer? How can you capitalize on them to help students and the school? What can you provide them?	**Find out** about your local schools, including their performance records, their needs and their recent innovations? What opportunities do they offer for engagement and partnership? What opportunities can you help the schools develop?
REACH OUT to potential partners on their own turf with specific offers of assistance and opportunities to work together.	**Reach out** to community agencies invested in children's learning, healthy development and success in school. Tell them what you offer them and what they can provide in return. Be specific about the value of partnerships and your plans for developing them. Offer the school's facilities for programs and services that help advance the school's mission.	**Reach out** to principals, teachers and other school staff by attending school functions and offering help in concrete ways. Make educators aware of all you do with kids and families, emphasizing how your work helps them and the students. Develop concrete strategies for communicating, connecting and collaborating.
SPELL OUT the purpose of the partnership and the terms and conditions of joint efforts, including who will do what, with whom, when, where and how.	**Spell out** the areas that are "off-limits" for partnerships, emphasizing the need for partnerships to be linked directly to school improvement. Draft MOUs and inter-agency agreements that specify outcomes, responsibilities and resources.	**Spell out** how complete success in your work depends on successful schools. Also spell out how your work can make schools successful. Be clear on what you want to do, through the partnership, and how the partnership will benefit the schools.
WORK OUT the kinks as they arise and change your approach as indicated by the feedback you receive.	**Work out** the issues, especially the conflicts because conflict is unavoidable and good things happen when it is resolved. Develop trouble shooting procedures to fix problems "on the fly."	**Work out** the problems that always occur when you establish partnerships with schools and need to abide by their rules, procedures and policies. Help educators think about alternatives and remain flexible as you align some of your operations with theirs.
BUILD OUT as you experience success by sharing positive results and promoting more innovative programs and services.	**Build out** by sharing positive results and success stories with staff, parents, district leaders and school board members. Use your successes to seek resources from governmental officials and funding agencies.	**Build out** by sharing success stories with other community organizations, local governments and the media. Proudly announce your achievements and use them to recruit other partners and supporters.

You might also consider developing or enhancing partnerships with the following entities:

- ***Businesses and Corporations.*** Business and corporations, along with the local associations they develop such as the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce, often have resources that you will want and need. Their money is important, of course, but so are the opportunities and people they provide. For example, employees from businesses and corporations often will volunteer to serve as mentors and tutors. Some businesses and corporations will sponsor career development initiatives, including school-and-work and school-to-work programs. These programs and initiatives are especially important for kids who wonder where school will take them; and why they should study, succeed and graduate. Thus, there is good reason to work with the business and corporate community.

- ***Colleges and Universities.*** Colleges and universities are especially important to your school. More of Ohio's students must complete higher education degrees to gain meaningful employment in the new economy. Toward this end, P-16 (preschool through the undergraduate degree) planning is underway across the state.

  Colleges and universities offer another resource to your partnerships. Most community colleges, four-year colleges, and universities offer special programs called "service learning." Students are able to receive credit for volunteer work in organizations like yours. You also might consider partnering with academic disciplines that have field placements and internships as parts of their requirements (i.e., education, social work, psychology, nursing and other "professional schools and colleges"). In a nutshell, you are able to get lots of help at no cost to you, and this help also benefits your students.

  Higher education faculty also may be helpful, and are expected to give work requirements for service, outreach and engagement within their academic roles. Faculty can be recruited to help with your evaluation and research needs. Even if faculty cannot do the work themselves, many can offer students to help you. And, when it comes time to check out a new program or service, especially to determine whether there is any evidence indicating that it works, faculty and their students often are just a phone call away from providing help. Faculty also know how to write grants, and you will need more grants. A strategic, solid partnership with one or more committed faculty will yield this fiscal benefit and others.

- ***Faith-based organizations.*** Churches, synagogues, mosques and other religious organizations also qualify as good, potential partners. For example, many provide after-school programs for youth and family support programs. Some provide special incentives and rewards for students who excel in school and in their communities. All have the capacity to help organize and mobilize parents, families and community leaders in the support of schools. These potential partners are, in short, powerful resources.

There are a few final points to be made in relation to getting started. Remember first and foremost, you do not have to do this work alone. Use your school and community contacts to locate two or three long-term providers of programs and services. Use these persons as community experts and guides. Find out who does what with whom. Find out who is at war with whom. Find out who successfully partners with whom. Find out who is dependable, credible and legitimate, and who has a shaky reputation.

Second, rely on the data you collected about the kids, parents and families you want to serve and the gaps you identified in relation to them. Take the data a step further, figure out what specialized sub-populations of kids, parents and families you have overall. Then figure out which ones you can serve directly, which ones already are being served by someone else, and which ones are not being served and why. As you figure out who will do what with whom, you will be well on your way to identifying your most important partners. Your partnership plan and direction will be influenced by these steps.

Partnerships operate from well conceived plans

The main idea here cannot be over-emphasized. *Strategic, solid partnerships are developed in relation to a justifiable plan that focuses on improved results.*

Clearly, you will be able to co-facilitate the development of strategic, solid partnerships if you operate with a well-conceived plan. This plan is not something new for you to do. Basically, *your plan is a practical way for you and your partners to implement the OCCMSI.*

You will recall the logic model is complex and comprehensive. You probably wondered when you first reviewed it whether you could do it all. Good thinking! You can not! You fundamentally need others, your prospective partners; and they also need you. You depend on each other.

Put another way, you will need strategic, solid partnerships in order to accomplish everything that needs to be done. You will not achieve the results you want and need unless you prioritize partnership development. *It is a central part of your job.*

If you develop a well-conceived plan that is tailored to your situation, you will develop a single school-linked partnership system. Like a large umbrella, this overarching partnership will encompass all of the "right" partners – the ones you have recruited strategically. As indicated in another chapter, you will develop collaborative leadership teams and processes to help operate these partnerships. Further, as indicated in yet another chapter, you will use evaluations to help you and your partners improve while you make progress in achieving outcomes.

This means that you, and others you recruit to develop and lead your partnership, need to understand "the big picture" for your operations. (Again, this is what the logic model provides for you.) This work also requires that you have a good idea about how the partners fit together in this big picture. As the partnership evolves – and every partnership does – you will need to be prepared to work with them to adjust their respective roles and contributions, and perhaps, the big picture. This macro perspective also is essential when aiming for sustainability.

Partnerships aim for sustainability

Thus, the best partnership arrangements are not informal, occasional and haphazard. They are built to last because they improve outcomes. And, that is why it is worthwhile to invest the time, energy and resources in them.

It is not enough to have strategic partnerships. These partnerships also must be *solid*. Only then will they have "sticking power" and "staying power", i.e., lasting and yielding benefits over the long haul even after you have left.

Two features of solid, sustainable partnerships deserve special emphasis here. They signal why partners are strategic and also what makes them solid.

- *Every partner is able to achieve its own missions, goals and accountabilities at the same time it contributes to the achievement of the school's vision, mission, goals and accountabilities.* In this fundamental sense, partnerships are strategic and solid because they are mutually beneficial. In fact, this is why partners join and stay.

- With time and especially with your facilitation, partners will learn they depend on each other. No partner, including you, can achieve what it wants and needs without the others. *Mutual awareness of interdependent relationships is the key to effective partnerships and the hard work they require. It enhances a partnership's sticking power and staying power.*

In this view, solid partnerships are purposeful, effective, efficient and lasting. Partners enjoy formal and regular working relationships; they meet regularly and communicate effectively. Some partners have histories of working together, and they draw on these histories as they plan their future working relationships. Others use the partnerships as a way of rewriting their own histories.

Several things happen when you are effectively translating and forging these school-community partnerships. They also serve as important indicators of future sustainability. As you work through partnership development and community building, several authors (Jenson, 1999; Lawson, 2004; Murray & Weissbroud, 2003) suggest you look for:

- More belonging than isolation;
- More inclusion than exclusion;
- More participation than non-involvement;
- More recognition than rejection;
- More consensus and less competition and conflict; and
- More sharing and less selfish hoarding of resources.

As the discussion indicates, when you develop partnerships, you also are doing community building work, which benefits schools, families and community agencies. People and organizations start doing their work collectively, and planning in relation to others and larger community priorities. Essentially, communities are strengthened as a result of the synergism.

Partnership development as a bridge to community-building

Several key strategies are documented in the research as being important for building bridges and engaging communities. Builders of community partnerships need to listen, think strategically, sort out agendas, build confidence and encourage participation. Mostly, partnerships must be built upon trust. This is challenging work in an age of cynicism and mistrust. In this approach to partnership development, bonding relationships and bridging mechanisms among people and organizations need to be developed among partners (Cahn & Rowe, 1996; Kretzmann & McKnight, 1993; Larsen, Harlan, Bolin, Hackett, Hope, Kirby, Nelson et al., 2004; Lawson, in press). Strategies, steps and actions in bonding and bridging with potential partners are identified in Table 9.7.

Table 9.7: Bonding and bridging mechanisms	
Step	**Action**
Listen	Meet one-on-one with all participants and potential collaborators. As you are able to identify the self-interest, passion and motivation for participation, you are able to most effectively enlist the resources that individual or collaborating partner has to offer.
Think strategically	Promote policies that maximize potential of all participants. A comprehensive community approach aims to do more than place a band-aid. It encourages a change in priorities grounded in local life, while incorporating resources from the outside world. Through collaborations and partnership, key information will surface.
Sort and build agendas	Understand obstacles. When approaching your work as a strategic builder of community partnerships, you will want to not only understand the strengths and the capacities of those around you, but also will want to engage in an informal analysis of decision-making. Understanding the roles by intentionally inviting persons and agencies to share their motivation or self-interest, transparency is generated.
Build confidence	Identify challenges and needs. However, build on the assets. As you do, do not forget to tell the stories. Emphasize building of grassroots resources, including cultural, faith-based, civic and recreational. • Develop core resources. • Increase support for training and recruitment of staff (paid and volunteer). • Expose key community partners, including executive directors and other leaders to concerted educational opportunities. Do not assume they understand. • Eliminate the rift between "process" or relationship-driven participants and "product-driven" ones. Both are necessary.
Build bridges	Strengthen and connect existing social networks, through bonding and bridging activities; and also strive to create new ones. Do not assume that poor people can be serviced out of poverty; include economic and occupational development initiatives, including ones you develop and provide through the partnership system. Use faith-based institutions such as mosques, synagogues, temples and churches as hubs of family support and community development. ▪ Identify and rely on community guides – insiders who can help you understand and work with residents you have not met before.
Recognize challenges and build on strengths	Identify and promote community-wide positive norms and expectations for prosocial behavior, health and well being. Create strong normative settings and environments that reinforce and promote knowledge, attitudes and behaviors supportive of health and well being.

We see school leaders as particularly well-suited to adopt community builder roles. Schools are often at the center of a community and garner great interest from the community. By moving into more broadly defined community partnerships, school leaders actually begin modifying their roles in the community. They find themselves moving from simply being school leaders to being community builders. Community builders are people who work actively to engage the concerted efforts of all members of a community to solve community problems and to promote the community good (Ife, 1999). School leaders as community builders find this expanded role brings benefits to their students, their families, teachers, the school and the larger community.

Common barriers in community partnerships

Regardless of who serves as the community builder, mobilizer or instigator, community partnerships allow for the tapping of underutilized resources, the mobilization of resources in focused, intentional ways, as well as the maximization of resources in school communities. In reality, extending and expanding the idea that all of a community's "gifts" offer potential resources for reducing barriers to student learning and increasing both student and family potential should be exciting for school leaders.

This work is not easy. There are multiple barriers and obstacles that may present themselves as you work through the process of negotiating partnerships and developing resources. A few are highlighted here, along with minimizing strategies aimed to reduce the impact of the each barrier.

Barrier: Recruiting and retaining partners

There are always challenges related to recruiting and retaining individual and organizational involvement within any community partnership. It is difficult to get these stakeholders to view the partnership as imperative to their success in their work. Table 9.8 presents common recruiting and retaining partners barriers and makes suggestions about how to address them.

Table 9.8: Recruiting and retaining partners – Specific barriers and minimizing strategies	
Barriers: Recruiting and retaining partners	**Minimizing strategies**
- Interdependent relationships and collaboration are not valued - Norms for quality interaction have not been established - Sharing is not a priority - Perception it is easier to do work alone - People and agencies are inadvertently left out "Gifts" are left untapped - Informal opportunities to get to know one another and continuously bring in new resources are not often available - There is limited time and resources to devote to building partnerships - Individuals and agencies do not see partnerships as central to their work and success - Others…	- Find common ground that allows each person and organization to participate, while recognizing each other's varied accountabilities - Identify benefits of partnerships; and costs and losses of dropping out - Find ways for each person and entity to get their goals met through the partnership - Find ways for each person and entity to have a niche to excel and ways to share in the accountability - Regularly develop and disseminate fact sheets that announce the partnership's aims and accomplishments - Make participation a welcome part of the climate and culture; hospitality will be contagious; persons will want to help you - Help partners convince their top level leaders that their partnership with you is worth the effort and part of the job - Offer resources and support to others when times are rough - Establish interdependent relationships; co-grant write - Explore intentional ways to include untapped resources; try to be aware of persons and groups that are not at the table - Understand and identify clichés; dismantling false boundaries and stigmatizing in the community can help youth and children do the same - Host "open houses" and informal times of hospitality to build effective bridges; there needs to be time together, without heavy agenda or motive - Sponsor informal events that build friendships

Table 9.8: Recruiting and retaining partners – *Specific barriers and minimizing strategies*	
	• Ensure the "right mix" is invited, drawing on histories of success and failure • Employ "community guides" who can translate the mission, best practices and interests of the entire community • Identify neutral people and organizations to convene potential partners • Others…

Barrier: Turf and related conflicts

Recruiting and retaining partnerships is challenging because of another related barrier: turf. Essentially, individuals and agencies are protective of their own expertise, clientele, geographical service area, space, practice arena and more. These self-interests often times get in the way of successful community partnerships. Table 9.9 presents common turf and related conflict barriers and makes suggestions about how to address them.

Table 9.9: Turf and related conflicts – *Specific barriers and minimizing strategies*	
Barriers: Turf and related conflicts	**Minimizing strategies**
• Multiple obstacles can block the convening of potential partners • People and agencies have different missions and perspectives • Agencies compete for the same resources • Perceptions that certain professions and agencies are more qualified, competent, etc. • Language and "alphabet soup" of organizations can impede communication • Historical "rifts" and turf can keep new partnerships from emerging • Not all perspectives are valued equally • Others…	• Find common ground that allows each person and organization to participate, while recognizing each other's varied accountabilities • Find ways for each person and entity to have a niche to excel and ways to share in the accountability • Learn the mission, vision, goals of each community partner and how it contributes to the community and partnership at-large • Understand and identify clichés; dismantling false boundaries and stigmatizing in the community can help youth and children do the same • Value each person and organization for its own worth in the community • Establish norms for high quality interactions • Build trust and relationships among community partners • Remember there will never be enough resources to fully meet the needs of the community • Develop conflict resolution procedures • Reach consensus on core norms, values and principles • Continuously emphasize partners' interdependence • Continuously emphasize the greater good of the community you serve • Develop "win-win" planning frameworks in which duplication of programs and services is good and needed in some cases • Create shared vocabulary and meanings that cross disciplines; provide translators/translation • Use only strengths-based, solution-focused language and avoid blaming • Develop cross-training programs • Do not be afraid to talk about issues involving race, socio-economic status, gender, sexual orientation, and their

Table 9.9: Turf and related conflicts – Specific barriers and minimizing strategies	
	relationships; silence is more of a problem than direct, problem solving • Others…

Barrier: Confusion and controversy

When you have multiple stakeholders involved, it also becomes confusing and controversial. People and organizations have different expectations, believes and opinions about what the partnership, and its members, should and could be doing. It also is difficult to inform partners of all that is happening because communication channels are often limited or ineffective. Table 9.10 presents common confusion and controversy barriers and makes suggestions about how to address them.

Table 9.10: Confusion and controversy – Specific barriers and minimizing strategies	
Barriers: Confusion and controversy	**Minimizing strategies**
• There are differences in opinions related to who should do what, when and for whom • People do not know what others do, and have perspectives on what others should be doing • Persons are not given permission to disagree • Roles and expectations may be interpreted differently • Simply having multiple stakeholders allows for confusion • Partners are not necessarily accountable to the group, but to their own individual organization/boss • Communication channels are limited, promoting miscommunication or little communication • Others…	• Minimize a crisis orientation by being in constant, honest communication • Honor differences and disagreement in a healthy way by establishing a culture of shared trust and integrity • Invite partners to share their perceived roles for clarification of expectations; memos of understanding or a written commitment to collaboration may be helpful • Avoid blaming and deficit-centered attitudes by agreeing to use strengths-based, solution-focused language • Use memorandums of understanding to provide clarity in roles and expectations • Spend time and energy on consensus-building aimed at the shared vision and missions • Ensure that each partner sees how they fit the big picture and how it helps them • Develop a coherent model and strategies • Convene the partnership regularly to facilitate communication, planning, and accountability • Develop newsletters, listserves, etc., that foster communication and the sharing of information and successes • Work strategically through local media • Others…

Some final thoughts

The OCCMSI aims to provide educators and their schools as well as students and their families with much-needed resources, assistance and supports. With this model, no one needs to operate in isolation. No potential resource remains undiscovered and untapped. Mindful that everyone needs additional resources, supports and assistance, your job is to develop strategic, solid partnerships.

This model's emphasis on "strategic" and "solid" partnerships is important. The research on school-family-community partnerships, and the multiple benefits they provide, emphasizes that not all partnerships are alike; nor are they automatically beneficial. Unfortunately, some partnerships tap people's time, energy, commitments and resources, but they do not yield any tangible benefits.

You and other local school community leaders need to rely on experiences and first hand knowledge about prospective partners. You especially need to remain mindful about the central roles, functions and missions of Ohio's schools, ensuring that partnerships do not take them off course.

Partnerships are strategic when school community leaders have recruited, engaged and retained the "right" partners. Important local choices are involved, especially choices about how prospective partners will make genuine contributions to school improvement. Reciprocally, partners expect something in return; and, what educators and schools offer should reflect and strengthen the central roles, missions and functions of Ohio's schools.

In this new school improvement model, partnership arrangements must be designed to provide resources, supports and assistance that will enhance learning, academic achievement, healthy development and a sense of connection to school. The OCCMSI encourages your school community to formalize the effective ones, consider shedding the ineffective and inappropriate ones, and develop new ones to gain family and community resources and, in turn, to improve results.

Only then will they be integral components of school improvement.

Above all, this model prioritizes strategic, solid partnerships in the aforementioned core areas – academic learning and enrichment, youth development, family engagement and support, and health-social services. Indeed, many of the improvement targets identified in relation to these core components require and facilitate partnership development.

Finally, you should be reminded that, in some of Ohio's communities and counties, partnership systems already are in place. Like undiscovered and untapped treasures, partnerships are out there waiting for you to discover them. Three notable examples are Partnerships for Success, Families and Children First and Communities that Care. There are others. And, most, if not all, are led by persons who believe they will not be wholly successful until such time as they develop solid, strategic partnerships with schools. As the saying goes, "opportunity knocks" under conditions like these.

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