BUILDING PARTNERSHIPS: PUBLIC SCHOOLS AS CATALYSTS FOR COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

by

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Submitted to the Department of Urban Studies and Planning
in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of
Master in City Planning

at the

Massachusetts Institute of Technology

June 2002

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ABSTRACT

A profile of urban public schools in the United States reveals under-utilized, outdated buildings set in a neighborhood with little or no ties to the surrounding community. A rising trend in urban school reform models is the community school concept where schools serve as centers of communities. These schools are open throughout the year and include a diverse set of programs to enrich the learning experience. They can also provide adult learning opportunities in the evenings and health services for students and their families. The key to providing programs such as these is through the creation of partnerships with surrounding institutions. This thesis discusses three case studies of community schools in Paterson, New Jersey, Brooklyn, New York, and New York City and applies the lessons learned from these schools to the redevelopment of a former Catholic school into a public school in Lawrence, Massachusetts. The school district, Lawrence Public Schools, and a grassroots community development corporation, Lawrence Community Works, are identified as the two key partners in this project. This partnership forms the core of a leadership team responsible for creating a community school in the North Common neighborhood in Lawrence. Recommendations are made for other potential partnerships and key challenges for the two main partners are identified.

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Acknowledgements

I would first like to thank my family, especially my parents for their endless support and love. Gracias por ensenar me lo que son ganas, los quiero mucho. I also thank you for showing me what it is to be human, what sacrifice is, and to never stop dreaming. Julia, thank you for being a role model, for showing me what I was capable of doing through your many accomplishments, and for always believing in me. George, thanks for teaching me generosity, for being the gravity that keeps my feet on the earth, and for protecting me when I was younger so that my wings would not be damaged and I could fly high. Anna, thanks for being the glue that helps hold this family together, for your sense of humor, and for always being happy to hear from me. Also, thanks for bringing Sol into the world and for taking after our mom in being a supermom. I am proud to be part of such a dynamic family. And I can't forget to thank my four-legged friends, Koke, Cozmo, and Xbali for their constant love.

I also want to thank my friends for putting up with me, feeding me, being understanding, and letting me be myself. zbar, you know what two words I have for you. Richard Milk, I would especially like to thank you for being such a great friend. I am happy I got to share this experience with you. Thank you HETE for all the fun times. Thanks also to my friends both near and far especially to my friends in LA for their deep friendship and to all of my DUSPers.

A very big thank you to Professor Ceasar McDowell and Liz Gutierrez for being part of my thesis committee and helping me say what I wanted to say. Thanks also to the people I interviewed.

I would also like to thank the young people that have touched my life in the past two years, especially Anthony and Javier in Paterson. High fives and hugs to my hermanas and hermanos of the Young Architects, Britta, Gabriel, and the staff of LCW for helping me get through this process by reminding me of reality. I especially want to thank the students for their honesty, their hard work, and sense of humor. Ana Isabel, Anybe, Tameria, Hidai, Marlene, Ricky, Richard, Max, and Juandoly, you rock! Thanks for laughing at my dry jokes. I look forward to hearing about all of your accomplishments.

Finally, I thank Professor Roy Strickland for his passion and dedication to improving the quality of urban education and believing in the power of children. You have been a great source of inspiration.

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Chapter 1

Introduction

Imagine a place situated on a large plot of land near a bustling urban core. A place full of meeting spaces, performing arts space, the latest in computer technology, a cafeteria, a gym, and perhaps even a baseball or soccer field. Now imagine this public place is only open from 8 AM to 3 PM, Monday through Friday, from September to June. In a year, this calculates to a place being open about 16% of the entire year, which is further reduced given that most people in this country are at work between the hours of 8 AM to 3 PM. In addition, only a select sample of the population is able to take advantage of these amenities. With such a light intensity of use, one may imagine these places are carefully preserved and maintained public amenities. In contrast, many of these places were built over 50 years ago and are in a deplorable state of decay full of dangerous substances like lead paint, carcinogenic asbestos, and mold.

Now imagine a similar place open for 15 hours a day, 6 to 7 days a week, all 12 months of the year. This place not only makes use of the aforementioned amenities, but also includes a health clinic for people of all ages, childcare facilities, and a diverse set of programs ranging from English language and GED classes to dance, theater, and arts programs for adults and children alike. Through partnerships with non-profit, public, private, community, and cultural institutions, this place is bright, clean, and full of the latest in computer and building technology. Students, teachers, parents, and community members work and volunteer inside and outside the walls of this place. This

space, created for and by the community, instills a sense of ownership and pride that contribute to its function as a true community center.

Unfortunately, the first place describes the current state of many public schools in urban areas in the United States. The second describes a concept of community schools dating back to the days of Jane Addams[1] but only recently gaining momentum on the agenda of school reform advocates and proponents of community development and revitalization.

Background

The city of Lawrence, Massachusetts, like many former industrial towns in the United States, is attempting to recover from years of disinvestment in the community and its poor performing school district. Only 30 miles north of Boston, Lawrence is seen as a third tier city not included in the Boston Metropolitan area and therefore does not benefit from Boston area initiatives. In 1998, the Lawrence Public School District (LPS) was targeted as an at-risk district in a report by the Massachusetts Department of Education for its continued poor performance and ineffective leadership.[2] This report stated that the school district would go under receivership and control of the State if actions were not taken by LPS officials to improve their district.

[1] The Children's Aid Society. *Building A Community School.* Third Edition. [online book], September 2001; page 17. URL: http://www.childrensaidsociety.org/comm_school_form/
[2] Massachusetts Department of Education, Report of the Fact Finding Team on Under-Performance By the Lawrence Public Schools, January 12, 1998.

The school district did not go into receivership but Lawrence High School did lose its accreditation. Since then, the school district has taken proactive measures to improve its schools, including the hiring of a new superintendent with a strong commitment to educate Lawrence's youth. In addition, Lawrence High School is on track to renew its accreditation this fall.

LPS has also embarked on a plan to rebuild some of its schools and construct new ones. It is crucial that these public school capital improvements be perceived as a significant community development opportunity. These new developments are a chance for LPS to approach school redevelopment with a comprehensive community development approach.

The story of LPS is a common story of public school facilities in the United States. In 2000, the US Department of Education reported that the average school building in the United States was built 42 years ago and that close to one-third of all public schools were built prior to 1970 and not renovated since 1980.[3] At the same time, the United States will spend over $200 billion in public school capital projects in the next decade.[4] School districts are faced with an excellent opportunity to not only improve the quality of their educational facilities, but also to contribute to the development of the communities in which they reside and become stronger, more active members of these communities.

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[3] U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, *The Condition of Education 2000,* NCES 2000-602, Washington, DC: U.S. Government Printing Office, 2000.
[4] Strickland, Roy, ed. Designing a City of Learning: Paterson, NJ. New Bedford Massachusetts, Reynolds-Dewalt Printing Inc., 2001, p. 1.

Professor Roy Strickland, formerly in the Department of Architecture at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and now Chair of the Urban Design Program at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor, has been a leader in redefining the urban school in the past decade. Under the New American School Design Project (NASDP), Professor Strickland and his colleagues have formulated guidelines for urban school curriculum and facilities redevelopment called the City of Learning (COL) principles. Inherent in the name is that the city – including its people, places, and institutions – provides learning opportunities. This connection between school and community is facilitated through partnerships. The following is a list of the ten main COL principles:[5]

1. Integrate COL stakeholders – teachers, students, school administrators, parents, community members, and civic and business leaders – into planning, design, and building process.

2. Break out of the traditional school "box." There is no single facility model for effective schools. Treat each school as an individual design opportunity.

3. Coordinate school projects as part of a strategic plan. Schools can represent a locality's largest capital investment. Coordination can maximize educational and community benefits.

4. Inventory learning opportunities in neighborhoods and towns and construct a "lesson plan" derived from local resources. This process can enrich learning without additional burden and cost to the school facility itself.

5. Inventory neighborhood and town sites and buildings as opportunities for various kinds of learning and recreation facilities. Take the lead of private and charter schools in the inventive use of available space.

6. Where possible, mix uses at school sites. Mixtures of compatible uses can help support learning with internships, mentoring, and work-study.

7. Coordinate agencies, programs, and funding sources that can contribute to school projects and their environs. Leverage school dollars by integrating projects with housing, community development, and other initiatives.

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[5] Ibid, p. 20-21

8. Consider the private sector in delivering learning facilities and services. Help stimulate local economic development through school projects.

9. Include learning space in buildings of all types. Make learning visible and accessible to all.

10. Use technology to support COL. As it has done in the workplace, technology can restructure the space, organization, and programming of learning places.

These principles have been applied to schools across the country from Berkeley, California to Washington, D.C. Currently, Professor Strickland is working in New Jersey with the City of Paterson Public Schools (PPS) to help plan, program, and design the renaissance of the school district. Paterson, New Jersey is one of several New Jersey cities recently awarded funds to improve their schools in a state supreme court case. PPS is in the middle of its five-year plan to spend over $700 million in capital improvements.

Research Question

In Lawrence, Massachusetts, a local partnership between the Lawrence Public School (LPS) District and ally organizations aims to apply the COL principles in a plan to revitalize the Holy Rosary School, an abandoned school near the urban core. The Holy Rosary School is a former Catholic School in the neighborhood that has been vacant for 11 years. A community process has begun to redevelop this school into a public school. Since this project is currently in the predevelopment phase, my thesis will be a hypothetical yet helpful exercise in determining the programming of the school with an emphasis on the community partnerships necessary to make this a community school and sustain its existence over time. The question then becomes: How can a public school district create a community school by forming partnerships with non-profit, public,

private, civic, and cultural institutions in a manner that will make the school a center of the community, a benefit to the community, and a catalyst for community development. This study will compare three such projects and identify lessons to assist LPS in its efforts to redevelop the Holy Rosary School.

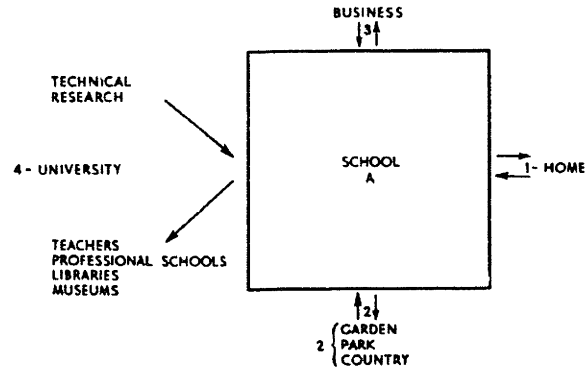
Community schools: history, literature, and benefits

According to Decker and Boo, the modern community school movement has been championed for nearly six decades.[6] In the same report, they offer the following three reasons to justify the need for community schools:

- schools cannot succeed nowadays (or, to put it more strongly, schools will fail) without the collaboration of parents and communities
- families need unprecedented strong support to become and remain functional; and
- communities must take charge of all the developmental needs of their children.[7]

Education reform literature reinforces the community school concept. John Dewey saw school as a part of a larger whole of social life. In the diagram below Dewey shows the exchange between schools and their communities. He believed that schools that do not

[6] Decker, Larry E. and Boo, Mary Richardson. "Community Schools: Linking home, school, and community." National Community Education Association, 1996, Introduction. [online report] URL: eric-web.tc.columbia.edu/community/community_schools/intro.html.
[7] Ibid, foreword, paragraph 6.



Dewey, Relationship of school and community[8]

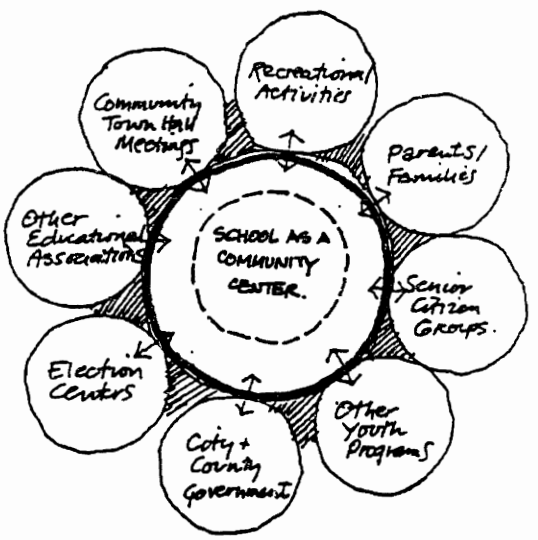
provide links to real life can be perceived by students as lacking relevance. Through partnerships, a school can achieve a strong link to real life by showing students how their classroom learning can be applied to real world problems.

Theodore Sizer focuses on the school setting as the principal challenge in school reform. He asks, "[W]hat sort of political, administrative, and community context is required for schools that graduate such admirable young people?"[9] Without the political support, school reform efforts will not be adopted by those in power. Administrative support is needed to carry out these reforms on a day to day basis. Finally, community buy-in is required as a fundamental of community development. Lessons linger from urban renewal strategies when a top down approach was used to address urban issues. A successful community school campaign will include a top down and bottom up approach.

[8] Dewey, John. The School and Society. Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1990, pp 72-73
[9] Sizer, Theodore. Horace's School: Redesigning the American High School. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1992, p. 12.

Deborah Meier adds to the discussion by commenting on the physical attributes of a community school. She suggests less hierarchical spaces to aid in recognizing all school users as members of a common community.[10] James Comer takes this a step further and suggests including banks and stores in schools to increase parental presence and draw them into the operations of the school.[11] Once inside the school, parents and community members may be drawn to become involved through curiosity or more direct recruitment tools.

Community schools not only succeed by bringing the community into the school, but also by taking the school out into the community. The diagram below shows a two-way exchange between the school as a community center and surrounding institutions.



School as a community center[12]

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[10] Meier, Deborah. The Power of Their Ideas : Lessons for America from a small school in Harlem. Boston : Beacon Press, 1995, pp. 108-113.
[11] Comer, James P. School Power. New York: The Free Press, 1995, pp. 193-206.
[12] Moore, Gary T. and Lackney, Jeffrey A. Educational Facilities for the Twenty-First Century: Research Analysis and Design Patterns. University of Wisconsin Milwaukee, Publications in Architecture and Urban Planning Research, Center for Architecture and Urban Planning Research, 1994, p. 41

This concept implies what Ernest Boyer calls a "Neighborhood for Learning."[13] Boyer sees these neighborhoods as networks of institutions that spark the mind and imagination including museums, libraries, zoos, and parks. Within the school, Boyer advocates adding community facilities to schools in the form of health services to support the network of learning.

NASDP identifies key benefits to students, schools, and the community when a COL model is followed. Below is the list of benefits for each group.[14]

Students:

- Exposure to real problems
- Enhanced understanding about their surroundings
- Exposure to people in many careers
- Exposure to a number of higher learning opportunities
- Increased understanding and application of core learning
- Sense of empowerment
- Appreciation for community involvement
- Desire to give back to the community

Schools

- Improved image
- Increased motivational learning
- Increase in teacher morale
- Increase in teacher learning
- Increased student-to-student learning

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[13] Boyer, Ernest. Ready to Learn: A Mandate for the Nation. Princeton: The Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Learning, 1991), pp 91-97.
[14] Strickland, Roy, ed. Designing a City of Learning: Paterson, NJ. New Bedford, Massachusetts, Reynolds-Dewalt Printing Inc., 2001, pp. 86-89.

Community

- Positive image of the community
- Increased volunteerism
- Expanded vision
- Better and more informed citizens
- Improved economic opportunities
- Knowledge gained through students' work and inquisitiveness

Research Design

This study will examine the efforts to create a community school in three urban settings similar to Lawrence. Case studies will be developed for the community school efforts in Paterson, New Jersey, Brooklyn, New York, and Washington Heights in New York City. Sources of information for the case studies and the proposed school in Lawrence come from published literature, online books, pamphlets, and reports, interviews, and from first hand experience. The three case studies will allow learning to occur across three areas of emphasis:

Area of Emphasis	**School**
1. Community Building and Institutional Partnerships	MPACT, Paterson Innovative Academies Paterson, New Jersey
2. Community and grassroots partnerships	El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice Brooklyn, New York
3. Extended day partnerships, school as multi-service community center	Salomé Ureña Middle Academies, Intermediate School 218M, Washington Heights, New York City

This paper is in no way a replacement for the community process currently underway. Instead, this document should be used as a supplement to the planning work and shall be helpful when the community reaches the programming stage for the New Holy Rosary School. Ultimately, the decision on what kind of community school will be

developed shall rest on the North Common community through a democratic process. It is important that all parties recognize the importance of a community-driven process, especially the school district, since it will be the agency accountable for fulfilling the recommendations of the community.

Summary of Chapters

The first chapter is an introduction to the concept of a community school. The concept is introduced in a historical context and in the current and ongoing work of NASDP. This chapter also includes background on Lawrence and the Holy Rosary School to set the context for the case studies. The next three chapters will be a review of three case studies of learning institutions, each with its own strengths and potential contributions to the New Holy Rosary School. Chapter 2 will look at the creation of the Metro-Paterson Academy for Communication and Technology (MPACT) in Paterson, New Jersey. This academy recognizes the importance of public, non-profit, and especially private partnerships with the school. Chapter 3 will highlight the El Puente Academy for Peace and Justice. El Puente is a public high school created by a grassroots arts and culture organization in Brooklyn, New York. The school is deeply grounded in its mission to produce responsible citizens committed to social, economic, and environmental justice. It provides an example of a school with strong partnerships with other grassroots community groups in New York City. Chapter 4 will discuss Intermediate School 218 (IS 218), a public school in the Washington Heights area of northern Manhattan. This school in New York City excels as a community center through an innovative curriculum, diverse after-school programming, and on-site community health services.

Chapter 5 is a discussion of the potential partnerships and programs for the New Holy Rosary School based on the concepts and lessons from the three case studies. Chapter 6 will conclude the paper with a vision of the New Holy Rosary School. It also provides recommendations for the two key partners in this project, LPS and LCW, and what they must work towards to create this community school.

Background of Lawrence and the Holy Rosary School

The City of Lawrence and LPS are at a pivotal point in their respective histories. In recent history, the city has been neglected as more affluent, surrounding suburbs have thrived in healthy economic times. Today, Lawrence is experiencing a renaissance as public and private resources focus their attention on the tremendous potential of this city. The public school system is also in a time of transition and restructuring. Two years ago, Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy was hired by LPS and given an opportunity to lead the district out of troubled times. One of his main goals has been to ensure that LPS takes the responsibility and is accountable for educating the youth of the City of Lawrence.[15] To achieve this goal, he is calling for equity in the learning facilities through school upgrades and new construction, motivated teachers with high standards for teaching, and the concept of neighborhood schools to strengthen ties between school and community.

The Holy Rosary School is an example of all three approaches to school improvement. Yet, this school redevelopment project is unique because it will be one of the first of its

[15] Interview with Superintendent Wilfredo Laboy, 16 April, 2002, Lawrence, Massachusetts.

kind in Lawrence to incorporate the idea of a community school grounded in the neighborhood where it is located. The fact that the school will be for grades 6-8 is an opportunity in itself that must not be overlooked. By immersing students in a community school environment at a younger age, the school might have a stronger impact on the global outlook of these children and their responsibility to themselves, their community, and the world at large.

Built in 1917, the school was formerly a Catholic elementary school run by the Archdiocese serving grades kindergarten to eight.[16] The school is centrally located in the North Common neighborhood on Summer Street, just east of the Common. Coinciding with the downsizing of the Archdiocese, the school began its decline in the late 1980's. The last graduating class was the class of 1991, leaving this beautiful example of brick and stone architecture exposed to the elements and subject to a rapid decay. In 1997, the Archdiocese grew weary of paying property taxes on a vacant building and sold the school to the City of Lawrence for one dollar. Proposals were submitted to redevelop this school but the seed money to begin such a project was difficult to acquire. A proposal was brought forth to convert the school into housing but that also proved to be too expensive. The City, like the Archdiocese before them, also began losing money paying property taxes on a vacant building and considered returning it to the Archdiocese.

[16] Holy Rosary Planning Day, Introduction by Father Neilson, 23 February, 2002, Lawrence, Massachusetts. Note: Additional facts in this paragraph from same source.

The city retained ownership of the school and although several plans to redevelop the school emerged, none of them were realized due to high costs of rehabilitation and other dilemmas. In May of 2000, North Common residents identified the Holy Rosary building as an emerging priority in the Reviviendo Planning process organized by LCW. In the beginning of 2002 LCW started a community planning process to identify the best use for the school building. One idea involved LCW purchasing the school from the city and redeveloping it as a charter school to serve the North Common community.[17] In the midst of the community planning process LCW learned that LPS was interested in redeveloping the building into a public school. The school committee was ready to transform the Holy Rosary School into a relatively small school of 300 students serving grades 6-8.[18]

The redevelopment of the Holy Rosary School will help mitigate the problem of overcrowding at the nearby Oliver School and Leonard School. These two schools will remain open. The recent change in LPS policy to make all schools into neighborhood schools means that the New Holy Rosary School will serve the North Common neighborhood. This is important because when it comes time to do an analysis of the student body to address their individual needs, it will be easier to narrow down the focus to a specific geographic area. It will also be easier to hold meetings in the North

[17] Meeting with Liz Gutierrez of Lawrence Community Works, September 28, 2001, Lawrence, Massachusetts.

[18] Interview with Pedro Arce, School Committee District B Representative, April 11, 2002, Lawrence, Massachusetts. In Lawrence, the public school system is divided into six districts with an elected school committee member representing each district. According to the city charter, the school committee is responsible for general management and control of the public schools of the city. The mayor occupies the seventh seat on this committee and also acts as chair of the committee.

Common neighborhood and have a strong attendance rate because students and their families will not have to travel far to attend.

Chapter 2

Metro-Paterson Academy for Communication and Technology
Paterson, New Jersey

Introduction

In September of 1999, a select group of high school freshman began their first day of classes at the Metro-Paterson Academy for Communications and Technology (MPACT), one of Paterson, New Jersey's newest Innovative Academies. This academy was heavily grounded in the City of Learning (COL) principles created by the New American School Design Project (NASDP) in both its facility and curriculum. It is housed in an under-utilized commercial mall in the center of downtown Paterson. Its unique curriculum blends concentrations in technology, urban planning, and design.[19] The school was a result of two very important events. The first was the vision of the newly appointed District Superintendent Dr. Edwin Duroy and Paterson public school teacher Stephen Cohen. In 1997, after being appointed District Superintendent, Dr. Duroy championed a link between the schools, community, and investment dollars. He created a plan that included the following three goals:

- "Develop learning communities at each school level that will help students improve their academic achievement, achieve excellence, and become life-long learners.
- Improve the communication between home and school.
- Provide training to staff and parents on effective communication between home and school."[20]

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[19] Strickland, Roy, ed. Designing a City of Learning: Paterson, NJ. New Bedford, Massachusetts, Reynolds-Dewalt Printing Inc., 2001, p. 46

[20] Edwin Duroy, Ed.D, State District Superintendent of Schools. Paterson Public Schools Annual Report 1997-1998; July 10, 1998.

The second factor, and arguably the most important, was the New Jersey State Supreme Court case of *Abbott v. Burke*. The case argued that great disparities existed in public school funding in the state between the wealthier suburbs and the impoverished cities. In 1995, after a 14-year long case, the Supreme Court of New Jersey ruled that the state funding practices for public schools was unconstitutional and that they needed to be revised immediately. The ruling also stated that urban students have a right to an education based on the New Jersey Core Curriculum Standards and that these urban districts should be on an equal spending level to their suburban counterparts. This landmark case identified 28 Abbott Districts in New Jersey, including Paterson. What this meant for Paterson Public Schools was that it would be receiving $700 million over a five-year period to construct, rebuild, and reform its schools.

When these funds were combined with the visionary leadership of Dr. Duroy and his ability to build relationships among various stakeholders, PPS began an ambitious plan of school reform. Initially, funds were used for long-overdue repairs and upgrades to the existing school stock. Although, the leaders at PPS had more ambitious plans. The abundant funds allowed for a rare type of innovation and creativity that is possible when budgetary constraints are minimalized.

Soon after, in 1998 Dr. Duroy met Professor Roy Strickland and found a partner to help him execute his innovative plan for the Paterson Public Schools. One of these plans was creating MPACT. In the summer of 1998, Professor Strickland and a team of graduate students from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) worked with Stephen Cohen to design the space and curriculum for MPACT. That fall, the ideas

were presented to the PPS Board of Education and the Paterson community and were very well received. Dr. Duroy made a commitment to build MPACT and hired Professor Strickland and the NASDP/MIT team to help him continue his plan of revitalizing the Paterson schools and building academies like MPACT.

As noted earlier, MPACT was envisioned by Stephen Cohen, the Technology Coordinator for PPS and a 30-year veteran educator. He believed success in the new, electronic economy called for a curriculum rich in technology and communication.[21] Mr. Cohen pictured MPACT's graduates as Paterson's future leaders. As the curriculum planning evolved, a focus on architecture, planning, and community development was added. Currently, a typical school day at MPACT is divided into two parts. From 9 AM until lunch time, the students spend their time in academic courses. After lunch until 4 PM is the studio portion of the curriculum where Paterson is the focus.[22] These areas of emphasis followed the COL principles and were intended to make the students the change agents of the ailing city.

The siting of MPACT reinforced its connection to the community and was a reflection of its curriculum. Rather than occupying space in its overcrowded parent school, John F. Kennedy High School in Paterson's westside, the NASDP team identified an under-utilized shopping mall in the center of the lively downtown area. MPACT occupied part of the second floor of the mall, overlooking Main Street, Paterson's busiest street. The HARP Innovative Academy (Health And Related Professions) moved in the same year

[21] Strickland, Roy, ed. Designing a City of Learning: Paterson, NJ. New Bedford, Massachusetts, Reynolds-Dewalt Printing Inc., 2001, p. 49

and occupied adjacent space on the second floor. The two academies share a dining hall on the same floor of the mall. Initially some parents, educators, and community members opposed having high school students in the downtown. They feared for the student's safety coming to and from school and the vulnerability of the school in a public place such as this mall. Although once this school opened, these fears quickly dissipated.

The central location proved to be an economic development engine for the downtown area. More people, both youth and adults, meant more business as the students shopped in the plethora of retail outlets and restaurants and the teachers and staff used the nearby services such as dry cleaning, beauty salons, and banks. MPACT also created partnerships with some of the nearby restaurants to provide lunches for its students to escape the monotony of the school cafeteria. The success of this academy has influenced development plans for a new transportation-based academy and a new high school in the city's historic district, a new K-8 school within walking distance of downtown, and several new academies based on the COL principles. PPS has now created a total of 24 Innovative Academies.[23]

Impact of MPACT

The creation of this downtown school is serving as a catalyst for the revitalization of downtown Paterson and the city as a whole. Although, I would argue that the biggest impact has been felt by the MPACT students themselves. In my experience with these

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[22] Ibid, page 49.
[23] Paterson Public Schools, Academies. URL: http://www.paterson.k12.nj.us/~demo1/class/

young adults, it is amazing to see how 2 years of the specialized curriculum has influenced the way they think, act, and see their community and the world at large. I was fortunate to work closely with two MPACT students in the summer of 2001 and had numerous interactions with all of the students in the fall of 2000. I witnessed a number of oral presentations and group discussions by the students and was impressed when I realized that the students sounded like many of my colleagues at MIT. The students have developed the language of community development. Like most high school students, they spend their time arguing about music and fashion trends. But, more importantly, they also spend a lot of their time arguing about how to improve their communities and the built form around them. The students have developed into a culture of learning.

This culture of learning is one of the goals of NASDP. It can be described as the fusion between bottom up and top down planning for higher education. From the bottom, MPACT can impress the idea of higher education into the minds of its entering freshman class. Through its connection with MIT and now the University of Michigan, MPACT can engage in a top down college strategy through the eyes of the admissions committees of these respective institutions. Professor Strickland and his colleagues can add useful knowledge about what colleges look for when they choose their incoming undergraduate class. To best prepare students to be competitive college applicants, NASDP has identified nine areas of concentration to enrich this culture of learning and increase the number of admitted students from MPACT and similar schools. They are:

- Recognize the 11th grade as critical to the admissions process
- Create as many opportunities as possible for advanced-placement courses
- and make them available the 11th grade.
- Give extensive homework.
- Make reading whole chapters, articles, and books part of homework.
- Work with parents to provide a time and place for homework and reading.
- Offer sustained SAT preparation.
- Develop a full complement of extra-curricular activities.
- College advising.
- Address the needs of the whole student.[24]

Partnerships

In four short years, MPACT has established important partnerships with various institutions that are helping to ground it in its community while at the same time building community. The following is a list of some of these partnerships and their effects.

- *Higher education* – Through the connection with Professor Strickland and NASDP, a two-way benefit has resulted. MPACT students benefit from the expertise of the NASDP teams. They are also exposed to positive role models that they can relate to and feel comfortable asking questions that they may not feel comfortable asking other adults. This connection also allows for field trips to visit universities such as the field trip MPACT made to MIT in the spring of 2000. Many students from communities such as Paterson have very little exposure to colleges. Visits to

[24] Strickland, Roy, ed. Designing a City of Learning: Paterson, NJ. New Bedford, Massachusetts, Reynolds-Dewalt Printing Inc., 2001, pp. 54-56.

schools can influence plans to attend college as students are able to visualize themselves in a real college environment. On the other hand students from the university, like myself, also benefit from working with MPACT. Listening to the students talk about Paterson and their experiences provides great insight to students who will soon be working in similar communities. It can also lead to a career in working in education or youth development after graduation.

- *Business sector* – As noted earlier, MPACT has had a positive effect on the businesses located in its vicinity. A logical next step is for the school to begin a pre-professional internship program with local businesses to help students discover potential careers and increase the desire to pursue higher education.

- *PPS* – Since MPACT was one of the first academies, it has naturally formed a strong partnership with PPS. The lessons learned from MPACT have then been used by PPS in forming additional innovative academies. Dr. Duroy and other PPS staff are regular visitors to MPACT. This shows the students that PPS is genuinely interested in the quality of their education.

- *Surrounding institutions* – MPACT has also established partnerships with local institutions. For example, the location of MPACT did not allow for playground space. Instead, the students use the local YMCA during their physical education period. By not having to build a gym, MPACT is able to share the community's assets and build

community as well. It also eliminates redundancy and provides a more sustainable approach to school development.

Lessons for Lawrence

MPACT teaches the importance of three key ingredients. The success of the academy is the result of a combination of strong institutional leadership by PPS, a trusting relationship with NASDP, and the tremendous financial support from the Abbott case. In the case of Lawrence and the New Holy Rosary School, a similar partnership can be established with an institution of higher education in the vicinity. LPS can also learn from the leadership of PPS Superintendent Dr. Duroy. He has been effective in rebuilding the public schools in Paterson because he is a good leader and follower. As a follower, he has been able to recruit and trust the ideas of leaders in school reform such as NASDP. As a leader his vision and community networks have enabled him to carry out these innovative ideas by earning the support of his colleagues. LPS and newly appointed Superintendent Laboy must recognize that the renaissance of LPS will only be possible with strong leadership, trusting relationships with leaders in school and community revitalization, and the support of the community.

Summary

MPACT is unique because it has been the result of a strong partnership between a university-based institution and a public school. It is interesting to note that this partner was located in Cambridge, Massachusetts. This is attributable to the fact that Professor Strickland was teaching at MIT. While it would have been preferable to have a local

school be a partner to MPACT, it shows that long-distance partnerships are possible. This relationship has allowed for an exchange of information and ideas based on theoretical principles found in academia to practical applications found at the school and the surrounding community.

MPACT students and the community have also benefited from hands-on, practical problem solving. Following the principles set forth by the diagrams of John Dewey, students are working on real solutions to real problems in their communities. Students conduct site research and analysis outside of the classroom and often make public presentations of their work. This gives them exposure in the community and showcases their work to the city. This showcase can serve to recruit community members to be involved with the school. The central location of this downtown school adds to this exposure. It also demonstrates the feasibility of a downtown campus and the sustainability of an adaptive reuse of vacant urban properties.