

*A Report to the
Annie E. Casey
Foundation*



SCHOOLS UNITING NEIGHBORHOODS

SUCCESSFUL COLLABORATION IN AN
ENVIRONMENT OF CONSTANT CHANGE



The SUN Initiative would like to thank the Annie E. Casey Foundation for its ongoing support of our development over the last four years. Our particular thanks to Bruno Manno, Senior Program Associate in Education at the Foundation, for encouraging the development of this report and lending his expertise and insight to our process.

This report was written by Marjory Hamann with assistance from Diana Hall of the SUN Initiative. Ms. Hamann is a coach, consultant, and freelance writer who helps nonprofit and public sector agencies clarify their values and put them into action. For the past three years, Ms. Hamann has been providing one-on-one technical assistance and group training for the SUN Initiative. She has 13 years of experience in nonprofit management and organizational development.

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LETTER FROM THE ANNIE E. CASEY FOUNDATION

We at the Annie E. Casey Foundation are pleased to receive this final report on our nearly five year \$575,000 investment in the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Initiative, a partnership spearheaded by Oregon's Multnomah County and the City of Portland. The Initiative's work is consistent with the Foundation's mission that aims to improve outcomes and build better futures for the nation's most at-risk children. The Foundation supports innovative approaches like SUN because they forge strategic alliances that seek to have a positive impact on families and young people; to influence others to pursue a similar approach reflecting the Casey point of view; and to leverage public and private dollars that lead to fewer young people and their families being denied the core promises of American life.

When focused on education, the Foundation's vision is that all young people—especially those in tough neighborhoods—will graduate from school with the knowledge and skills they need for future success and in the worlds of work, family, and citizenship. In pursuing this ambitious vision, our education investments fund community-based and system-wide efforts that create responsive and effective elementary and secondary schools that strengthen families and neighborhoods. The SUN Initiative has provided further evidence that this can be done.

The Foundation's education investments include support for strategies that both create new schools and restructure existing schools. These investments help support the Foundation's *Making Connections* initiative, which is based on the premise that children do better when their families are strong and their communities are supportive. Among the support systems needed to strengthen families is an effective and responsive system of schools that is based on the following core values and beliefs:

- *High standards.* Set high academic standards for all schools that drive curriculum, instruction, and assessment, stating clearly what all students are expected to achieve.
- *Flexibility and equitable resources.* Give schools—including the least successful schools—the flexibility, resources, and support required to give all students an opportunity to achieve success.
- *Small, personal schools.* Create schools that are small enough to engage all students, so that even the most disadvantaged students are connected to and supported by schools.
- *Effective leadership.* Allow school leaders the autonomy they need to overcome and manage the mission, operational, and strategic alliance challenges they will face in building the capacity they need to create a high performing organization.
- *Accountability for results.* Hold all schools and districts accountable for the academic achievement of all students, including those who have traditionally had the least success in school.
- *Family empowerment.* Promote meaningful family empowerment and participation in choosing schools, especially among parents who have historically been least likely to participate in school life.

- *Community support.* Make education a larger community commitment to healthy youth and family development.

The Foundation's education investments based on these values and beliefs seek to demonstrate three types of results: *impact*—evidence that there have been changes in the well being of the children and families being served; *influence*—evidence that policies, regulations, systems, practice or public opinion are becoming more consistent with the viewpoint advocated by the Foundation; and *leverage*—evidence that there have been increases in investments by other public or private funders in Casey supported strategies to improve outcomes for children and families.

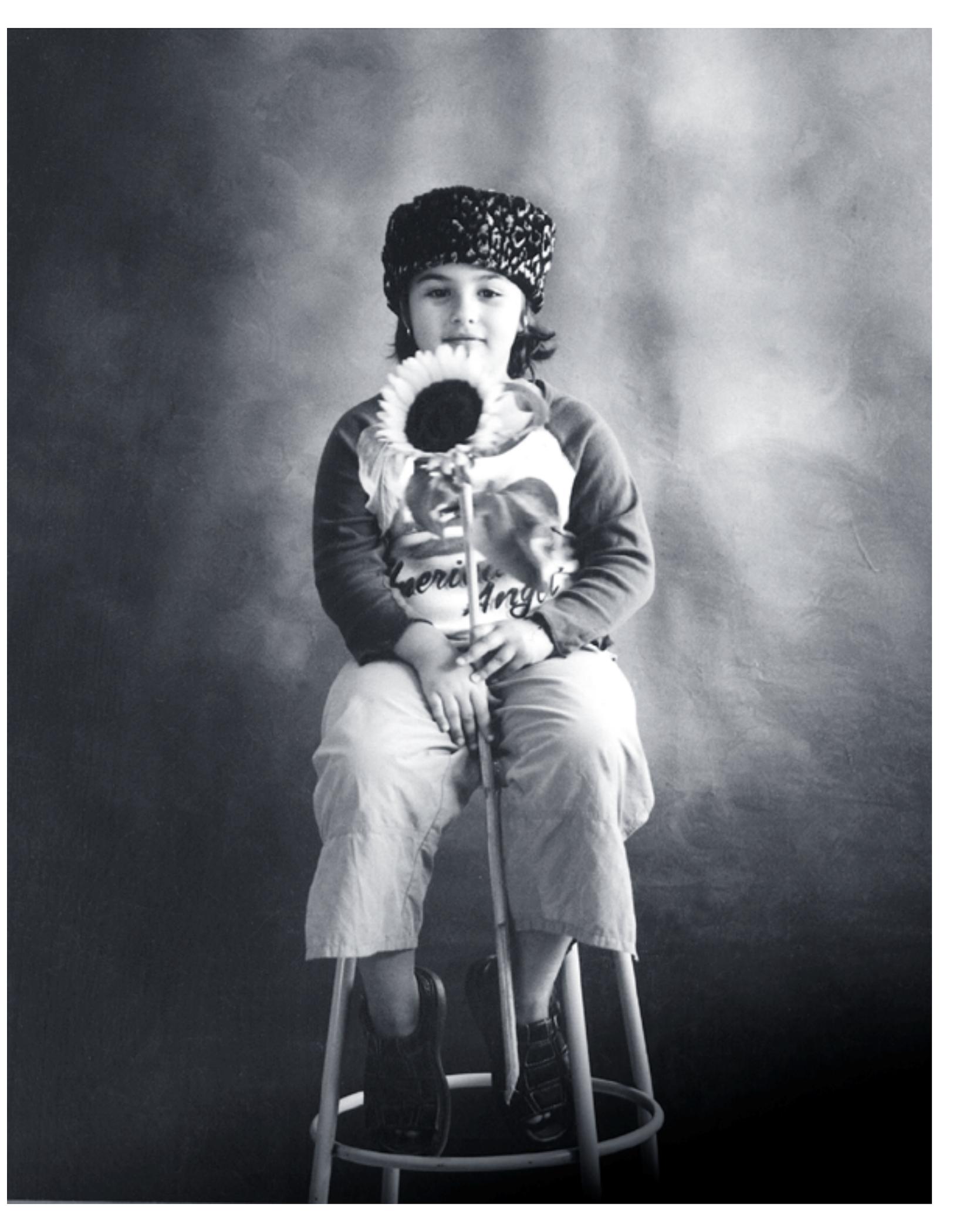
As you read this final report to the Foundation, you'll see that the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods alliance has:

- Produced an *impact* on the children and families being served in the 19 schools that are part of this initiative, including an increase in parent involvement in the SUN schools as well as providing a host of services that have contributed to the upward trends in student achievement at both elementary and middle schools;
- Grown in *influence* from an idea to 19 school sites across Multnomah county offering more than 800 extended day activities and services that reach over 4,800 young people, generate over 16,000 volunteer hours a year, and attract over 18,000 community members to family nights and cultural events; and
- Managed to *leverage* Casey's investment of \$575,000 over nearly five years in a way that created a strategic alliance that co-invests core operational funding for SUN originating from the City of Portland, Multnomah County, the Oregon Commission on Children and Families, the Oregon Department of Human Services, the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program, and the U.S. Safe Schools/Healthy Students Initiative. Over \$7 million in funding has been brought to the SUN Initiative alliance through these co-investment and leverage efforts over the last four years, plus significant cash and in-kind resources that individual schools and non-profit partners have been able to leverage using SUN as an infrastructure.

Congratulations on a job well done! And continued good luck as you further expand SUN's impact, influence, and leverage.

Bruno V. Manno
Senior Program Associate in Education
The Annie E. Casey Foundation

Baltimore, Maryland
July 2003



Like many communities across the country, those of us in Portland, Oregon and Multnomah County are learning to live in a time of constant change. We are expanding our capacity to work together, putting the focus on partnership rather than turf. We are pooling resources to generate creative responses to emerging issues while staying true to our core values and strategic goals.

When we were faced in the late 1990s with the triple challenges of a growing achievement gap among students, diminishing public funds for education, and national research pointing to the dangers of high risk behavior by youth in the hours immediately before and after school, we went looking for a new way to provide services to support students and their families.

The result was the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Initiative. The SUN Initiative pooled City and County resources and attracted new funding to expand student enrichment activities and social services in 19 public schools, using a full-service community school model. SUN represented a new philosophy of using school-based services to address multiple layers of need.

We had several motivations for going this route. We wanted to meet families where they are—in the neighborhood—and provide services in a place that was familiar and non-stigmatizing—the neighborhood school. We knew that school personnel were likely to be able to identify students who could use extra support before these students were in crisis, so that resources could be spent on enrichment and prevention. We also wanted to help close the achievement gap by focusing additional resources in neighborhoods where students were particularly challenged.

Our early experiences with SUN have been positive. The SUN model has created a better alignment of City and County resources, an increase in parent and community involvement in the 19 designated SUN Schools, and upward trends in student achievement at both elementary and middle school levels.

These changes aren't quick to make, and we still have a lot of work to do. This report describes our experience with the SUN Initiative so far, with a special focus on the collaborations that have made the SUN Initiative successful in a time of constant change.

We invite you to stay in touch with us as we move to the next level of commitment for providing school-based services. We are currently in the process of restructuring services to school-age children and families. Our community has passed three revenue measures that will significantly increase resources for youth, children, schools and families. We welcome the opportunity to exchange ideas with community leaders from other areas as we move forward.

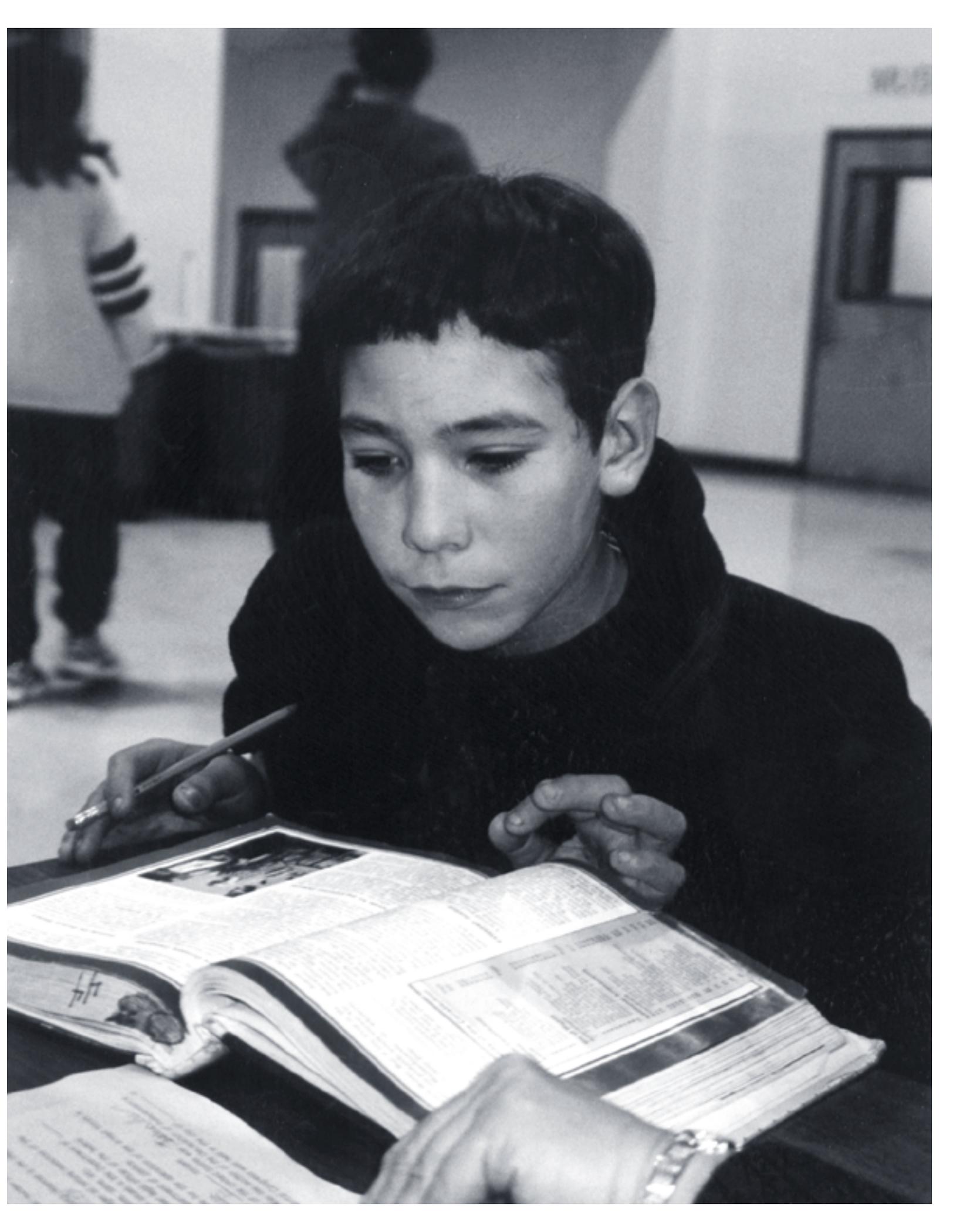
This work would not have been possible without the early and ongoing support of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. We are deeply grateful for the Foundation's investment in our community, and look forward to building on that investment for years to come.

Diane Linn, Chair
Multnomah County Board of Commissioners

Lorenzo Poe, Director
Office of School and Community Partnerships

Jim Francesconi, Commissioner
Portland City Council

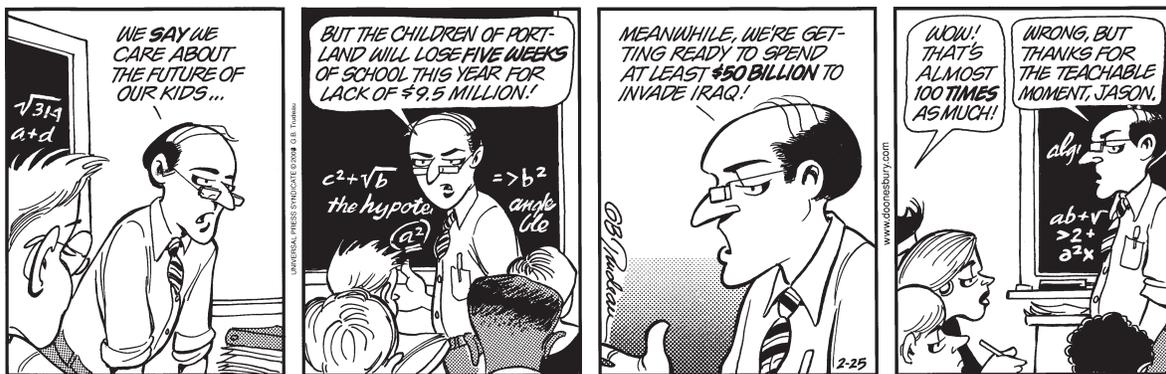
Zari Santner, Director
Portland Bureau of Parks and Recreation



INTRODUCTION: ONE MOMENT IN TIME

In an era of economic uncertainty, increased political scrutiny and rapid demographic change, public schools across the country are struggling to provide innovative and effective educational services for students with increasingly diverse needs.

The schools in Oregon's Multnomah County are no exception. State funding dropped dramatically in the 2002/2003 school year, forcing local school districts to consider drastic cutbacks and create emergency funding solutions in order to educate their students. The area's largest district, Portland Public Schools, drew national attention after it proposed cutting 24 days off the school year and narrowly avoided a teachers' strike. The 24 days were reinstated in Portland schools through intense negotiations that included teachers offering to work ten days without pay and a one-time increase in business license fees, but other districts in the County cut between five and eight days from the calendar.



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When looming budget cuts grab headlines, it is easy to miss the thousands of committed parents, educators, students, politicians and community members who are working together to create vibrant learning opportunities for local youth. These are the stories that need to be told, because programs that can weather the storms during times of rapid change can teach us lessons about what other programs will need to be successful in a new and constantly evolving environment.

The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Initiative of Multnomah County is that kind of program. It is a learning organization made strong by a strategic vision, a willingness to innovate, and an unusually high level of collaboration across organizational boundaries. The lessons shared here offer insight into how to draw on resources throughout the community to build successful collaborations in an environment of constant change.

Early Successes

The SUN Initiative turns local public schools into community learning centers by offering before and after school classes, parent support and involvement activities, community educational and cultural events, and social services for young people and their families. SUN Schools exist at the elementary, middle and high school level, in five school districts.

Planning for the Initiative began in 1998, and by 2002 there were 18 SUN Schools, including 15 established sites and three that were transitioning from an earlier service delivery model. In school after school, SUN is increasing parent involvement and expanding opportunities for youth. Early evaluations indicate SUN Schools are also having a positive impact on academic achievement at both elementary and middle school levels. In the 2001-2002 school year alone, the 15 established SUN schools:

- Offered more than 800 extended-day activities and services, ranging from homework clubs and drama classes to health vans and family literacy nights.
- Served 4,871 children in extended-day activities.
- Increased family involvement in the schools, attracting over 18,000 family and community members to family nights and cultural events.
- Generated over 16,000 volunteer hours.

The Annie E. Casey Foundation provided crucial support to launch the SUN Initiative and fund ongoing technical assistance to staff throughout the Initiative. Core operational funding came from the City of Portland, Multnomah County and the Oregon Commission on Children and Families. Additional funding came from the federal 21st Century Community Learning Centers and Safe Schools, as well as the Oregon Department of Human Services and an array of private funders.

Lessons Learned and Emerging Directions

The Portland metropolitan area is not the only region that has created a network of community schools or adopted a school-based model for delivering services to youth and families. There are many resources available that explain how to operate a community school or describe the benefits of school-based services (see Appendix C). This report is not designed to cover the nuts and bolts of working with youth, but instead focuses on what is unique about the Portland experience—the high level of collaboration across organizational boundaries that has enabled the SUN Initiative to thrive in an environment of constant change.

The SUN Initiative is a community-building enterprise, and its success is the result of hundreds of committed partners representing diverse sectors of the community. This report is organized to highlight different aspects of the Initiative and the people who make it work, including:

- Core Initiative staff and contracted technical service providers
- Political champions
- Staff, students, parents and volunteers at individual schools
- Agency partners from the public, nonprofit and business sectors

As the Initiative evolved, staff and evaluators paid careful attention to the lessons learned from running extended-day programs at 19 different schools across the county. Those lessons have been woven into each section of the report and can be identified by the following icons:



LEADERSHIP

The support and buy-in of established leaders across the county and in each school is critical to securing community support and creating effective partnerships that cross institutional cultures.



VISION AND GOALS

Taking time to set shared goals ensures that the SUN Initiative reflects the true interests of schools throughout the county, and that each partner agency is able to take action that supports the Initiative as a whole.



STRUCTURE AND PROCESS

The structure needs to support initiative-wide goals and standards while encouraging site-specific activities and procedures.



COMMUNICATION

In an environment of constant change, clear and frequent communication between partners becomes essential.

The financial and political climate in Multnomah County—as in any other community—is constantly changing. As the 2002/2003 school year draws to a close, Multnomah County is in the process of revising how services for school-aged youth are funded and delivered. At the same time, successful revenue measures have temporarily increased local taxes, bringing much needed funding for youth, along with questions about how that funding will be distributed.

This report captures a moment in time in a system that is still evolving. Each section of this report includes emerging directions for the SUN Initiative and a list of additional resources that are available on our web site (www.sunschools.org). One thing will remain constant—the SUN Initiative will continue to adapt to its changing environment, even as it builds on past successes and lessons learned.



BACKGROUND: RESPONDING TO A CHANGING ENVIRONMENT

The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Initiative was created as a way to support local schools as they struggled to respond to the shifting social, demographic and political environment of the late 1990s. At that time, schools in the Portland metropolitan area were facing multiple challenges, including:

- The advent of state school reform legislation and the creation of new academic benchmarks that intended to link state funding to student achievement.
- Demographic changes that dramatically increased racial and cultural diversity in the region, requiring schools and social service organizations to develop new approaches to delivering services.
- A national rise in the number of children who were left unsupervised in the hours before and after school, as economic necessity led to more working parents.
- An increase in the number of students changing schools in the middle of the year due to a severe shortage of affordable housing that destabilized families with limited incomes.
- A significant achievement gap based on ethnicity and language, including a state-wide drop out rate for African American and Hispanic students more than twice the average for all students.

Along with these constraints there was also a rich tradition of community collaboration, and the recognition that healthy schools were an asset the Portland area couldn't afford to lose. As civic leaders and activists sought local solutions to the challenges facing area schools, numerous programs and projects benefiting children and their families evolved. This was the environment in which the SUN Initiative was launched.

The Vision

The SUN Initiative started small and grew organically as advocates cultivated key relationships and identified resources to support expansion. Planning for the Initiative began in 1998 under the combined leadership of Portland City Commissioner Jim Francesconi, former Multnomah County Chair Beverly Stein and current County Chair Diane Linn, then the Commissioner in District 1. Their vision was to create a model for extended-day, full-service community schools with the combined support of both the City and County governments.

After studying national models, local leaders began crafting a new approach that would meet the particular needs of Multnomah County schools. Community members, government leaders, social service agencies and school personnel all participated in the original planning process. Within the next year, a name was chosen, a director hired, and the first eight SUN Schools were selected. Over time, the SUN Initiative has expanded as the City, County, local school districts and other partners have leveraged additional resources. SUN is very much a creation of its stakeholders and has at its core a commitment to being a learning organization.

The SUN Model

The SUN Initiative is a community-driven model that allows each school community to design the programs that fit neighborhood needs, while working towards core goals that stretch across all SUN Schools. The common goals are:

GOAL 1:

to increase the capacity of local schools to provide a safe, supervised and positive environment for expanded experiences that improve student achievement, attendance, behavior and other skills for healthy development and academic success.

GOAL 2:

to increase family involvement in their child's education as well as supporting the school and school-based activities that build individual and community assets.

GOAL 3:

to increase community and business involvement in supporting schools and school-based programs that combine academics, recreation and social/health services.

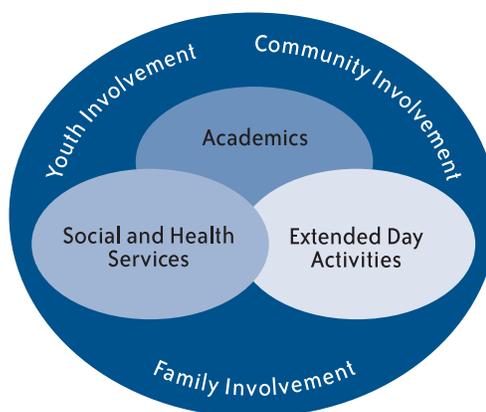
GOAL 4:

to improve the system of collaboration among school districts, local governments, community-based agencies, families, citizens and business/corporate leaders.

GOAL 5:

to improve use of public facilities and services by locating services in the community-based neighborhood schools.

SUN Schools tailor their programs, events and services to the neighborhoods they serve based on local needs assessments. An Advisory Committee at each school brings together school staff, parents, community leaders, students and partner agencies to determine the best ways to support youth and families. Because they are locally driven, each SUN School looks different. Some partners and activities are at every SUN School and some are unique to a single site. There are three main components of the model, which can be thought of as the three legs of a stool, each necessary to maintain the balance and effectiveness of the whole:



- Academics
- Social and Health Services
- Extended Day Activities: Linked with the School Day

“It is possible to prepare for the future without knowing what it will be. The primary way to prepare for the unknown is to attend to the quality of our relationships, to how well we know and trust one another.”

*Margaret Wheatley,
Author & Management
Consultant*

Activities in each area are designed to increase involvement by family members, youth, and the larger community.

A non-profit Lead Agency serves as the managing partner for each SUN school, bringing social service expertise, knowledge of the community, and additional resources to the SUN School. Lead Agency staff work with the Principal and Advisory Committee to select a Site Manager. The SUN Site Manager coordinates extended-day programs; links SUN activities to the academic school day; fosters strong relationships with school personnel and community partners; and identifies networks of services, programs and resources that can benefit youth and the larger community. The SUN Initiative as a whole is managed by staff in Multnomah County’s Office of School and Community Partnerships, under the leadership of Director Lorenzo T. Poe.

On Our Website

- Original Concept Paper
- SUN Model
- Mission & Goals
- SUN Organizational Chart
- School & Lead Agency Selection
- SUN Evaluation Plan & Reports

SUN TIMELINE

1997

Multnomah County Board of Commissioners unanimously passes a resolution creating the Community Building Initiative.

1998

City of Portland passes a resolution endorsing community building.

Bank of America and the City Bureau of Parks and Recreation launch the Time for Kids program in Marshall High School cluster.

Committee identified to develop an expanded community school proposal. Key stakeholders from state and school districts invited to participate.

Annie E. Casey Foundation funds the development of the expanded community schools concept with matching money from the Oregon State Department of Human Services.

1999

County hires first Director for the community schools initiative and begins implementation.

Multnomah County Youth Advisory Board names the new initiative Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN).

First eight SUN schools selected.



2000

Portland Public Schools district receives 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant for four middle schools. Elects to identify them as SUN Schools and be part of larger Initiative.

SUN becomes an established line item in City and County budgets.

East County school districts receive a joint Safe Schools grant, funding four new SUN Schools.

Annie E. Casey Foundation awards grant to provide technical assistance to SUN Schools.

First quarterly Initiative-Wide Gathering held to share lessons learned and provide technical assistance.

2001

Services at three high schools restructured to create SUN Schools.

2002

SUN Initiative, Parks & Recreation and the County-funded Touchstone Program develop joint school selection process, simplifying applications for schools.

SUN School/Business Partnership Project launched.

Voters pass local Parks Levy and Children's Initiative.

2003

SUN receives 21CCLC grant for two new SUN Schools in Reynolds school district.

School funding shortfall threatens to close Portland schools five weeks early. Crisis draws national attention in New York Times and Doonesbury cartoons.

Portland teachers agree to work ten days without pay and city officials raise business license fees to restore the full school year. Other districts cut between five and eight days from the school calendar.

Income tax option passes in Multnomah County restoring funding to schools and social services for three years starting in 2003/2004.



SUPPORTING THE NETWORK OF SUN SCHOOLS

Perhaps the biggest lesson we've learned is that it takes time and talent to support the wide range of partners who make SUN Schools a success. We learned this lesson during early evaluations, in which on-site staff stressed the need for extra support in order to meet Initiative goals.

A small team of Multnomah County staff in the Office of School and Community Partnerships provides that support, supplemented by contracted service providers with specialized expertise. Each year, County staff talk with SUN Site Managers, Principals, Lead Agencies and parents to identify emerging issues and create a mix of technical support services that expand the SUN Schools' capacity to respond to those issues. These services have been made possible by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, which has provided \$200,000 in funding for technical assistance over the last three years.

The SUN Initiative's focus on technical assistance supports our commitment to operating SUN as a learning organization. That means being willing to take thoughtful risks, seek continuous feedback, and candidly respond to challenges as they arise. By providing targeted technical assistance, the Initiative seeks to create an active learning environment for staff throughout the network of SUN Schools.

Training and Technical Assistance

The SUN Initiative used funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation to expand its capacity for providing technical assistance on best practices. In addition to regular one-on-one meetings between SUN Initiative staff and Site Managers, the Initiative contracts with an organizational development consultant to provide approximately six hours of coaching per school each year. Monthly group meetings offer Site Managers an opportunity to network with one another, share information and resources, and receive mini trainings. Quarterly Initiative-Wide gatherings bring together Site Managers, Lead Agency staff, Principals and partners for training and planning on topics that affect all core

partners. Common training and technical assistance topics include:

- Community building and engagement
- Involving and empowering parents
- Delivering culturally appropriate services
- Developing Advisory Committees
- Successfully managing a full-service site with multiple stakeholders
- Linking extended-day and school-day activities
- Closing the achievement gap
- Strategic planning
- Cultivating positive relationships and resolving conflicts

Parent Organizing and Partner Recruitment

The Initiative contracts with non-profit partners that have extensive community organizing experience to organize parents and strengthen community engagement. Each school also has access to one of three project consultants who help school leaders identify potential partnership opportunities, recruit appropriate businesses, and design joint projects. Worksheets and templates were designed to facilitate this process, and are available on our website.

Resources and Technical Systems

County staff also develop resources and technical systems that support SUN activities. The SUN website, newsletter, brochures and other resource materials benefit each site in their efforts to build participation and attract new resources. A common database supports student tracking, registration, reporting and evaluation in order to meet both initiative and site level needs.

Leadership Development

The strength of the Initiative depends on a core of committed, informed advocates. The SUN Initiative leads teams of stakeholders to national conferences such as Harvard Collaborative for Integrated School Services, Coalition of Community Schools, and Yale Schools of the 21st Century.



POLITICAL SUPPORT ACROSS JURISDICTIONS

After looking nationwide we believe it is unusual for elected officials to collaborate between jurisdictions at the level that has been achieved with the SUN Initiative. Cities across the nation are now supporting initiatives that expand the use of schools, but we know of only one other county that has become involved.

The decision for the City of Portland and Multnomah County to partner together to support schools happened in 1998 under the leadership of former Multnomah County Chair Beverly Stein, City Commissioner Jim Francesconi and then County Commissioner Diane Linn. The goal was two-fold: first, to support education and school success and second, to improve the way resources for students and their families were delivered by developing a school-based delivery model.

Early Political Support

While staff researched models across the country, elected officials Stein, Francesconi and Linn cultivated support from their colleagues on the City and County Commissions and in key departments. In particular, City Commissioner Dan Saltzman, County Department Director Lorenzo Poe, and former City Parks Director Charles Jordan stepped up to join them in providing leadership to the project.

An ad hoc committee of representatives from the County, City, State, multiple school districts, and local community organizations was convened, including leadership from an existing County Community Building Initiative and a City-sponsored After School Cabinet. The Committee met for seven months to design a model that built on existing assets. One major asset was the City Bureau of Parks and Recreation's successful community school program offering recreational activities at 13 sites. Another asset was the County's history of providing school-based services, including health clinics, case managers, family resource centers, and mental health workers. While both the County and the City had experience partnering with the schools, they had never systematically

coordinated their efforts with each other. A third key asset was the early work that local non-profits were doing to build partnerships with schools.

The vision that emerged from the ad hoc committee was an expanded community school model that added educational activities and social services, and increased the involvement of families, community members and local businesses. The Parks Bureau had begun moving in this direction with a new program called Time for Kids, bringing partners together to increase recreational programming for the hours before and after school. The focus on community partners was folded into the emerging model for expanded community schools.

Both Multnomah County and the City of Portland allocated general fund dollars to support a collaborative full-service community school model. In 1999, the Multnomah County Youth Advisory Board chose the name SUN Schools, which stood for Schools Uniting Neighborhoods. The decision was made to house the Initiative in the Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services and the City forwarded their resources to the County (see Appendix A for a current Organizational Chart). Within months, a director was hired and the first eight SUN Schools were identified.

Evolving Political Support

“Bell rings on a rough year—after political drama and fiscal trauma, school’s out for most students”

Headline from The Oregonian, June 11, 2003

As the SUN Model developed, City and County leadership continued to be strong on policy and operational levels, and the SUN Initiative became an established line item in both City and County budgets. Sustained political support within the two jurisdictions led to deeper collaborative efforts among senior staff. This work culminated in a joint school selection process to choose the schools that would receive school-based services.

Elected officials continued to champion SUN and advocated to have more of their schools become SUN Schools. Education is a top priority in our area, and the SUN Initiative helped define a clear role for the City, County and other community partners in supporting education.

In the spring of 2003, elected officials decided to carry the collaboration even further by folding all services for school-aged youth and their families—including SUN Schools and the Bureau of Parks and Recreation’s Community Schools—into a single full-service package as

part of a School-Aged Policy Framework for Multnomah County. The School-Aged Policy Framework uses a school-based delivery model to bring a core set of services to high-need schools.

On the broader political scene, the level of support for education and children's issues in the City and County in 2002 and 2003 has been remarkable. In response to economic and social service crises, elected officials, school district employees and the community at large worked collaboratively throughout the school year to pass three levies to restore and expand funding for vital services. The levies included a City Parks levy, a City Children's Initiative and a temporary County income tax primarily for school funding, for total yearly revenue of 46 million dollars dedicated to education and children's services.

Lessons Learned



IDENTIFY COMMON AGENDAS WITH POLITICAL LEADERS.

Politicians are a wonderful asset to lead the charge for a new initiative and can provide high-level support on an ongoing basis. For SUN, it was especially important to have a director and staff who had experience working closely with politicians, as well as an ability to work collaboratively within bureaucracy. Staff need to be comfortable and skilled in functioning in both these worlds. It is important that staff know what elected officials need and how to develop a common vision based on elected leaders' key priorities.



POLITICIANS ARE IN A UNIQUE POSITION TO SUPPORT INNOVATION.

When a window of opportunity exists, political leaders can provide the vision, leadership and direction within their organizations to make innovation succeed. Such a window existed to take the SUN concept to an initiative level, instead of creating a single pilot project. Political leaders had a strong shared vision with school districts, community and each other. They stepped forward to champion the concept that had been advocated by community and staff.



POLITICAL LEADERS CAN HELP CONNECT NEW INITIATIVES WITH EXISTING PROGRAMS.

When beginning a new initiative, it is not uncommon for the new effort to be disconnected from existing structures and programs. In the desire to

make change, we often believe we have to do something entirely separate from what already exists, and efforts to collaborate are frequently confined to individual programs rather than being woven throughout the larger system. With the SUN Initiative, however, leaders chose to introduce a new way of doing business that built on existing assets and partnerships. By using existing assets, SUN capitalized on strengths that would help the initiative develop more rapidly, and minimized political turmoil.



POLITICIANS NEED TO BE KEPT INFORMED AND INVOLVED.

Elected officials are busy, and it is important to stay on their radar screen. SUN Schools keep champions current by sharing program updates and organizing site visits during SUN community events. Site visits allow elected officials to stay current with the SUN Initiative's development, be visible in the community, and make personal connections with their constituents. Of course, sometimes elected officials leave office, so it's important to build relationships with multiple leaders and to engage with new leaders as they are elected.

“Many people in the community are skeptical about political leaders; we tend to objectify and see them simply as running for re-election. You have to understand the underlying interests and causes that have motivated them to run for office in the first place and help actualize those dreams. If you can't, you won't be effective in maintaining financial and political support from public sources.”

*Kathy Turner,
Chief of Staff
County Chair Linn's Office
and Former SUN
Initiative Director*

Emerging Directions

In the months ahead, staff at the SUN Initiative and partner agencies will be:

- Implementing the School-Aged Policy Framework, which includes a long-range plan to provide school-based programming in 108 high-need schools. Leaders and staff from the County, City, school districts and community will be working closely together as this new structure is defined.
- Using our success with recent funding levies to build a collaborative effort around applying for additional funding from new sources.



EACH SUN SCHOOL AS THE CENTER OF THE COMMUNITY

Of course, the reason elected officials get involved in SUN—along with parents, teachers and a wide range of community partners—is to make a difference in students’ lives. Most people in the community don’t know about the years of planning it took to launch the Initiative, or the tireless efforts of activists and politicians who have made sure the program continues from year to year.

When they think of SUN, they think of their neighborhood school and the wide range of activities SUN has made available to students and families in their area. SUN Schools are designed to help build a community of parents, neighbors, teachers and school staff focused on the education of children and support of families. SUN Schools are a center of community activity, not just a site for service delivery.

By the end of the 2002/2003 school year, there were 19 SUN Schools, including nine elementary schools, nine middle schools and one high school. The specific activities and services vary from school to school depending on local interests and needs, available resources, school strategies for improving achievement, grade levels served, and how long the school has been a SUN site.

SUN Activities

Local Advisory Committees help set the direction for each SUN School. Advisory Committees draw on the expertise of school staff, parents, community leaders, students and partner agencies to determine the best ways to support youth and families.

Each school offers a wide range of activities, and the offerings become more diverse as the program becomes more established. Buckman Elementary School was one of the first SUN Schools designated. In its fourth year, the Buckman SUN School offered approximately 130 before and after school classes and activities, 17 family events, nine social service or health events, four informational sessions for parents, three ongoing parent leadership opportunities and camps during winter and spring break.

While the scope and strategies of each SUN School vary, they all offer a core set of services including academic support, social and health services, and extended-day recreation and enrichment activities. Academic support includes everything from offering supplemental math and literacy activities to recruiting speakers from high-tech businesses to make presentations in science classes. Social and health services are often offered in partnership with another service agency or a business partner, giving the SUN Schools access to on-site immunization screenings, support groups, referrals to mental health counselors and much more. Recreation and enrichment activities round out the offerings and supplement the targeted academic support activities. These are classes and evening family events offered outside the traditional school day that broaden students' exposure to the larger world and offer opportunities for applied learning.

A common thread through all the activities is their focus on empowering parents to become actively involved in their children's education and building a stronger sense of community among the families connected to the schools. This is accomplished by drawing on diverse community resources, involving community members in making decisions about the SUN School, and increasing assets in youth. Equally important is the time spent supporting leadership development and skill building, encouraging parents to get to know and respect one another, and providing opportunities to break isolation.

Implementing the Vision

The primary responsibility for implementing the vision for each SUN School lies with the SUN Site Manager. As both the manager of SUN activities and the ambassador for SUN in the school building, the Site Manager needs a strong mix of people skills and planning skills. They also need the clarity to be able to run a complex program while being accountable to multiple entities, including the school, the sponsoring nonprofit Lead Agency, and the County Office of School and Community Partnerships.

But as any Site Manager is quick to point out, it takes many people to run a SUN School. SUN Schools are programs located within existing public schools, and their successful operation depends on the complete support and collaboration of the school Principal, teachers and building staff, parents,

students, community volunteers and agency partners to make it happen.

The importance of the school Principal cannot be overstated. Along with the Site Manager, the Principal has the greatest influence on the success of the SUN School in the building. Typically, the Principal is the lead advocate in recruiting the SUN Initiative to a new school, and he or she sets the tone for the rest of the staff in collaborating with SUN employees.

Working in a school building means building relationships with the existing teachers and building staff that are based on respect and collaboration. Teachers already know the students well, and are an invaluable resource in promoting SUN activities and sharing information with SUN staff about student needs and performance. Typically, the SUN program is dependent on classrooms and other building spaces for SUN activities and classes, so clear communication with the people who have primary use of those spaces and those who are responsible for their maintenance is essential. Teachers also play a key role in designing after-school classes that support the school's larger instructional goals.

Increasing family involvement is one of the primary goals of the SUN Initiative, and parents are very active in the SUN Initiative, both as volunteers and as participants. As volunteers, parents teach after-school classes, serve on Advisory Committees, organize events, and personally reach out to invite other parents to get involved. As participants, parents take classes, join support groups, attend evening activities, and support their children's learning at home.

Students are not just participants in the SUN Initiative, they also help make it happen. Students regularly give feedback on the activities they would like to see offered in their school, encourage classmates to sign up for SUN classes, and participate in Advisory Committees. At some schools, older students serve as teachers and teaching assistants in after-school classes for younger grades.

Another active constituency is the large group of community volunteers who assist in classes, tutor students, help organize events and join workdays to spruce up the school environment. A wide range of community service providers also support SUN. These agency partners bring critical expertise and resources into the building and are described in more detail in the "Expanding Opportunities Through Strategic Partnerships" section.

Linking with the School Day

As the SUN Initiative has evolved, SUN staff have identified the importance of designing extended-day programs that directly support school-day instruction as an important area of growth. Initiative-Wide Gatherings help schools assess the level of connection that currently exists between school-day and after-school activities and strategize ways to increase the connection. SUN Initiative and school district staff share recent research, sample curriculum materials, and best practices that help SUN Site Managers join the effort to meet state benchmarks and close achievement gaps. Training is provided for tutors, mentors and after-school staff to help them be effective in supporting student academic goals. At some schools, special retreats are held to bring SUN staff and classroom teachers together to design after-school classes that reinforce school-day learning objectives.

One way that SUN Schools support school-day instruction is through project-based learning. Project-based learning uses real-life learning opportunities to integrate multiple academic skills. At George Middle School students are learning to integrate math, science and writing as they study their local watershed. The project is co-sponsored by the City's Bureau of Environmental Services and offers students an opportunity to see how real-world issues that affect the city's water supply are addressed.

Lessons Learned



CULTIVATE PRINCIPALS AS CHAMPIONS OF SUN.

There is no substitute for well-informed and committed leadership at each site. In recognition of that reality, the involvement of the school Principal in SUN is a critical factor in whether or not a school is chosen as a SUN site. One challenge is that Principals sometimes transfer to another school, and the incoming Principal may not have the same level of commitment to SUN. In the event of a change in principal, Initiative staff, along with staff from the nonprofit Lead Agency, need to be prepared to provide a thorough orientation to the SUN vision and help the new Principal clarify what role he or she wants to take with the SUN School.



ESTABLISH COMMON VISION AND GOALS.

Taking time to create a common vision and goals at each school helps to ground everyone's expectations and makes it easier to prioritize activities to develop. Early on, SUN Initiative staff realized that without a clear vision and goals, it was difficult to get partners, school staff and community members to buy in to the SUN concept. People would become familiar with one piece of their SUN School but not recognize the importance of all the other pieces. Using a group process to create the vision and goals gives people an opportunity to come together as a team, get to know each others' strengths and areas of interest, and identify emerging leaders who have a strong commitment to the SUN School.



BALANCE INITIATIVE-WIDE CONSISTENCY WITH SITE AUTONOMY.

Having a common vision and goals at the initiative-wide level facilitates planning, evaluation and technical assistance for the SUN Schools as a group. A shared vision and goals also ensure that the activities of individual schools support regional priorities for improving services for school-aged youth. The challenge is to design a system with enough flexibility for individual schools to tailor activities to local needs and interests. For example, the Initiative has an overarching goal of increasing family involvement, but that goal is met in different ways from school to school. At some sites, the focus is on organizing parents to have a more vocal role in issues affecting public schools. At others, the focus is on culturally specific outreach that increase parent participation in school activities. Many schools blend these approaches and add others, creating the mix of outreach activities and family services that best support their specific community.



CREATE REGULAR SYSTEMS OF COMMUNICATION AT EVERY LEVEL.

The best way to ensure that the program keeps running smoothly even during times of change is to clarify roles, set clear expectations, and keep the lines of communication open. This is true at every level, from building agreements about the use of space to initiative-wide decisions about how resources will be allocated. SUN Initiative staff found it especially useful to work with school principals and lead agencies to clarify roles and responsibilities so that each could provide appropriate support to the on-site managers and leadership for the SUN Initiative.

Emerging Directions

In the months ahead, the SUN Initiative will be:

- Working closely with school district staff to create stronger links between SUN activities and the schools' academic goals, provide personalized support for individual students, and share expertise and data with one another.
- Building on lessons learned to provide technical assistance for the School-Aged Policy Framework. When the SUN Initiative first began, sites were chosen based on their level of initiative and readiness. As the school-based services model expands to serve all the communities that have need, the County will need to provide a different level of technical assistance to build the capacity of agencies and schools to do this work and to support the leadership at each school.
- Expanding culturally specific and culturally appropriate services at individual SUN Schools and throughout the larger Framework in a way that supports individual cultural groups while at the same time bringing people together across cultural boundaries.
- Building the capacity of each SUN School's non-profit Lead Agency to raise supplemental funds for SUN activities, attract additional service partners and link with community leaders.

On Our Website:

- [SUN Site Listing & Contacts](#)
- [SUN School Profiles](#)
- [Advisory Committee Development Resources](#)
- [Annual Planning Template & Instructions](#)
- [Linking with the School Day: Resources](#)

Spotlight: Parent Involvement and Empowerment

The SUN Initiative knows that children do better in school if a parent or interested adult is involved in their education, and that education reform needs active parents and community members pushing for it to really work. But for parents, getting involved is not always easy. Financial pressures often make it difficult for parents to earn a living and still have time to participate in school activities. Cultural and language differences between families and school staff can create barriers that make it hard to communicate with one another. Parents who struggled themselves as students may not be comfortable coming back into a school environment.

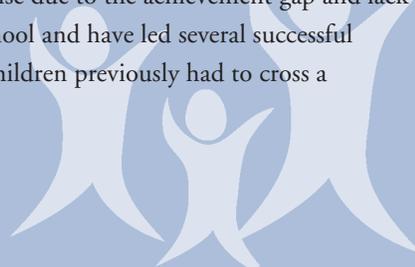
Increasing parent involvement means carefully responding to each of those challenges, and creating a school environment that welcomes and respects all parents. It means empowering parents to have a voice in the school community and to become leaders. With help from the Annie E. Casey Foundation, the SUN Initiative has used two strategies to reach out to parents who are often less involved and to build a sense of community from which action can take place.

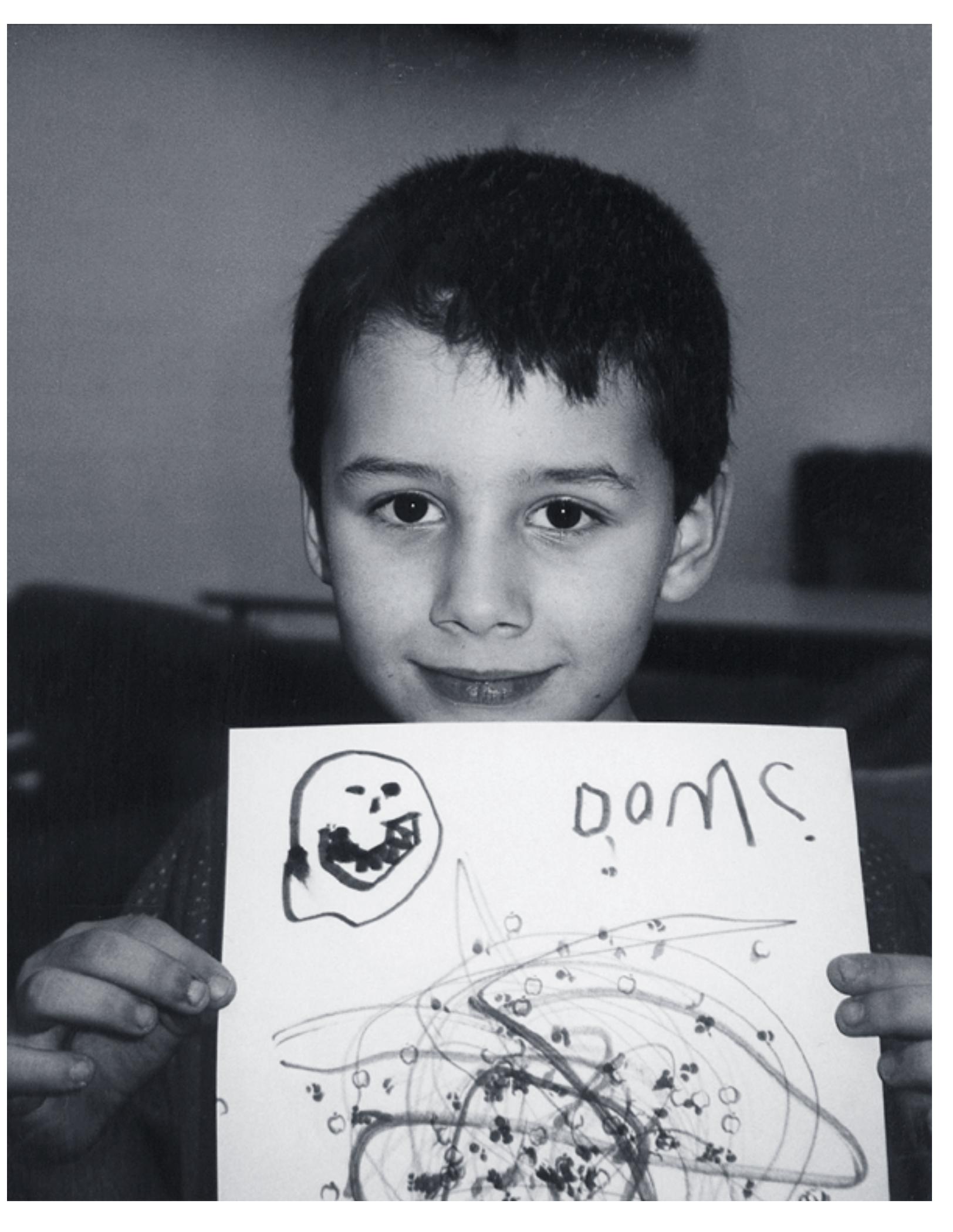
The first strategy is to hire culturally specific Family Outreach Workers at schools with large Latino and Asian/Pacific Islander populations. Parents are invited to come together to participate in SUN activities, to offer support to one another, to give input into how the schools can best support their children, and to organize culturally specific events at the schools. Casey Foundation funds are used to provide ongoing training for the SUN Family Outreach Workers.

The second strategy is to partner with the Portland Schools Alliance, a community-based organizing group that builds the leadership of parents, teachers and principals to strengthen public education for all children. The Alliance uses one-on-one conversations, house meetings, classroom gatherings and leadership development workshops to identify and train parent leaders who then build a base of parent advocates for schools. Funding from the Annie E. Casey Foundation directly supports the SUN Initiative's contract with the Alliance, enabling them to expand their work in two SUN communities.

Rigler Elementary has used both strategies to create a climate that is welcoming for Latino families, whose children make up 40% of the school population. A monthly parent tea, attended by the school Principal and SUN staff, allows parents to ask questions and learn more about their children's education. A Family Outreach Worker connects families with social and health services. Mexican Folkloric Dance classes for families and Latina culture classes for girls help families feel their culture is valued in the school. A part-time Latino Organizer with the Portland Schools Alliance has personally met with more than 65 Latino parents and cultivated a core group of 15 new parent leaders. Parents are becoming partners with the teachers, learning more about what is happening in the school district, and beginning to take action to assist students and staff.

These combined efforts are having an impact at Rigler, transforming an environment that just four years ago was identified by a parent advocacy group as a school in need of crisis response due to the achievement gap and lack of parent involvement. Now parents are visible in every aspect of the school and have led several successful organizing efforts, including getting bussing restored to an area where children previously had to cross a dangerous road to get to school.





DAMS.



EXPANDING OPPORTUNITIES THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS

The SUN Initiative cultivates strategic partnerships to maximize the positive impact SUN has on children's lives. The list of SUN partners is diverse, including a wide range of government agencies, nonprofit organizations and businesses. Some partnerships within the SUN Initiative are created by developing new connections between existing programs. In other cases, the SUN Initiative has recruited new partners to bring fresh perspectives and needed resources into the schools.

Government Agencies

The active involvement of elected officials in both the City and County governments has led to greater partnerships between SUN and existing government-funded programs. Working together means government agencies are better able to coordinate resources, share information and deliver a more complete range of services where they are most needed.

The partnership between SUN and the Multnomah County Health Department is one example. The Health Department has a number of staff in local schools, providing a wide range of services from dental sealants to physical examinations. As the SUN Initiative increases community engagement in the schools, SUN staff are able to connect students and their families to County health services and information and, more significantly, to strengthen health prevention in the SUN school communities through co-sponsored projects like an immunization van. As resources become available, the partners plan to do common organizing around local health issues in a way that enhances both student achievement and student health.

Nonprofit Organizations

Another source of community partners is the wide range of nonprofit organizations that are working to enhance educational opportunities for students. By partnering, a SUN School is able to broaden the range of

activities offered at the school, and the nonprofit is able to channel its resources to sites where they are likely to have a significant impact. One example is the Regional Arts and Culture Council (RACC), a private nonprofit that funds high quality art programs with links to academic benchmarks. A portion of the RACC budget has been dedicated to funding programs in SUN Schools, enabling SUN to bring cultural experiences to youth and families who would not otherwise have this exposure. Together, RACC and SUN help deepen the community's appreciation of the arts while broadening cross-cultural understanding through after-school arts workshops, neighborhood art events, multi-cultural fairs and mural projects.

Businesses

In addition to creating links with existing community services, the SUN Initiative has also expanded the range of community partners available to schools by cultivating strategic partnerships with local businesses. In the spring of 2002, SUN launched a School-Business Partnership project as part of its technical assistance activities. In the past year and a half, 19 businesses have joined in strategic partnerships with local schools, creating activities that draw on the businesses' areas of expertise to create unique learning opportunities for students (See Spotlight).

Lessons Learned



DESIGNATE A PERSON TO FOLLOW THROUGH ON PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES.

Inter-agency partnerships thrive when there is a clear champion on both sides willing to put time and energy into cultivating a positive relationship, negotiating roles and responsibilities, and making sure the partnership serves each organization. While the champion can be a designated staff person, it is essential that the leaders of each agency endorse the partnership. One of the advantages of the SUN model is that the Site Manager can serve as the point person for partnerships that have been endorsed by the Principal and that need more attention than the Principal is able to give on a day-to-day basis.



CREATE PARTNERSHIPS THAT HAVE MUTUAL BENEFITS FOR EVERYONE INVOLVED.

The most successful partnerships are those that meet the existing goals of both partnering agencies. It helps to identify each organization's needs and expectations up front, and to talk openly about what will make the partnership work as well as what will be most challenging. Too often, the focus is placed only on what a potential partner can bring to the schools. Paying attention to the partners' strategic goals creates a stronger partnership and can lead to creative ideas for joint projects.



USE EXISTING CONNECTIONS TO EXPAND THE NETWORK OF PARTNERSHIPS.

Sometimes existing partners are the best source of ideas for future partners. Existing partners often have connections with organizations that provide complementary services, and attracting those services to the school can lead to more comprehensive learning opportunities for students. This arrangement benefits partners too, offering their staff strategic networking opportunities that strengthen the relationship between the partnering agencies.



TAKE TIME TO BUILD PERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS.

Strong personal relationships lead to personal buy-in and clear, consistent communication at all levels of the partnership. Involving multiple staff people from each partner in the planning stages can lead to more solid connections between agencies and deeper commitment within each organization. It also helps to spend time learning about each other's work environments and the special opportunities and challenges those environments create.

Emerging Directions

In the months ahead, the SUN Initiative will be:

- Expanding business partnerships by reaching out to new businesses, encouraging existing partners to deepen their work together, and pursuing relationships with business associations at the Initiative level.
- Looking at ways to better prepare for turnover in key staff positions so that partnerships between organizations continue successfully after personnel changes.

- Increasing the linkages across departments in both the City and County governments as the School-Aged Policy Framework enters the implementation stage and elected officials strengthen their commitment to working collaboratively with the schools and each other.

On our Website:

- SUN Business Partners
- Partnership Case Studies
- School/Business Partnership Materials
- School/Business Profiles
- School/Business Partnership Planning Forms

Spotlight: SUN School—Business Partnership Project

Healthy neighborhood schools and successful local employers are critical to the livability of any community, and the SUN Initiative is working to bring those community resources together. The School-Business Partnership Project recognizes that business people don't want to be seen as "cash cows" for local schools—they want to be partners in the schools' success.

The Project's goal is to create partnerships between individual schools and businesses that provide innovative educational activities for youth and meaningful ways for adults to become involved in local schools. The project focuses on creating strategic partnerships that:

- Foster relationships between business employees, students, and school staff
- Are tied to current school and business goals so they benefit both partners
- Start with realistic expectations and expand over time
- Focus on helping students thrive

City Commissioner Jim Francesconi offers critical leadership to the project, serving as a public advocate in the business community, and often personally recruiting business partners that are then matched with interested schools.

These partnerships are creating real-life opportunities for students to integrate and apply their academic skills. At Tubman Middle School, a partnership with local advertising firm Wieden+Kennedy brings young people together with advertising professionals to look at the world behind the ads they encounter everyday. During the summer, students will write, shoot and edit their own commercial, getting hands-on experience with marketing and communications and developing personal relationships with adults in the professional world. Ideas for the partnership were generated by a team of teachers, school administrators and staff at the ad agency during an all-day retreat hosted by Wieden+Kennedy and facilitated by a SUN consultant. The retreat helped staff at the school and the business get to know each other and explore ways to work together to support student achievement.

Targeted support for school personnel helps ensure the developing partnerships will be a success. Two to three times a year, the SUN Initiative hosts an Initiative-Wide gathering to celebrate accomplishments, share insights, and build momentum for future growth. The gatherings are sponsored by Fred Meyer grocery stores, and hosted by Commissioner Francesconi and County Chair Diane Linn.

Throughout the year, a team of technical assistance providers supported by the Annie E. Casey Foundation offer personalized support to each school, helping schools identify their needs, recruit appropriate partners, negotiate agreements with businesses, and build their capacity for successful long-term partnerships that deepen over time. Additional funding is offered for retreats that bring teachers, school administrators and business representatives together to identify goals and generate ideas for their work together.

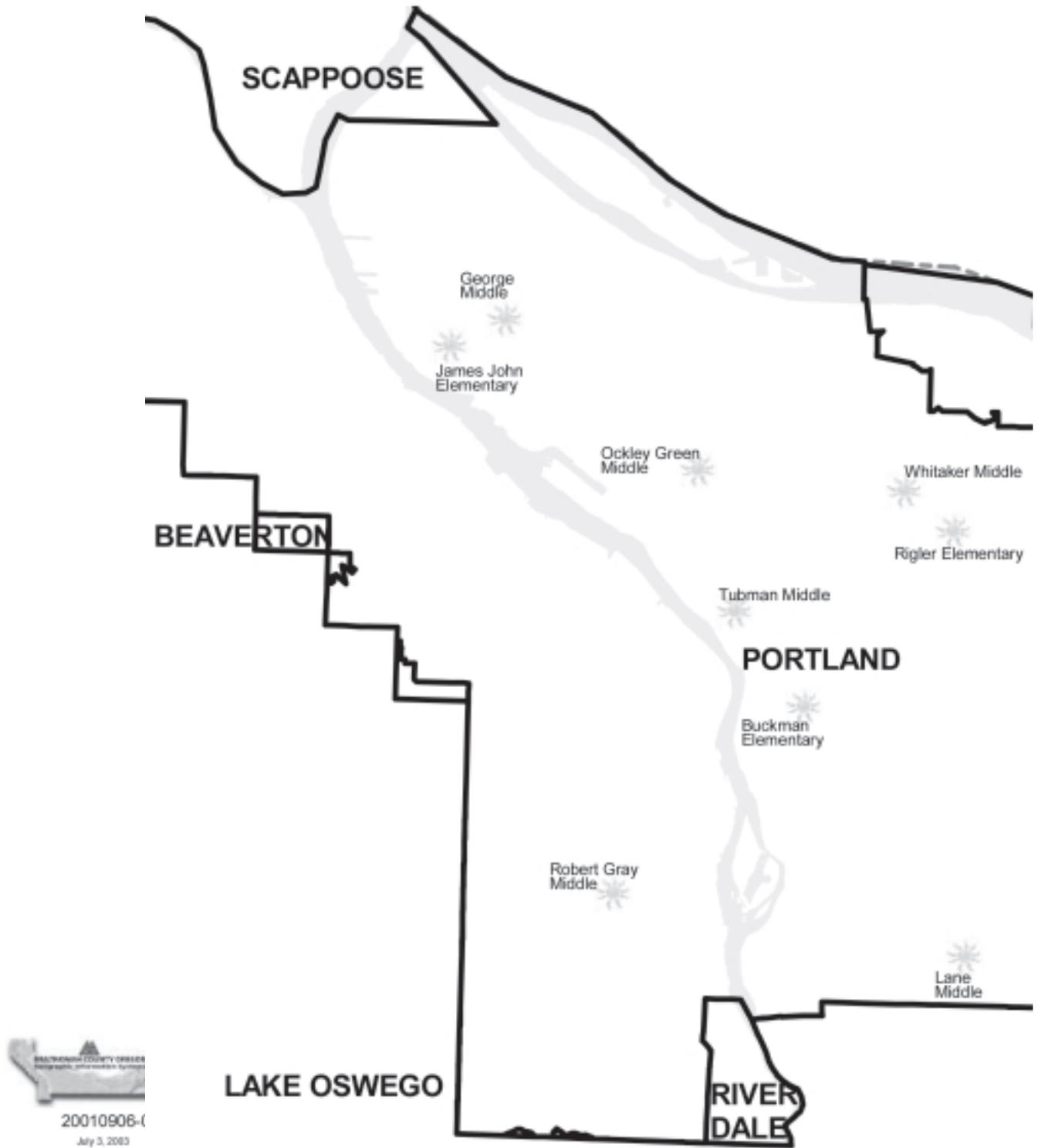




Appendix A: SUN Organizational Chart

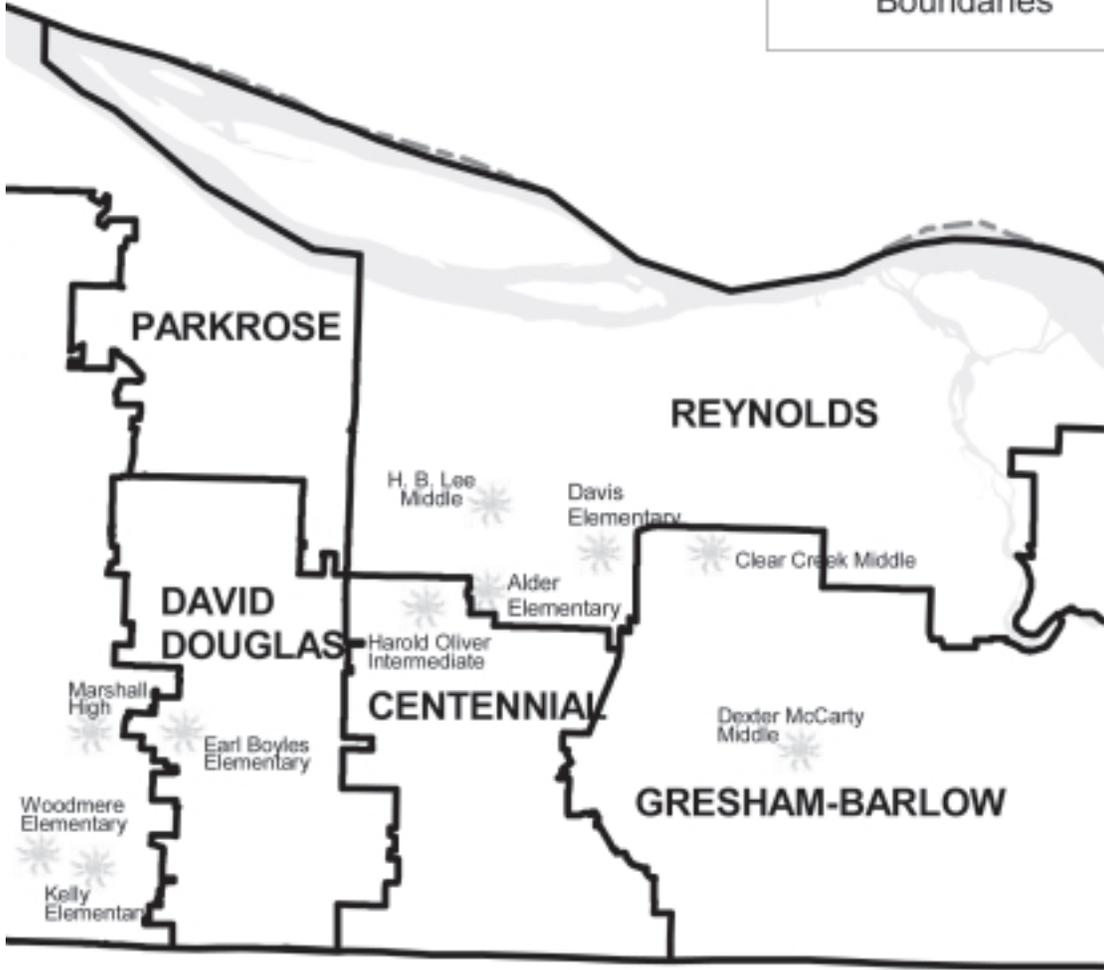


Appendix B: Map of SUN School Sites



Legend

-  SUN School
-  Multnomah County Boundary
-  School District Boundaries



Appendix C: Contacts

Office of School and Community Partnerships

*Including SUN Initiative &
School-Aged Policy Framework*

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Office of School and Community Partnerships Website

<http://www.co.multnomah.or.us/oscp/>

School-Aged Policy Framework Website

[http://www.ourcommission.org/policyplan/
ppsapf.shtm](http://www.ourcommission.org/policyplan/ppsapf.shtm)

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Portland Children's Initiative

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Children's Initiative

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National Resources on Community Schools and Community Building

Afterschool Alliance:

<http://www.afterschoolalliance.org/>

The After-School Corporation:

<http://www.tascorp.org/>

Annie E. Casey Foundation:

<http://www.aecf.org/>

Coalition for Community Schools:

<http://www.communityschools.org/>

Harvard Collaborative for Integrated School Services:

<http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~ciss/>

National Community Building Network:

<http://www.ncbn.org/>

NCREL (North Central Regional Education Lab) Beyond the Bell:

<http://www.ncrel.org/after/index.html>

NWREL (NorthWest Regional Education Lab):

<http://www.nwrel.org/>

US Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers:

<http://www.ed.gov/21stcclc/>

US Safe Schools Program:

<http://www.ed.gov/offices/OSERS/OSEP/Products/earlywrn.html>

Yale School of the 21st Century:

<http://www.yale.edu/21C/index2.html>

Appendix D: Resources Available on the SUN Website

www.sunschools.org

- Original Concept Paper
- SUN Model
- Mission & Goals
- SUN Organizational Chart
- School & Lead Agency Selection
- SUN Evaluation Plan & Reports
- SUN Site Listing & Contacts
- SUN School Profiles
- Advisory Committee Development Resources
- Annual Planning Template & Instructions
- Linking with the School Day: Resources
- SUN Business Partners
- Partnership Case Studies
- School/Business Partnership Materials
- School/Business Profiles
- School/Business Partnership Planning Forms

Appendix E: Acknowledgments

The SUN Initiative and the Office of School and Community Partnerships would like to acknowledge the invaluable support of our community and jurisdictional partners who have made the Initiative blossom, and allowed us to learn the lessons contained in this report. Our thanks to:

- All the political leaders, current and past, who have supported the development of SUN and championed children's issues in our community.
- SUN Principals, Site Managers, Lead Agencies, parents and community members for their dedication and incredible work to create the vibrant communities we call SUN. Without them, there would be no Initiative to report on.
- SUN community and business partners who bring vital resources and energy to our communities.
- SUN Management Team and Evaluation Workgroup members who provided critical support and guidance as we found our path during the first years of implementation.
- City of Portland and Multnomah County Departments (Parks and Recreation, Health, Community Justice, Human Services, Library, Environmental Services and Transportation) who have partnered with us to align resources and design a new way to do business to best serve our communities.
- Coalition for Community Schools and Harvard Collaborative for Integrated School Services who have shared their expertise and encouragement throughout our development and have brought school/community partnerships into national view.
- Other local and national programs (community schools, full-service schools, community learning centers, and family resource centers) who have given so generously of their experience and resources. In particular, the Oregon Coalition of Community Learning Centers, facilitated by the Oregon Commission on Children and Families.







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