
**COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:
An Integrated Service
Delivery Model for Rural
Regions in Newfoundland and
Labrador**

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this document is to present a new model for community and school integration for rural Newfoundland and Labrador. The Province of Newfoundland and Labrador has been divided into nine Rural Secretariat regions, each represented by Regional Councils. These citizen advisory groups have a mandate to provide advice to government on issues impacting social economic, environmental and cultural matters which affect the sustainability of rural regions.

The Regional Council for the Clarenville-Bonavista Rural Secretariat region states the presence of Community Schools in the region in its Vision 2020 document. As well, under the Transparency and Accountability Act, the Council identifies rural education as a key priority for action in its 2008-2011 Activity Plan.

This document aims to describe the issues impacting education delivery in rural communities in its current form, in addition to how it affects the future sustainability of rural communities. It also promotes a potential new model for educational delivery and public service delivery to the entire community: a **Community Schools Model**. The model supports a holistic approach to individual health and community development, similar in context to the Social Determinants of Health Model.

HISTORY OF EDUCATION DELIVERY IN NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR

Education in Newfoundland Labrador has undergone significant structural change over the past 50 years. During this time, there has been mass completion of secondary education by citizens. Educational opportunities have included changes to allow equality for men and women, regardless of age, race or disability. In short, careful attention has been given to support the individual needs of the student, and the general public, in the pursuit of academic success.

Between 1950 and 2000, significant external forces have changed the face of how education is perceived and delivered in the community. Unionization of teachers and support staff has created challenging relationships between government, school boards and parents, resulting in competing external forces being placed upon the entire education system. Furthermore, since 2004, new demands for skilled labour, out-migration of youth, an aging population and low birth rate have created changes throughout the province. These new demands impact the future delivery of education in rural communities.

Consequently, the sustainability of the education system in Newfoundland and Labrador must consider all factors acting against it and find new models for addressing the increasing demands resulting from societal, economic and cultural pressures. Schools, in and of themselves, are not isolated systems. Students, too, come to school with many issues acting upon them. Consequently, effective solutions must now involve the creation of a new set of partnerships between the family, the school and the community.

The province of Newfoundland and Labrador has witnessed a significant decline in its population, especially since the Cod Moratorium in 1992. Prior to that time, the Newfoundland and Labrador Statistical Agency (2006) reports there were 579,518 residents in the province. However, in 2006, with low birth rates and out-migration, the provincial population dipped to 505,470. Similarly, the student population continued to experience change over this period of time declining from more than 169,000 in 1969 to fewer than 75,590 in the 2006-2007 school year. This trend in student enrolment decline is anticipated to continue beyond 2020.

School Transformation

Despite the transformation of school buildings and the entire education delivery system as summarized by the points above, there has been little transformation in how the school interacts within the community until now. Trask (2007) suggests that just changing the structure of the education system does not automatically translate into improving the quality of student learning and achievement. It is suggested that we, as interested stakeholders in education and in its role in community development, must collectively move our efforts to focus on *school sustainability*, *community sustainability* and *improving outcomes for students and citizens* alike. Dr. Ken Stevens, a professor with Memorial University's Faculty of Education, remarks, "sustaining rural community [can be achieved by] using the model for sustaining small, rural schools" (reference taken from speech given at Symposium on Post-Confederation Reform: From Rhetoric to Reality, 2008).

Community education processes help address issues identified by the Social Determinants of Health. These Determinants of Health list eleven key factors affecting individual health and community well-being:

- ✓ Aboriginal status;
- ✓ Early life;
- ✓ Education;
- ✓ Employment and working conditions;
- ✓ Food security;
- ✓ Gender;
- ✓ Health care services;

- ✓ Housing;
- ✓ Income and its distribution;
- ✓ Social safety net;
- ✓ Social exclusion; and
- ✓ Unemployment and employment security.

Raphael (2003) suggests that “the Social Determinants of Health have a direct impact on the health of individuals and populations, are the best predictors of individual and population health, structure lifestyle choices, and interact with each other to produce health. In terms of the health of populations, it is well known that disparities - the size of the gap or inequality in social and economic status between groups within a given population - greatly affect the health status of the whole” (as cited by the World Health Organization, 2008).

In a Community School Model, partners aim to address these inequities by reducing the gap in social and economic status of child and youth and the community. However, schools cannot accomplish this task alone. Ringers and Decker (1995) report that modern community schools are operated by a number of partners with the school assuming the lead.

In a related report, **Closing the gap in a generation: health equity through action on the social determinants of health**, the World Health Organization (WHO) suggests that:

The poor health of the poor, the social gradient in health within countries, and the marked health inequities between countries are caused by the unequal distribution of power, income, goods, and services, globally and nationally, the consequent unfairness in the immediate, visible circumstances of peoples lives – their access to health care, schools, and education, their conditions of work and leisure, their homes, communities, towns, or cities – and their chances of leading a flourishing life. This unequal distribution of health-damaging experiences is not in any sense a ‘natural’ phenomenon but is the result of a toxic combination of poor social policies and programmes, unfair economic arrangements, and bad politics. Together, the structural determinants and conditions of daily life constitute the social determinants of health and are responsible for a major part of health inequities between and within countries.

[And],

Action on the social determinants of health must involve the whole of government, civil society and local communities, business, Policies and programmes must embrace all the key sectors of society not just the

health sector (as cited in the *Executive Summary*, 2008, p.1).

Population Decline

The continued decline in both the provincial and the student population has had greater impacts on rural communities throughout the province. School classrooms are large, but the number of students occupying these spaces is getting smaller. Furthermore, too many children are dropping out, or are unengaged and find themselves simply coasting through courses within many of our schools. In 2002, the former Vista School District tracked Grade Nine students through to Level II. Over the four year period, 42 students had left the school system pre-graduation.

Since 1997, the Department of Education, through the four School Boards, has reduced the number of schools in the region and busses approximately 80 percent of its students. In the 1990s, education quality was often used as the rationale for school closure and consolidation in rural areas of the province. Holloway (1997) reported that the last remaining school in Port Blandford was closed. The parents were told that their children would receive a better education in schools located in Clarendville than if they remained in Port Blandford. Many parents suggest that there are trade-offs when their children attend larger schools located in larger, more regional centres. While children are often exposed to more extracurricular opportunities, the long bus rides to and from school limits their participation in such activities (Author, PowerPoint Presentation to Vista School Board, 1997).

Further school consolidation in many rural communities is not likely given the geographical distances students and families must endure in the pursuit of anticipated “education quality” and to take advantage of extracurricular opportunities which are typically not offered in smaller, more rural communities.

Similarly, the media is frequently reporting on the need to encourage greater participation in the skilled trades. The Provincial Government, following its 2006 *White Paper on Post-secondary Education*, highlights the need for a greater focus on the skilled trades. Even the recent announcement on the proposed Hebron agreement will place greater emphasis on the need to address human resources shortages for this industry, as with all industries throughout the country. Couple these issues with the anticipated rate of retirement, the challenge of replacing existing workers has never been more difficult to address. Furthermore, it is predicted that, by 2019, new entrances to the Labour Force will out-number potential retirees by 2:1 (*Demographic Predictions, Community Accounts, 2006*).

Other identified challenges facing rural education delivery include finding enough financial resources to replace old school buildings and increased costs for bussing students farther distances, especially in rural areas. In the 2006-2007 school year, the Department of

Education allocated \$617.5 million for teaching services, board operations, capital costs and student transportation. Furthermore, rural education delivery will likely include resource development and education leadership, school-community partnership development, volunteerism and community development, as well as student achievement and school effectiveness, to name a few of the more predominant issues.

One possible solution to these problems and issues would be to create a new model that focuses on strengthening partnerships to improve delivery and reduce costs. A new model for rural education, a **Community School Model**, (also referred to as *Integrated Service Delivery Model for Rural Regions*), will require a focus on increasing the capacity and the skills of all partners and all members of the community in order to do things better and in a more effective manner. However, the transformation to a **Community School Model** requires leadership and political will. *It also means that our definition and interpretation of partnership has to be re-visited and internalized by all involved.*

School Administrators acknowledge that partnerships are central to child enrichment and learning. However, they equally admit that partnerships are challenged; limited information is shared between schools and service delivery agencies, which negatively impact the safety of the child, their families and the community. Part of the solution is to recognize that while service providers and schools serve similar clientele, they have varying relationships with these individuals. One of our first steps is to acknowledge this fundamental difference.

THE PHILOSOPHY BEHIND A COMMUNITY SCHOOL CONCEPT

What is a Community School - Integrated Service Delivery Model?

The proposed **Community School Model** is a central place within a cluster of communities which supports a set of partnerships between the school, home, and other community resources. This Model also focuses on traditional academics, in addition to health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement. This Model leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities and is based on a changing role for the school within the community (*See Appendix A for a list of potential partners*).

Today, traditional schools serve two primary functions:

- ✚ **to educate children and youth** by nurturing the development of the whole child, intellectually, socially, spiritually, emotionally and physically; and,
- ✚ **to support service delivery** by serving as centres for community development through the delivery of appropriate social, health, recreation, culture, justice and other services for children, youth, families and all citizens.

However, a **Community School Model** uses an integrated approach that involves much more than traditional delivery. *The Model* mobilizes an array of community resources, both government and non-government-based, including after school programming to promote youth development, family support, health and mental health, parenting and adult education, community-based justice programming, employment and violence prevention. It connects the resources to student learning and development, community leadership, adult literacy and capacity building.

Dryfoos (2008), a leading researcher on integrated school systems in the United States, argues that a “full-service community school remains open for extended hours, weekends and summers, welcoming families and community members into the building for an array of services and activities provided by community agencies.” Furthermore, Dryfoos explains that “needs related to physical and mental health, dentistry, social services, after-school activities, and educational enrichment are addressed on-site.” (*Centers of Hope*, in **Educational Leadership**, April 2008, pp. 38).

The Department of Education in Newfoundland and Labrador states that “Education levels are a key indicator of individual economic success which fuels the province’s achievements in both national and international environments and have been vital to the remarkable turnaround in the province of Newfoundland and Labrador over the past few years. Hence, the Vision [of the Department of Education] is citizens with [the] values, knowledge and skills necessary to be productive and contributing members of society.”

The Department of Education also states that it is “committed to providing an education system which is:

- ✚ Of high quality - Newfoundland and Labrador students are offered every advantage in what is now a global labour market;
- ✚ Safe - teachers and students are provided with learning environments that are free of health and life-safety challenges. Furthermore, all citizens deserve an environment free of harassment and intimidation; and,
- ✚ Affordable - in order to ensure access for all Newfoundlanders and Labradorians, public education in this province must remain affordable” (as cited by Department of Education, Government of Newfoundland Labrador, 2008).

The primary objective in a **Community School Model** supports of the vision and mission articulated by the Department of Education - it is about providing children, youth and the community with values, knowledge and skills so that they are able to contribute to the sustainability of the community.

The Model also recognizes that multiple supports (physical, emotional, social, and academic) are required for all students to succeed. These schools centralize the community and strengthen family and community relationships. They are open to everyone—*all day, every day, evenings and weekends*.

Furthermore, key directions for desired outcomes of the **Community School Model** include:

- ✚ Student achievement and success;
- ✚ Youth Leadership;
- ✚ Healthy Lifestyles and Family Development;
- ✚ Child and Youth Mental Health;
- ✚ Life Long Learning;
- ✚ Parental and community engagement; and
- ✚ Community Development and Capacity Building (*See Appendix B*).

CONTEXT: *What do we really mean?*

In a **Community School Model**, all participants are treated as equal partners in success. Partners focus on the development and delivery of programs and services through strategic priorities:

- ✚ *Family support* - Family Resource Centre and Early Childhood Programs;
- ✚ *Integrated service delivery* - coordinated health and social services aimed to support and enrich child and youth development as well as family life;
- ✚ *Quality education* - excellence in academic achievement through high quality curriculum instruction and the use of community assets as resources to enrich student learning;
- ✚ *E-Learning and e-teaching opportunities* - aimed to enhance the delivery of quality education to all students living in rural communities;

- ✚ *Adult literacy* - adults are encouraged to explore life-long learning opportunities, including Adult Basic Education, personal development and to act as mentors to other members of the community;
- ✚ *Youth development* - youth are encouraged to develop their maximum potential through positive relations with peers and adults, engage in mentorship programs and become assets to the development of their communities; and
- ✚ *Community development* - all partners in the community school focus on building and enhancing social networks, economic sustainability and environmental and cultural infrastructure throughout the community (*See Appendix C*).



The Community Schools approach to education delivery and community sustainability will require a shift in thinking as well as a cultural shift in how we traditionally deliver education in rural Newfoundland and Labrador. Policy makers will need to identify “best practices” that exist within the province, throughout Canada and around the globe. Specifically, community and school integration models promote student achievement, youth development, community participation and community capacity.

Proposed Community School Model for Newfoundland and Labrador (Figure 1)

Chung (2005) comments that schools have often been perceived as closed systems. She observes that:

...school districts have not always been perceived to be willing partners in community development efforts. Residents are rarely engaged in a school’s capital planning processes, and school planners often overlook community concerns... to address the disconnect between public schools and neighborhoods, new networks of planners, community development professionals, educators, and policymakers are being formed to explore

the connections between schools and communities.

OTHER MODELS IN CANADA AND THE UNITED STATES

Newfoundland and Labrador Perspective

The Community School concept is not new! Provincially, three models propose a more integrated approach to community and school. In each case study, citizens and communities have mobilized to support the broader needs of the community. These local rural areas:

1. New World Island Academy, in the community of Summerford, near Twillingate;
2. Christ the King School in Rushoon, Burin Peninsula's Placentia West area, through its *Facilitating Community Leadership Project*; and
3. The Communities in Schools Model, through the Community Education Network, near Stephenville

Specifically, in case study 1, the New World Island Academy school community serves children and families from nine neighbouring communities. At the time of our review earlier this year, the community school model was reportedly in its developmental infancy.

By March 2008, the Community School Coordinating Committee was reviewing its present Work Plan whereby it had identified five core strategic directions to promote a Healthy School through:

1. Nutrition;
2. Healthy Child Development;
3. Physical Activity and Youth Leadership;
4. Promoting Community Education; and
5. Managing Resources.

However, officials working with the Coordinating Committee report community and school participants are constantly moving towards better community and school integration.

The Community School Coordinating Committee has a staff Coordinator who assists with scheduling and with operationalizing numerous activities which support the children and the community. These activities include: the School Breakfast Program; arranging

local Health Fairs; finding volunteers for school related events (i.e. Curriculum Days, Anti-Bullying Programs, and Roots of Sympathy program); managing the Community Access Program (CAP Site); and assisting with the YMCA's on-site daycare. Additionally, while formal community-based recreational opportunities are not currently offered at the school, such opportunities are being discussed by the Coordinating Committee.

Some of the challenges associated with the model include the consistent need to do fundraising. The lack of consistent funding has resulted in a continuous need to apply for core funds to keep the Coordinator position in place. Stakeholders involved in the initiative comment that the school community would not be able to sustain the current programs and services without the support of a Coordinator's position. It appears that core funding is a critical ingredient in the success of the model.

There is also limited access for after-hour use of the school by external community groups. This limitation has resulted in some confusion in the community because they had been promised greater access to school facilities and equipment. Officials at the school reported that some additional challenges exist around school supervision and maintenance when external groups make use of the facility. As well, after-school busing and extra space for external agencies such as Social Workers, a Community Health Nurse and Community Policing would be required to enable the school to integrate more effectively with the community.

In addition to these formalized approaches to integrating school and community resources, there exist smaller examples throughout the province where schools are finding innovative ways to invite the broader community into the learning environment.

In case study 2, Dyke & Holloway (2006) report on a uniquely successful initiative involving Christ the King School, in Rushoon, located on the Burin Peninsula. The school articulates a philosophy of how the community should be integrated with the school. In 2003, numerous community-based organizations from the Placentia West Development Area participated in the **Facilitating Community Partnerships Pilot Project**. This initiative was funded by the former Strategic Social Plan in partnership with numerous government departments, agencies and the local rural development association. The aim of the project was to assist communities in self-identifying strategies and solutions to address low literacy, youth out-migration and unemployment, community leadership, duplication of resources, health and well-being and economic development.

Christ the King School was central to the sub-region and an obvious choice for the Leadership Team to coordinate its action plan. Over the three years of the project, with the assistance of a Coordinator, the Leadership Team was very successful in building a strong partnership between the school, the communities within its geographical boundary, and its citizens.

Programs were supported through funding from various government departments (provincially and federally), in addition to School, Health and Regional Economic Development Boards, Development Associations and local municipalities. Officials working with the Leadership Team openly acknowledge that they were very successful in achieving many of the goals and objectives which were outlined in the Action Plan.

However, they cite several reasons for the discontinuation of the Leadership Team, including a lack of core funding for Coordinator's position, the loss of core leaders (i.e. champions) involved with Leadership Team, and changes in School Board policy on external group access to school.

Similarly, in case study 3, the *Communities in Schools Model*, through the **Community Education Network**, located on the west and south coast of the province, illustrates how rural education can be delivered through a multi-service delivery approach. Beverly Kirby, former Executive Director of the Community Education network, stresses the importance of the process to build relationships and partnerships between key individuals and organizations.

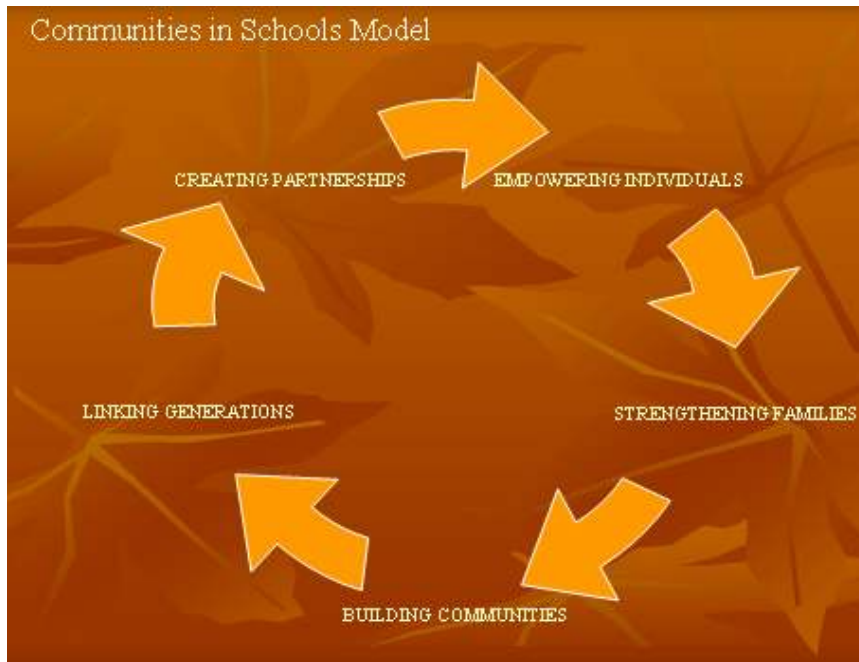


Figure 2, to the left, depicts the ingredients necessary for an effective partnership between the school and the community. Proponents of the model highlight the essential development of a common vision to the success of a Community School's Model and must be achieved before policy can be developed to support the direction and commitment of partnering organizations and government. Stakeholders need to be self-empowered. Programs and policies need to be flexible to reflect the needs of participants and stakeholders.

Ms. Kirby summarizes that "individual learning is paramount in terms of promoting community well-being and lifelong learning."

Some of the challenges with this model centers on core funding for school/community services' coordination. Currently, school-based facilitators are hired through Service Canada under the Job Creation Program. While officials see the value in consistent staff

turn-over in that it provides an opportunity for new ideas and new energy, the turn-over is time-consuming and can detract from moving forward. To ensure continuity of the process, the Community Education Network funds a Coordinator who supervises all school-based facilitators.

The *Communities in Schools Model*, of the Community Education Network, builds upon five core principles:

- ✚ Empowering Individuals;
- ✚ Strengthening Families;
- ✚ Building Communities;
- ✚ Linking Generations; and
- ✚ Creating Partnerships.

Officials, working with the Community Education Network, also stress the importance of:

- ✚ Building a philosophical foundation between all partners;
- ✚ Grassroots involvement all the way;
- ✚ Developing a “common vision”;
- ✚ Identifying champions; and
- ✚ Building a sustainable structure.

Furthermore, they advise that the process must be fluid and flexible to allow partners to enter and exit the alliance as required. Funding should be seen as supporting schools and communities. Policy development should help create the right kind of involvement and actions plans should build to support regional plans of all stakeholders.

Canadian and International Perspectives

The **Community School Model** builds upon ideas which are found in other jurisdictions in Canada and the United States. In Canada, the original Community School Concept was established twenty-eight years ago in the Province of Saskatchewan to assist Métis and First Nation children with their integration into the community.

Over the past 28 years, this Model has transformed into the **SchoolPLUS** model to promote student improvement through the delivery of a strong learning program which has input and support from service delivery agencies, parents and the broader community. It recognizes the school as a centre for social, health and other services for children and their families. Using public schools as hubs, [*Community Schools*] bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities.

Today, the **Community School Model** is going through a renewal process; and it is offered in varying approaches within the Province of Saskatchewan. Each school-community implementation is geared towards individual community need and has flexibility to address unique student and community challenges. In some models, the Community School mirrors the model which is being promoted in this paper. Officials working with the Department of Education report the next generation of the SchoolPLUS Model will include a focus on the idea of the *Whole Child*. According to this approach, children are provided opportunities, and the resulting curriculum and partnerships will encourage them to be *healthy, safe, engaged, supported* and *challenged*. (See also *Appendix B*).

In the SchoolPLUS and the Whole Child Models, partners work to achieve the following results:

- ✚ Children are ready to learn when they enter school and every day thereafter.
- ✚ All students learn, achieving high standards.
- ✚ Young people prepare for adult roles in the workplace as parents and as citizens, actively participating in the social and economic fabric of their communities.
- ✚ Families and neighborhoods are safe, supportive and engaged.
- ✚ Parents and community members are involved with the school and develop value for their own life-long learning.
- ✚ The community views the *community school* as an integral part of the social infrastructure.
- ✚ The community supports children and youth to strengthen both educational success and well-being.
- ✚ Everyone supports the transition into and through the education system, to post-secondary education and the labour market.

The trend to move towards better community involvement in school development is spreading across Canada. In 2007, the Government of New Brunswick passed legislation to develop 45 Community Schools throughout its rural communities. According to officials working with the Department of Education, rural communities require a “full services approach” to community engagement and school development. Schools and communities, however, must demonstrate a willingness to become a Community School. School operating grants are topped-up with additional monies to hire a Community School Coordinator and secure additional resources for the school and the community. New Brunswick’s (NB) Education Minister, Kelly Lamrock states:

Engaging communities and partners in improving schools and academic achievement is essential to the success of building the best education system in the country, [and] community groups, businesses, schools, teachers and parents have all recognized the importance each can play in providing hands-on learning experiences for children in their own community. The collective response to the community schools initiative that we launched in June has been tremendous, and we are well on our way to meeting our goal of 75 designated community schools.

The NB Government aims to establish 75 Community Schools by 2012.

In British Columbia, the challenges impacting school enrolment are no different. Since 2001, student enrolment in British Columbia public schools has declined by approximately 50,000 students. Consequently, in 2008, the Government of British Columbia launched a \$30-million Neighbourhoods of Learning pilot project to bring community and other education services together with K-12 education in a single neighbourhood hub and make use of surplus school space as student enrolment declines.

Furthermore, the trend to invite and support community sustainability through the K-12 education system is not isolated to Canada alone. Throughout the United States, there exist nearly 500 Community Schools, located within inner cities and rural communities. These initiatives, according to Dryfoos (2008) include “*Full-Service Schools* in Florida; *Healthy Start Sites* in California; *Beacons* in New York City; the United Way’s *Bridges to Success* in Indianapolis; the *C.S. Mott Foundation* in Flint, Michigan; and the *Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania*.”

Similarly, according to the **Community in Schools: Helping Kids Stay in School and Prepare for Life** website:

A Community School is a collection of partnerships and a place where services, supports and opportunities lead to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities....

[And],

using public schools as a hub, inventive, enduring relationships among educators, families, community volunteers, business, health and social service agencies, youth development organizations ...to children are changing educational landscapes...by transforming traditional schools into partnerships of excellence.

HORIZONTAL COLLABORATION: *Creating Partnership Across Government*

Cross linkages between government departments and related strategies serve to promote the essence of a **Community School Model**. *The primary aim of the model is to develop a sustainability plan for the school, along with a sustainability plan for the community.* For example, integrating the Department of Health and Community Services' Provincial Wellness Plan with the Department of Tourism, Culture and Recreation's Recreation and Sport Strategy may help identify solutions to individual health and wellness. These are two critical issues confronting individual and community well-being.

Likewise, the 2007-2008 provincial budget funded school boards to support the *community use of schools*, which would provide liability insurance coverage allowing external, community-based groups to utilize school buildings for community events. Anecdotal evidence suggests that community-based organizations need space to do their work:

To promote physical fitness and healthy living, we are proceeding with a number of initiatives to benefit young and old. This year, we will launch our Recreation and Sport Strategy and Action Plan, which is designed to promote the many benefits of sport and physical activity - health benefits, social benefits, educational and economic benefits alike. With incremental funding this year of \$2.39 million, this strategy will encourage and enable more and more Newfoundlanders and Labradoreans to take greater responsibility for their health through positive engagement in recreation and sport pursuits with a strong fitness component.

[And],

We are dedicating \$100,000 this year to support the sharing of school facilities with community user groups, to enable school boards to improve their access while protecting these valuable resources for our children's instruction. **(Government of NL and Labrador, 2008).**

Individuals need to find common ground to discuss vital community issues and find effective solutions that will enhance the sustainability of the community and the region. It is critical to note that the integrated approach to rural education is much broader than a community school, in its present form or a community - organization's use of a school building.

ALTERNATIVES AND OPTIONS

What are the benefits/advantages of a Community School Model?

Unlike traditional public schools, schools utilized within the context of multi-service delivery have 4 major advantages that schools acting alone do not have:

- ✚ **They garner additional resources for the school and reduce demands on school staff.** Success of the model can be achieved if supportive mechanisms and sufficient resources (human and financial) are in place to enable schools to assume greater responsibility for the outcomes of improved community and school collaborations.

Schools will find it difficult to manage resources involving an array of partners. School-based Coordinators will be required to assist School Administrators and service delivery agents in the effective support of children and their families. They can garnish additional resources to offer Adult Basic Education (ABE) programs, senior's recreation programs, daycare services, boys and girls club activities, mentorship programs, breakfast programs, visiting medical services, restorative justice programs, and an endless array of services to student, their parents and the community.

- ✚ **They provide learning opportunities that develop both academic and nonacademic competencies.** Community schools support the intellectual, physical, psycho-emotional and social development of young people by engaging and challenging the community to play an active role in helping the school and the child to attain this goal. Educating the Whole Child - *to enable them to become active, engaged and contributing members of the community*- is our collective goal.

Teachers recognize that all developmental assets of a child's development are reinforced through this holistic approach. There are abundant opportunities for learning and exploration in school, after school and in the community which help students mature in all areas of development.

- ✚ **They offer young people, their families and community residents' opportunities to build social capital.** Social capital connects students to people and information that can help them solve problems and meet their goals. Community schools

enable all students to forge networks and social skills through mentoring relationships with caring adults, school-to-work learning, volunteer, community-based service and other experiences.

Students find opportunities to demonstrate leadership to their peers, which, when nurtured, can lead to leadership opportunities as adults. Pure community integrated schools provide parents and other adults with similar opportunities to learn and assume leadership roles.

However, success in implementing such a complex model for rural schools and their respective communities depends on the value partners place on relationship building, as well as the buy-in and support of school administrators. This buy-in and support includes the ability to communicate effectively with partners and to develop policies and procedures which are supportive of children, youth, their families and the community at-large.

In a similar report, *Making the Difference, Research and Practice in Community Schools (2003)* potential outcomes include:

- ✚ Student learning improves; young people develop a range of competencies.
- ✚ Parents and families increase their participation in their children's education and in the school.
- ✚ Principals and teachers have more time for quality instruction because partners help address nonacademic barriers to learning; family support principles become embedded in the school.
- ✚ Families have easier access to supports and opportunities that strengthen their capacity to care for and help educate their children and contribute to their community.
- ✚ Communities become more viable and resilient. There is improved safety, security, and increased community pride.
- ✚ Communities share accountability for student success.
- ✚ Synergies in service delivery are achieved through shared responsibility and the development of a common vision, goals and objectives.
- ✚ A **Community School Model** can also help address reduced community leadership due to out-migration of youth.
- ✚ A **Community School Model** can provide opportunities for new relationships and understanding between formal education systems, service delivery agents and community-minded citizens.

WHAT IS REQUIRED?

Change requires commitment and belief in community involvement and engagement. Partnership development is extremely difficult to accomplish. Change will result from a willingness of all partners, inclusive of government, service agencies, parents and the community to find a process that is supportive of children, their families and their communities.

Conflict resolution strategies, an understanding of community development principles and open mindedness are keys to the success of a community-school partnership. Equally, the identification of key champions within the school (ideally the School Administrator) and the community are essential at the start of a Community School arrangement.

Creating a *Community School Model* requires:

- significant change in leadership and attitude, requiring new skills in: conflict resolution, community development, collaborative leadership, and horizontal decision-making;
- positive and interactive processes and relationships within formal education systems, within communities, and amongst citizens;
- development of a common vision;
- grass-roots engagement;
- open-mindedness of all participants;
- sustained effort;
- identification of champions in each support agency and within the community;
- flexible funding arrangements between government and community to advance partnerships;
- investment in infrastructure, including school re-design and broadband for rural communities;
- supportive public policy; and
- participants' willingness to make the *community school* a positive place.

Figure 3

LEGAL ISSUES

The **Community School Model** can impact the following:

- ✓ School construction policies so that it reflects the needs of the community;
- ✓ Safety and securing of children;
- ✓ Early childhood programming policies;
- ✓ Use of public buildings by community groups external to normal school operations;
- ✓ Budget decision-making processes for cross departmental cost-sharing arrangements;
- ✓ Application of the rural lens; and
- ✓ Governance and shared decision-making.

The **Community School Model** is ideal for more remote rural communities where there is little private business opportunity to offer additional services to support individual, community well-being and sustainability. Partners in the model must ensure that local businesses are not negatively impacted for the creation of the new model. Nevertheless, the Model can be implemented in some form for all communities in Newfoundland and Labrador when there is sufficient flexibility to respond to individual community challenges.

CONSIDERATION OF IMPACTS- RURAL LENS APPLICATION

The Rural Lens was developed by the Rural Secretariat as part of the Cabinet Review Process to ensure that future policies for the Province of Newfoundland and Labrador are reviewed with consideration of the impacts on rural regions.

Philosophical Considerations and Guiding Principles

- ✚ Children are our most important resource. Hence, their development and well-being are our most important consideration.
- ✚ The school **can be** the centre of the community where a range of programs, services, and resources can be provided for children and their families.

- ✚ The school **can be** the focal point for community development and capacity building. Policy makers must consult with key stakeholders to build, support and facilitate the community's capacity to transform from the current school development model to the new *community school* model.
- ✚ Education is a shared responsibility: shared with parents, businesses, government agencies, service providers, and members of a community. (The argument that “it takes a whole village to raise a child” has never been more relevant in our society.)
- ✚ The integration of services to children in a **Community School Model** is not a new concept. The Coordinated Services Model for Children and Youth, often referred to as the Individual Support Services Plan (ISSP Model) exemplifies how inter-agency cooperation advances the needs for children, youth and families in educational attainment, community inclusiveness and transitioning from school to community, and the labour force. It is important to distinguish that the fundamental principles behind this model are good. Furthermore, a **Community School Model** must be user-friendly, open to the public and not complicated by bureaucracies or by its insular rules and regulations (**ISSP and Pathways Commission Report, 2007**).
- ✚ Government departments collaborate more effectively and horizontal collaboration is desired. Organizational and agency collaboration, cooperation and interdependence replaces organizational and agency isolation, independence and competition.

FINANCIAL ISSUES

The **Community School Model** will require *new* funding. In the New Brunswick Model, pilot community schools are given an additional school operating grant to hire a Community School Coordinator and to use these additional funds to leverage other monies from provincial and federal sources. In Newfoundland Labrador, other community development models, such as the Community Youth Networks, have an annual allocation of \$60,000 to assist with the coordination and implementation of programs and services to youth in rural communities. A funding allocation to pilot the **Community School Model** will be approximately \$100,000 per site. To move the Community Schools' agenda, we will require:

- ✓ Approval to pilot this model in a minimum of 4 schools, strategically located throughout the province;
- ✓ Funding allocations in addition to and above regular school operating grants to support human resources and partnership development opportunities;
- ✓ Re-consideration of janitorial and snow clearing services to allow for use of the school buildings beyond normal K-12 hours of operation;
- ✓ Renovations to accommodate external groups while not jeopardizing the safety and securing of children;
- ✓ An expansion of existing school construction designs to accommodate other community-based services;
- ✓ New funding for additional human resources to coordinate activities and organizations; and
- ✓ New funding to provide after-school busing.

A **Community School Model** allows for a review of existing financial costs to maintain numerous structures within a local geographical area. Re-profiling funds from departments can result of savings to government.

CROSS-DEPARTMENTAL ISSUES AND LIMITATIONS

Community School Models affect more than one sector (e.g., health, education, industry, economic, recreation, etc.) and individual partners will have different responsibilities. Support and buy-in from all partners is necessary including: departments, school boards, school administrators, service delivery providers and individuals at the community level.

However, some limitations with implementing the **Community Schools Model** include:

- ✚ Finding and maintaining appropriate levels of funding beyond the pilot study phase;
- ✚ Hiring the “right” person to coordinate the activities and organizations utilizing a *community school model*;
- ✚ Sustaining support for the model beyond its initial implementation;
- ✚ Finding effective solutions to ongoing school and community challenges;
- ✚ Addressing potentially conflicting policies within government and boards; and
- ✚ Measuring and evaluating success along the way.

SUMMARY

A **Community School Model** is one possible solution to school and community sustainability. However, it requires more debate and dialogue with community leaders, education specialists, parents, policy makers and service providers to find effective solutions for rural communities.

An intensive consultation process must be pursued to inform and engage government departments, School Boards and Regional Councils, in addition to Regional Health Authorities, municipalities and citizens. Presently, this concept paper has been circulated to officials within the Department of Education, the Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy Working group, as well as the Eastern and Nova Central School Districts. Further discussions will be organized to obtain new perspectives on the model.

Endnotes:

1. Community Schools Model builds upon the work of Dr. Albert Trask, Assistant Director, Rural Education and Corporate Services, Eastern School Board.
2. This concept paper has been developed in consultation with Regional Partnership Planners from other Rural Secretariat regions: Gander-New-Wes-Valley; Grand Falls-Windsor-Baie-Verte-Harbour Breton; and Stephenville-Port-Aux-Basques.
3. Site visits to Rushoon, Summerford and Stephenville helped the development of this concept paper.
4. Issues raised for consideration were presented at a Knowledge Transfer Session (KIS Project), through Memorial University's Harris Centre, on June 7th, 2008
5. Research conducted on the Community Schools Model included participation in the Community Schools Conference at Regina, Saskatchewan in October, 2008.
6. Consultations with 35 school administrators provided input into the proposed model on October 27th, 2008.
7. The Model is not a "one-size fits all" approach to school and community integration. It can, however, build upon best practices, provincially and nationally

RECOMMENDED READING

Active, Healthy Newfoundland and Labrador: A Recreation and Sport Strategy for Newfoundland and Labrador (2007) from <http://www.tcr.gov.nl.ca/tcr/publications/2007/activehealthyNL.pdf>

Blank, M. J. et al. (2003) *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools* (May) from <http://www.communityschools.org/CCSFullReport.pdf>

Community in Schools: Helping Kids Stay in School and Prepare for Life from <http://www.communityschools.org/partnerships.html>

Community Education Network of Southwestern Newfoundland from <http://www.ryakuga.org/cen/>

Chung, C. (2005) **Connecting: Public Schools to Community Development** (winter)

Dryfoos, J.G. (2008) *Centres of Hope: Full-service community schools can improve the lives of children in poverty*, Educational Leadership (April)

Dyke, B. & Holloway, C. (2006) *Learning From Experience: Building Sustainable regions Through Community Partnership*. (March) <http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/pdf/Clarenceville/LearningFromExperience.pdf>.

Educating the Whole Child, Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development from <http://www.ascd.org>, and <http://www.wholechildeducation.org>

Helleur, J. & Associates. (2005) *Final Report Evaluation of Facilitating Community Partnerships Pilot Project, Rural Secretariat – Eastern Region* <http://www.exec.gov.nl.ca/rural/pdf/Clarenceville/FinalReport-2005.pdf>

Langdon, Bernice et al. *The ISSP and Pathways Commission Report* from http://www.ed.gov.nl.ca/edu/pub/Focusing_on_Students.pdf

Press Release, Neighborhood of Learning Pilot Program, Government of British Columbia from http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2008OTP0216-001326.htm

Press Release on Community Schools, Government of New Brunswick (2008) from <http://www.gnb.ca/cnb/news/edu/2007e1589ed.htm>

Ringers, J. & Decker (1995). *School community centers: Guidelines for Interagency planners*. Charlottesville, VA: Mid Atlantic Center for Community Education.

SchoolPLUS at a Glance, Government of Saskatchewan. (2008) from <http://www.learning.gov.sk.ca/SchoolPLUS>

Trask, Dr. A. (2006) PowerPoint Presentation: *The Changing Face of Education: The Changes, The Challenges, The Possibilities*. (November)

World Health Organization. (2008) **Commission on Social Determinants of Health Final Report: Closing the gap in a generation** from http://whqlibdoc.who.int/publications/2008/9789241563703_eng.pdf

APPENDIX A

POTENTIAL PARTNERS

Community:

Regional Health Authorities
Community Police/Legal Agencies/Crime Prevention
School Boards
School Councils
Addiction Services
Child Protection Services
Victim Services
Municipalities (Town Councils)
Newfoundland and Labrador Federation of School Councils
Literacy Newfoundland and Labrador
College of the North Atlantic
Rural Development Associations

Newfoundland Labrador Teachers Association
Future in Youth Newfoundland and Labrador
Chamber of Commerce
Planned Parenthood
Youth Employment Services
Child/Youth/Advocate
Seniors' Groups/50+ Clubs
Voluntary, community-based organizations
Family Resource Centres
Community Youth Networks
Regional Economic Development Boards
Violence Prevention Initiative Committees

Provincial Government Departments, Agencies and Initiatives:

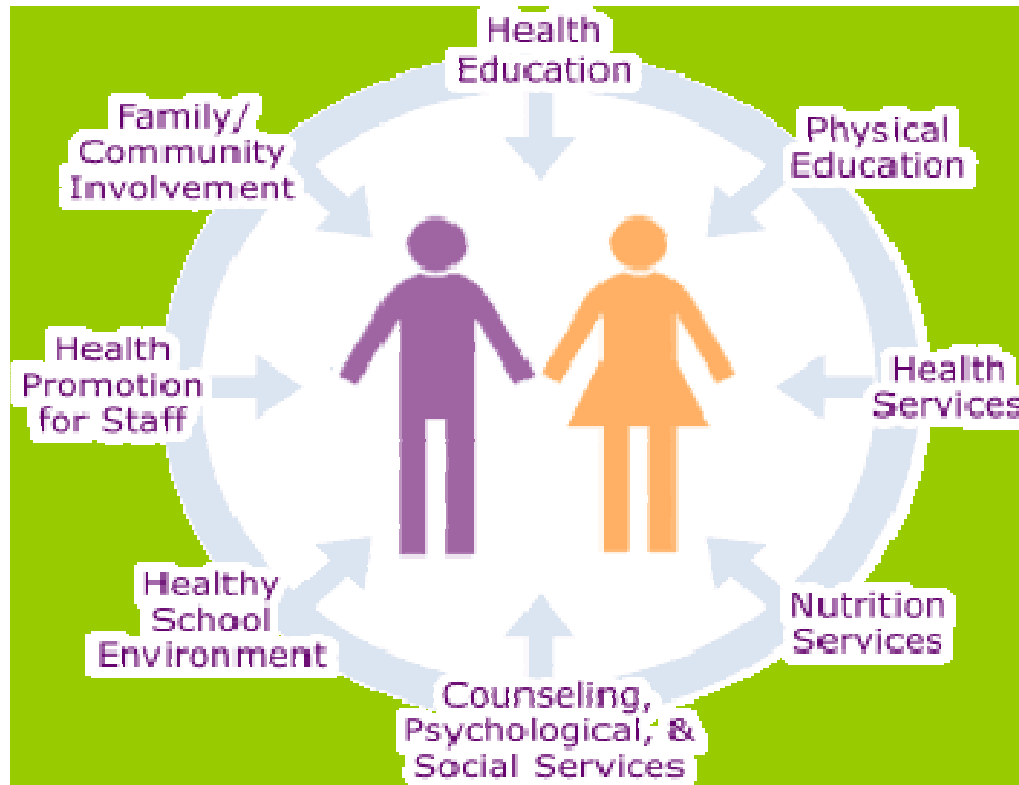
Rural Secretariat
Department of Health & Community Services
Department of Human Resources, Labour & Employment
Department of Education
Department of Tourism and Recreation/Community Recreation
Youth Retention and Attraction Strategy Working Group
Poverty Reduction Strategy
Violence Prevention Initiative

Memorial University of Newfoundland

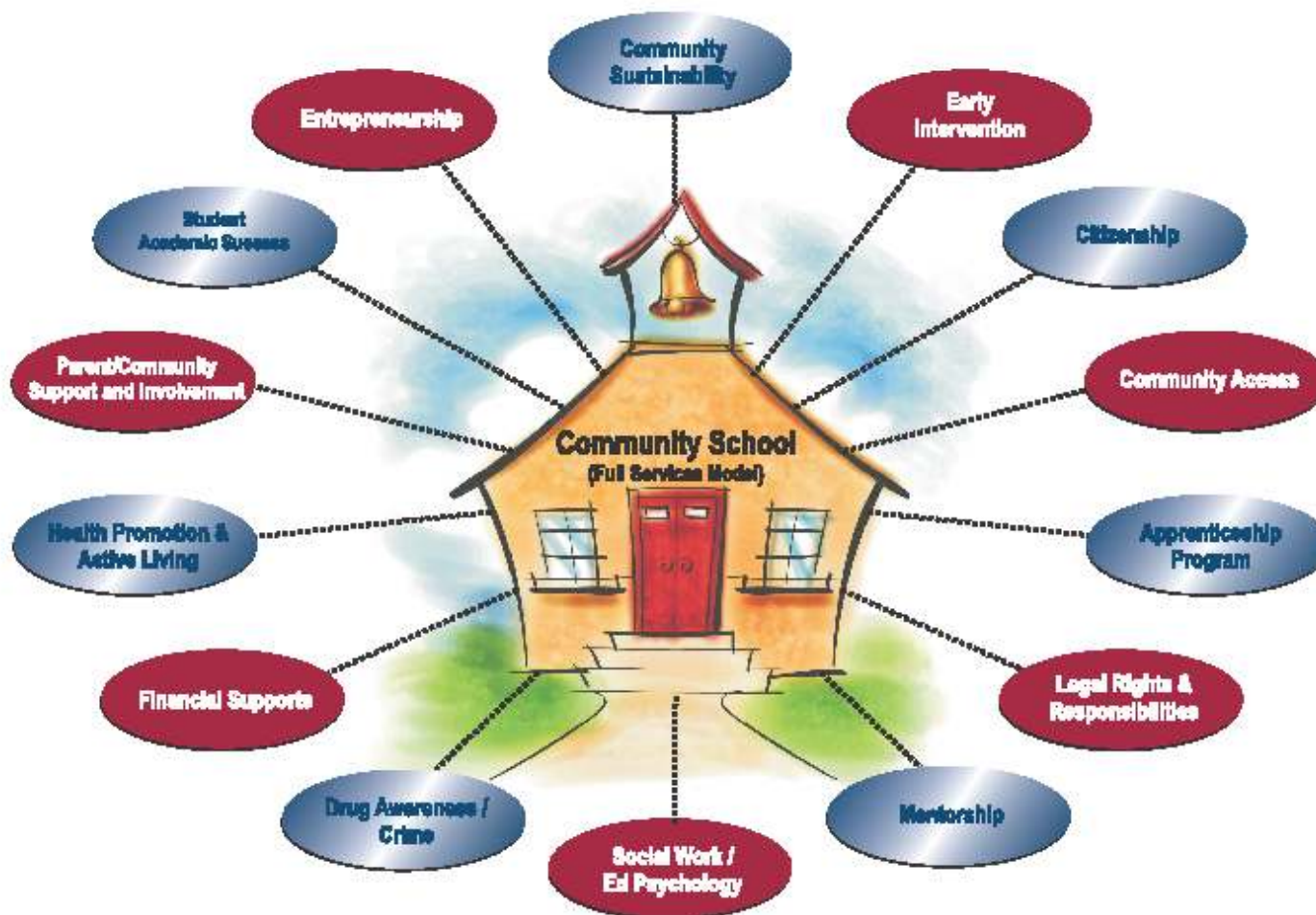
Dr. Leslie Harris Centre
Faculty of Education

APPENDIX B

SAMPLE COMPLEXITY MODEL OF MEETING THE HEALTHY LIFESTYLE NEEDS OF CHILD/YOUTH AND PROVIDING AN OPPORTUNITY FOR FAMILIES TO BE *SAFE, ENGAGED* AND *CHALLENGED* IN SCHOOL DECISIONS



Community School Full Services Model



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