

Fifth Annual Symposium on Small Towns  
***“Leveraging Resources to Improve  
Schools and Communities”***

June 5 – 6, 2007

On the campus of the University of Minnesota, Morris



# **ROUNDTABLE CONVERSATIONS**

## **ACTION ITEMS**

**Tuesday, June 5, 2007**

### **1. Building Bridges – School/Community Partnerships**

#### ***Action Items:***

1. Discover the real, both vocal and silent, aspirations of the community for our children and our community.
  - a. In an application inquiry process
  - b. MN Campus Compact seeks a community who wants to partner?
2. Support intergenerational opportunities in many forms to lift up both children and adults – not for but with, both benefiting. (i.e. Foster grandparents)
3. Form School Community Teams and strengthen the interdependence
4. Go to current local government summit
5. Who is teaching democracy?
  - a. Leadership – fewer capable leaders
  - b. Why don't we have more people running for office
  - c. Swimming pool issue – Opportunity to teach involvement and leadership.
6. Are there partners to engage in your quest?

### **2. Asset Development and Support – for Schools and Community Projects**

#### ***Action Items:***

##### Legislative

1. State develop a *new* funding formula for public schools
2. Develop more funding for public pre-school education

##### Human Resources

1. Develop volunteer resources to help the school, classrooms, and students
  - Utilization of senior citizens (retiring boomers)
  - Programs/training – peer helpers
  - Adult/student mentoring program
2. Promote local community pride

##### Other Asset Development

1. Train teachers in grant-writing, and work with school administrators and school board to receive grants
2. Develop and promote community/school foundations (independent of schools local philanthropy)
3. Promote Partnerships with chambers of commerce, businesses, and individuals in work of specific projects, issues

- a. Employment skills, mentoring, and technology
- b. New curriculum
- c. Venture programs
- 4. Partnerships with local non-profits and units of government
  - a. Greater utilization of physical school facilities
- 5. Schools stop “nickel and dime” fundraising – conduct annual unified school campaign

### **3. Food and Schools – Economics, Health and Wellness**

### **4. Making and Maintaining Connections with Former Students and Residents**

#### ***Action Items:***

- 1. CD Program – where banks provide an opportunity for people to buy certificates of CDs, deposit where for each CD purchased a tiny % goes to a community-based project. People from anywhere can buy “local” CDs.
- 2. Philanthropy education beginning at a young age.
- 3. Connect with former residents through class reunions to give community foundations.
- 4. Start a community foundation.
- 5. Maintain a capacity inventory of former students/residents.
- 6. Partner community-based organizations with service learners to assist in outreach/database/research for small towns.

### **5. Promoting a Culture of Entrepreneurship in Schools and Communities – Going, Going, Local**

#### ***Action Items***

- 1. E-Club – (Entrepreneurship Club) If there are local community network clubs (i.e. Staples, St. Cloud) Invite students to participate in or build E-Club in schools – invite local business owners to work with students (education, networking) about entrepreneurship.
- 2. Implement Collaboration between Business Education Class to teach entrepreneurship start with superintendent to gain support teachers working with business owners to understand businesses – building in entrepreneurship into business education classes. Having students working with businesses.
- 3. Schools need to link to resources within region that may help to promote entrepreneurship (i.e. inventors congress – Redwood Falls)
- 4. Succession Planning and Entrepreneurship. Business owners working with students. Showing what opportunities within community
- 5. Resources Directory
  - a. Ideas on schools/communities entrepreneurship
  - b. Resources available for entrepreneurs
- 6. Developing Infrastructure
  - a. Investment – Angel Investment.

### **6. Energy Efficiencies – Going, Going, Green**

### **7. Opportunities with Downsizing – Going, Going, Going?**

#### ***Action Items***

- 1. Manage regionalism while making use of all locations in the geography.
  - a. Small town residents shouldn’t always be the ones who have to “go there”
  - b. Strategically locate meetings and events in a variety of places; also locating things in different jurisdictions throughout a city.

2. Stop the mentality that forward movement = urbanity. Consider how rural areas can be future-looking and forward moving through technology and other endeavors.
3. Instill pride in all communities – regardless of whether there is a school there. Ideas included:
  - a. Have citizens become tour guides. “I saw our town through a foreigner’s eyes. It opened mine.”
  - b. Have kids take pictures of their town.
  - c. Use technology /You Tube to help communities document the town’s assets and pride.
  - d. Monitor conversations in home and public so that they don’t have a negative hue. School classrooms can start that conversation shift by bringing out the perspective of the students.
4. Look at structural shifts and policy and voting changes that could support change.
  - a. Small schools can become magnet schools or specialized schools or satellite schools if a regional center can handle administrative structures.
  - b. Currently, dollars follow geographies. A new model could have the small schools contract with other schools to provide services. (CK...I’m not sure I documented this the way you said it)
  - c. Election cycles are short but visioning is long. This creates an atmosphere where there is a bias against change.
5. Consider the psychological barriers that prevent such changes. Apply pressure and support. (Who are the best entities to do that?)
6. Repurpose school buildings so that communities thrive. Consider how the school facility can work with all needed jurisdictions and needs to provide space for that. Make public school the public center. (Hoffman, MN example.)
7. Think multi-jurisdictionally.
8. Action – change the mindset. The school does not define a community. How do we redefine our community, all the while really looking/taking care of the children so that families want to live there?
9. Initiate conversation and regionalism.
10. Engage school staff/teachers and administrators more in community groups.
11. Bring the regional centers to the small towns.
12. Repurposing the schools that are left in a community.

### ***Other Notes***

1. What is Regional?  
When can an area (region) no longer downsize...travel distances get too great?
2. Would the “Little House on the Prairie” system work? Multiple grades in one classroom.
3. Is it true that “as the school goes, so goes the community”?
4. MN has enough facilities...not enough students.
5. What do communities do with closed schools...? Can schools turn them into something else? Housing, incubation, daycare, etc.
6. Can schools look at “going their own”? i.e. have learning happen in nursing homes with nurses and college staff to get youth interested in a medical facility.
7. School Staff – how do you get them involved in community?
8. How do we get community and teachers engaged with each other?

\*Research\* Development fund to do new initiatives. Set money aside every year.

## **8. Student Involvement in Communities – The Power of Youth**

### ***Action Items***

1. Engagement in a sense of place.

2. Engage students and communities in critical thinking and creative thinking.
3. Venues to share ideas
4. Promote benefits of service learning for school funding.
5. Learning Center for Youth – Retired teachers/community members to teach as well as peer mentors.
6. What can we do to ensure we are not “using” students?
  - a. Working toward a goal
  - b. Truly valued
  - c. Fits the students’ interest
  - d. Allows a student to expand interests
  - e. Mutually beneficial
7. Explore the thought of a youth Policed Community Center / Learning Center

***Other Notes***

Benefits of the youth on community adds energy keeps students home

Benefits of community in youth teaches community involvement

**9. Staying Flexible – Embracing Lifelong Learning and Changing Demographics**

***Action Items***

1. One person at a time model behavior
2. Start Young
3. We are all responsible for these changes
4. Encourage life long learning from day 1 to the last day.
5. Educate people about the value of education in early childhood
6. Service-learning – a need for hands on learning
7. Support for older adults to return to workforce to start new business
8. Vital Aging Network (VAN) – education keeps us vital
9. Housing options for older adults in smallest rural towns
10. Increase the intergenerational learning and activities – anti-separation.
11. Library – bookmobile – supplement with other services (literary focus) i.e. white earth Ind Res.
12. When is a small town too small, attitudes getting in the way
13. How to bring minorities into the mix
  - a. Diversity dinners (break bread)
  - b. Trade lunches
  - c. Its much more work for teachers
    - i. Immigrants
    - ii. Refugees
    - iii. Term “people of color”
14. Economic opportunities for new MN
  - a. Focus on kids

***Other Notes***

Society view about EC and education – lack of understanding of its importance, investing in the future

Citizens are not seeing concrete change, victims of mentality of schools

Ed should include all ages, from birth to old age.

Mentoring helps adults with depression, has better health and young parents gain from their mentoring and baby gains from mom being a better parent. It is a win/win situation for everyone.

Intergenerational learning is a win/win situation, it keeps the elderly vital and helps younger people from day 1 to the last day of life that education is important.

Shunning takes place in many small communities, all fear and ignorance – begins in early childhood.

Poverty is another reason for discrimination as well as incarcerated parents, not just the race of a person.

If parents pay for something in the school – is it a “public school”

## **10. Changing Roles and New Models: The Co-evolution of Communities and Schools**