Balsz Community Scan
Part B: Scan Methods, Findings, and Resources Toolbox

December, 2012
Minor Edits: October, 2013

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Introduction

In Fall of 2011, ASU’s Partnership for Community Development (PCD) entered into a collaboration with Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) to conduct a community scan to inform the Balsz Promise Neighborhood initiative. The vision of the Balsz Promise Neighborhood initiative is to create “a comprehensive and seamless cradle-to-college-to-career continuum to improve educational and developmental outcomes for the children and youth of the community.”

A fundamental tenet of the emerging vision was that all elements of the Balsz community must be engaged if the educational and developmental outcomes of education are to be maximized. Thus, the responsibility for building a thriving learning environment rests not solely with the schools, but with the entire community. There are many players: individuals, families, businesses, faith communities, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, service clubs, and many other community-based organizations. As the old adage goes, “It takes a whole community to make a community whole.” The basic premise is that all aspects of community life – and all the individuals and organizations within it – boldly shape the destiny of the children and youth of a community.

Many partners where assembled to provide leadership for this Balsz Promise Neighborhood initiative. These included but were not limited to Valley of the Sun United Way, Balsz Elementary School District (BESD), Communities in Schools AZ, Camelback High School, GateWay Early College High School, Gateway Community College, Educare Arizona, ASU – Partnership for Community Development, ASU - Educational Outreach and Student Services, KAET - Channel 8 Educational Outreach – ASSET, Chicanos Por La Causa, City of Phoenix Department of Human Services, City of Phoenix Department of Neighborhood Services, the Lindon Park and the Greater Orangedale Neighborhood Associations, Boys & Girls Club of Metropolitan Phoenix, Southwest Human Development, Literacy Volunteers of Maricopa County, and UMOM New Day center. The partnership structure continues to expand over time with an ever-increasing roster, and emerging support from entities such as Ellis Center for Educational Excellence, Apollo Group/University of Phoenix, Stardust Foundation, Desert Schools Federal Credit Union, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Administration for Children and Families and others.

The ASU Partnership for Community Development’s Balsz Community Scan was commissioned by VSUW to gain perspective on community assets and challenges, as well as what the Balsz community senses are barriers and opportunities for enhancing the educational and developmental outcomes for its children and youth. VSUW and the PCD elected to use an Asset-Based Community

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Development (ABCD) model for conducting the scan, which is designed "to empower the community to establish its own vision."\(^2\)

The ABCD model assumes that the answers for community challenges rest in the community, and not within institutions and traditional community service structures. While realistically identifying and addressing challenges within any given community, the focus is on identifying and organizing the many gifts and assets that abound within every community – challenged or not. This perspective is ultimately used to select and implement effective community development strategies that both meet community needs and build on community strengths.

This report serves as Part B of the community scan – one of three components of the Balsz Community Scan. All three components are available on the ASU Partnership for Community Development website (pcd.asu.edu).

Part A summarizes key findings of the results of community conversations conducted during the scan, and is intended to serve as a tool for creating community conversations and action around the Balsz Promise Neighborhood goal of creating pathways for success for the children and youth of the community.

Part C is a repository of key statistical data that summarizes the socio-demographic structure of the Balsz community, as well as key institutional and organizational assets of the community – including but not limited to educational organizations, faith communities, government agencies, nonprofit organizations, businesses, service clubs and other community-based organizations. It was built to serve as a primer for quickly assembling insight on the residents, organizations and land use patterns that give shape to the community.

This report, Part B, serves four primary functions:

1. To offer detail on the methodologies utilized for the community scan. The scan included a mix of community conversations, national best practices research, community vital signs assessment, and community asset mapping.

2. To further expand upon the results of community conversations summarized in Part A of the scan.

3. To offer resources from national best practices research that might be helpful to the community as it seeks to create action that will expand pathways for the success of its children and youth.

4. To serve as a connection between Parts A and C of the scan, by combining insights from the community conversations (Part A) with insights from the vital signs assessment and community asset mapping process (Part C).

The Balsz Community Scan was built around the premise that, by working together, many things can be done to ensure the success of our children and youth in the Balsz community. Indeed, the primary key to success is when schools, families, and the community as a whole all work together to build pathways toward success.

As noted in Part A of the scan, the community needs a vision for what it hopes to accomplish and how to get there. The vision is yet to be built by the community. As it does so, a sense of the promise, purpose, and power that surrounds such a process of vision-building can be gained by studying the perspectives of those who have been on the same journey in neighborhoods just like Balsz around the country. Let us listen to their voices, and be inspired to open new pathways of hope and success for the children and youth of our own community.

Metaphorically speaking an entire library of literature on School / Family / Community partnerships is available to an interested reader. Many interesting titles are presented at the end of this part of the scan. For the time being, we present some food for thought that was written by leading scholars in this field:

‘The evidence is consistent, positive and convincing: Families and communities have a major influence on their children's achievement in school and through life ... When schools build partnerships with families and communities that respond to their concerns and honor their contributions, they are successful in sustaining connections that are aimed at improving student achievement.’
(Ferguson, 2005c)

‘Collaboration that involves the home (parents and other family members), school (teachers, school administrators, and other educators), and community (health and human service providers, business representatives, and other community members) has been heralded as an effective way to reform and improve educational services for our children.’
(Molly, Fleming, Rodriguez, Saavada, Tucker, & Williams, 1995)
School-community partnerships can be defined as the connections between schools and community individuals, organizations, and businesses that are forged to promote students' social, emotional, physical, and intellectual development.' (Sanders, 2001)

Engagement among families, schools, and the community is a shared responsibility. It reflects the many different ways in which families, community organizations, and schools engage with and support one another to ensure that every child is academically successful. It is continuous throughout a child's life and happens everywhere that children learn: at home, in school, and in the community. It supports the creation of multiple and complementary ways that children learn and grow from cradle to career. And it recognizes and encourages the role family and community play in advocating for educational quality and opportunity for all children.' (Ferguson, Jordan, & Baldwin, 2010)

A community school is a place and a set of partnerships connecting school, family, and community. A community school is distinguished by its integrated focus on academics, youth development, family support, health and human services, and community development. Its curriculum emphasizes real world learning through community problem solving and service. By extending the school day and week, it reaches families and community residents. The community school is uniquely equipped to develop its students into educated citizens ready and able to give back to their communities and to strengthen families and communities.' (Coalition for Community Schools: http://www.communityschools.org)

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. In these schools, an integrated focus on academic and family support, health and social serves, and youth and community development leads to improved student learning, strong families, and healthier communities. Community schools are open to everyone – all day, including evenings and weekends. Community-based organizations or public institutions often work as lead agencies in community schools, helping to mobilize community assets and support student success.' (Bank, Berg, & Melaville, 2006)
‘Community schools are vehicles for aligning the assets of students, families, teachers, and the community around a common goal – improving the success of young people. Community schools purposefully integrate academics, health, and social services; youth and community development; and community engagement – drawing in school partners with resources to improve student and adult learning, strengthen families and promote healthy communities.’ (Blank & Pearson, 2010)

‘So education has a new scope and a new task. Education is here conceived as a function of many institutions in the community, the church, the school, and all other social organizations with a program of public or semipublic activities.’ (Longo, 2007)

‘The neighborhood is a place dense with relationships, rich with history, and memories, and alive with learning the skills, values and aptitudes needed for an interdependent world. Everyone is expected and invited to be a teacher, a learner and a co-creator of the common good. We are trying to create a community alive with learning.’ (Longo, 2007)
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Part B Organization

Part B of the Balsz Community Scan is organized to follow the structure and themes of Part A.

Part A serves as a facilitator of community conversation – providing concise summaries of the core themes emerging from conversations with community members and key informants included in the study. In Part B, we provide more detailed narratives regarding the results of the community conversations. We also include tools and resources from best practices literature and websites that can further inform the process of community visioning and action planning. And, we draw connections to the results of the Scan’s community vital signs and asset-mapping processes presented in Part C.

Part B is organized into five major sections:

Section I: Scan Methods

This section details the four methodologies utilized in the Balsz Community scan: community vital signs assessment, community asset mapping, community conversations, and review of national best practices in school, family and community partnership building for student success. The blending of the four research approaches is best captured in this report (Part B of the overall scan). It places the results of community conversations within the context of local quantitative data about the community as well as national best practices.

Section II: Balsz as a Community

The second section provides an introduction to the Balsz community, an area geographically defined by the boundaries of the Balsz Elementary School District in east central Phoenix, Arizona. It provides a snapshot of the socio-economic qualities of the community as well as the assets of the community. This section directly corresponds to material found on pages 4-5 of Part A of the Scan.

Section III: Chapters of the Balsz Story

The third section provides further details on the results of the community conversations that were summarized in Part A of the Scan. It closely follows the flow of Part A – describing in sequential order each of the themes and sub-themes captured by the “Chapters of the Balsz Story”. At the same time, this section offers further reflection questions to energize future community conversations. This
section directly corresponds to the material found on pages 9 through 33 of Part A of the Scan.

**Section IV: Next Steps**

The fourth section expands the “Next Steps” framework presented on page 37 of Part A of the Scan. Drawing on “best practices” literature, it provides further guidance on how the Balsz community can work together to ensure that new pathways of success are created for its children and youth. Manuals, worksheets, and toolkits are reviewed that would help the community move through the five-step process of:

- Building relationships
- Formulating vision
- Tapping resources effectively
- Acting collaboratively, and
- Engaging in ongoing learning

**Section V: Resources Toolbox**

The final section contains a list of useful resources that will empower community members with the tools and insights necessary to create effective change. There are two components to this section. First, we present a more comprehensive list of resources that would be particularly helpful in addressing each of the twelve themes reviewed in Section III. Second, we offer a list of resources that point the reader to best practices in creating effective school, family and community partnerships. This section directly relates to page 35 of Part A of the scan. Armed with these resources, community members are best equipped to getting involved, making a difference, and helping our children and youth succeed.
Section I: Scan Methods

Research Approach

Four methodologies were utilized to build the Balsz Community Scan: community vital signs assessment, community asset mapping, community conversations, and review of national best practices in school, family and community partnership building for student success. The role of each is detailed below.

Community Vital Signs Assessment

At the core of every community assessment is an analysis of available data on socio-demographic and economic indicators that define the community, its residents, and its organizations. Examples of such data include: household composition, income indicators, health and public safety indicators, school performance measures, and other economic and life quality indicators. This methodology calls for assembling what is known about variables that have bearing on the vitality of the community. Insights that emerged from this methodology are described in detail in pages 10 through 73 of Part C of the Scan.

Community Asset Mapping

The asset-based community development (ABCD) framework calls for creating desired community transformations by making effective use of the many assets within the community - including its people, facilities, institutions, programs and services. The Balsz Community Scan methodology included a process for creating a comprehensive inventory of these assets. The results of this process are described in detail in pages 64 through 168 of Part C of this scan.

Community Conversations

A typical feature of most asset-based community development (ABCD) scans is to create a variety of opportunities for extensive conversation with the residents and organizations comprising the fabric of the community. These conversations take place in many forms, including one-on-one conversations, focus groups, town halls, or neighborhood meetings. The Balsz Community Scan process included both focus groups (with parents, school administrators, youth and one community group) and key informant interviews. Collectively, these methods offered a view into the prevailing concerns, hopes and aspirations of community members – both in general and in the particular context of helping children and youth of the community succeed. The major themes emerging from these methods are summarized in Part A of the scan, and are reviewed in greater detail on pages 21 through 58 of this report (part B of the scan).
Review of National Literature and Best Practices

The Balsz Community Scan was anchored in a comprehensive analysis of nationally recognized literature on and “best practices” in community development and school, family and community partnerships. The methods used in the comprehensive review ensured that (a) core insights of asset-based community development methodology were reflected in the preparation of this report, (b) nationally accepted approaches to community assessment were followed, and (c) core insights about effective action plan development and asset-based intervention strategies were considered. It was equally important that useful resources, toolkits and guidebooks were reviewed and offered to the community as forms of empowerment to create effective change. Such insights from the national literature and best practices are embedded throughout the entirety of Parts A and B of this scan. In particular, Sections IV and V of this report (part B of the scan) review resources that have direct bearing on the twelve themes emerging from community conversations - as well as resources particularly useful in building school, family and community partnerships that create pathways to success for children and youth.

Sources of Data for Community Conversations

The Community Conversation data presented in summary fashion in Part A of the Scan – and presented in more detail in this section B of the scan came from a series of focus groups gatherings and key informant surveys conducted during the period of April through July of 2012.

Focus group participants and key informants were selected in consultation with the Valley of the Sun United Way and the Balsz Elementary School District Office. The PCD team would like to express deep appreciation and thanks to everyone who took part in these conversations for their contribution and for bringing up inspiring ideas.

Focus Groups

Fifteen focus groups were conducted to represent a broad range of Balsz community elementary, junior high and high school children, parents of these children, teachers, administrators, and adult residents with no direct connections to school activities. In total, 115 community residents participated in the focus groups. Acceptable focus group protocol for community scanning processes was followed³. The protocol includes commitment to confidentiality – participant names are held confidential, and data are presented only in aggregate form.

Table 1 presents a summary of the dates, places and participant groups, and number of participants in each focus group. Focus group meeting times ranged from 20 minutes (2 student focus groups) to 90 minutes, depending on the participants’ availability and size of the group. The larger groups tended to meet the full 90 minutes. All but three focus groups were conducted entirely in English. Three conversations that took place with parents during their Coffee Talk meetings required a Spanish-English interpreter that the research team did not know about until the beginning of the first parent focus group. The organizer of the Coffee Talks and some parents stepped in and provided a continuous translation of what was said.

As is true with all community-based qualitative research processes, it cannot be said that focus group participants are representative of the entire community from a statistical perspective. At the same time, participants were chosen to represent the diversity of residents comprising the community (family structures, cultures, age, employment, neighborhoods, background characteristics). Additionally, these community conversations were held in a variety of locations throughout the community in order to maximize the variation and diversity of individuals included in the focus groups.

Table 1. Focus groups Conducted for the Balsz Community Scan

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>#</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Month of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Brunson Lee Elementary School</td>
<td>14 parents of Brunson Lee students</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Brunson Lee Elementary School</td>
<td>12 parents of Brunson Lee students</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Orangedale Junior High Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>4 parents of Orangedale students and 3 residents who come to Orangedale “Coffee-Talks”</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>David Crockett Elementary School</td>
<td>10 parents of Crockett students</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>David Crockett Elementary School</td>
<td>7 Crockett students who are thinking of applying to college</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Griffith Elementary School</td>
<td>7 Griffith students who are thinking of applying to college</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Orangedale Junior High Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>13 Orangedale students who are thinking of applying to college</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>#</td>
<td>Location</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Month of Interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Camelback High School</td>
<td>9 Camelback students who are thinking of applying to college (all former Orangedale students)</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>David Crockett Elementary School</td>
<td>5 Crockett students who are not sure about applying to college</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Griffith Elementary School</td>
<td>4 Griffith students who are not sure about applying to college</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Orangedale Junior High Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>7 Orangedale students who are not sure about applying to college</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>David Crockett Elementary School</td>
<td>3 Crockett teachers</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Griffith Elementary School</td>
<td>6 Griffith teachers</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Orangedale Junior High Preparatory Academy</td>
<td>6 Orangedale teachers and 1 administrator</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Balsz Elementary School District Administrative Offices</td>
<td>7 residents not directly connected with school activities</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Key Informant Interviews**

In-depth personal interviews were conducted with strategically chosen community members who have specialized forms of knowledge of the needs, aspirations, challenges, services and programs of the Balsz community. In total, interviews with 19 key informants were conducted. Participants were strategically selected to represent different sectors serving the community: government, non-profit, education, faith-based, community advocacy or volunteer groups, and business. Acceptable key informant interview protocol for community scanning processes was followed. As is true for the focus group process, the protocol includes commitment to confidentiality – participant names are held confidential, and data are presented only in aggregate form.

Table 2 presents a summary of the organizational or community role of the informant, and time of the interview. The interviews ranged from 20 minutes to 60

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minutes each. The themes that emerged from these conversations detailed on pages 21 though 58 of this part of the scan.

In summary, a combined total of 133 Balsz community residents and leaders of organizations active in the community participated in the focus groups and key informant methods. The distribution of participants is summarized in Table 3.

Table 2. Key Informant Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Key Informant Organization or Community Context</th>
<th>Month of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Non-Profit Organizations</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Communities in Schools of Arizona</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Scottsdale Healthcare Clinic</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3, 4</td>
<td>Boys and Girls Clubs of Metropolitan Phoenix (2 Key Informants)</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Government Agencies</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>City of Phoenix Neighborhood Services Department</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>City of Phoenix Parks and Recreation Department</td>
<td>April 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>City of Phoenix Police Department (Central Precinct)</td>
<td>May 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>City of Phoenix Fire Department</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Businesses</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>La Quinta Inn</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Desert Schools Federal Credit Union</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Chinese Cultural Center</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Discovery Triangle Development Corporation</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Faith Communities</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>St. Agnes Parish</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>St. Joseph Maronite Church</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Educational Institutions</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Balsz Elementary School District</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Gateway Community College</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Community Leaders / Advocates</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Community Advocate</td>
<td>June 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18, 19</td>
<td>Neighborhood Leaders (2 Key Informants)</td>
<td>July 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition to the above informant interviews, shorter interviews about the community were conducted with the community members listed below. Throughout the text of the scan they are referred to as key informants because they have provided resident information about the community.
Table 3. Additional Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Month of Interview</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1 Costumer at East Side Bar and Grill</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Resident at Red Rox Condominium</td>
<td>March 2012</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Adjustments for Dual Contribution

Lastly, because two key informants also took an active part in the focus group with residents engaged in community planning, and one parent took part in two different Coffee Talk focus groups, we are making adjustments for the total count.

Table 4. Summary of Focus Group and Key Informant Interviews

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technique</th>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Total number of participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Focus Groups</td>
<td>Students</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Parents</td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Teachers</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Residents Active in Community Planning</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Key Interviews</td>
<td>Key Informants</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 Additional Interviews</td>
<td>Residents</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Adjustment for dual contribution</td>
<td>-3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Total</td>
<td>133</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions Used to Guide Focus Group and Key Informant Conversations

Participants in the focus groups and key informant interviews were asked specific questions about community points of pride, assets, challenges, things that are working well, schools, children and youth, and potential pathways for success in meeting the needs of children and youth. The critical incidents technique was utilized in one of the interviews as a means of asking participants for moments they felt especially good, especially bad, especially connected, especially disconnected, especially safe, especially unsafe, especially well-treated, and especially poorly treated by a person in the community.

Specifically, nine framing questions were utilized to guide the conversations in all focus groups and key informant interviews. The nine framing questions were:
(1) What are the best things in your community?

(2) What kind of community would you like to see here?

(3) What things do not work well in your community?

(4) How can people and organizations work together to improve things in your own community?

(5) What thoughts come to mind when you think of the children and youth of our community – positive thoughts and challenges?

(6) What thoughts come to mind when you think of schools in your community? What is working well? What new things would you like to see in your schools?

(7) What messages do people in your community send to children and youth?

(8) What signals should your community send to children and youth about how they can be successful in life?

(9) How can schools, families, and the community work together to help youth get on the trajectory of success?

The facilitators were all staff from the ASU Partnership for Community Development trained in focus group and key informant interview methods. Through a series of probes and sub-probes, rich conversations were created by the participants around each question in sequential order. The facilitators rigorously captured core themes of the conversations using formal scribing techniques. Some of the focus groups and key informant interviews were recorded electronically for later review. All data were transcribed using MS Word.

Analysis of the Data

Transcripts of the conversation data generated by 133 participants in focus groups and key informant interviews were open coded and prepared for submission to the NVivo qualitative analysis software - version 8. NVivo is a widely used software package that allows research to label, sort, and search flows of conversation in order to extract core themes that emerged during the conversations. In the case of our community conversations, NVivo revealed a total of 12 main themes emerging from the participants. These are the twelve themes that define the 12 chapters of Part A of the Scan, and are summarized briefly there.

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Further NVivo analyses revealed that each of the twelve general themes carried three core sub-dimensions - or sub-themes. Thus, the full dimensionality of the community conversations can be understood as being captured by a total of 12 general themes, and a total of 36 sub-themes (three sub-themes for each theme).

Each of the twelve general themes and the thirty-six sub-themes are recorded in part A of this Scan. The twelve broad themes are captured by the chapter titles (see page 9 of Part A), and the three sub-themes for each chapter are posted at the beginning of the relevant chapter in the section entitled Scan Findings.

**Community Conversations Data in this Report (Part B of Scan)**

Sections II and III of this report, as noted earlier, present more details about the results of the community conversations than was captured by Part A of the scan. Section II incorporates exemplars from the community conversations that pertain to the “Our Community” portion of Part A of the scan (see pages 4 and 5). Section III mirrors the 12 chapters of Part A (see pages 9 through 36), but provides greater detail about the substance of the conversations as reported by the NVivo analyses. At the same time, insights from the community vital signs assessment reported in Part C of the scan that link to concerns and aspirations expressed in the community conversations are highlighted.
Section II: Balsz as a Community

What is a community? One way to answer this question is to define a community geographically – for example as boundaries of a school district. Yet, other organizations and institutions that lie outside of the geographic boundary can contribute – and therefore be counted as assets for the community.

Scan Findings

Cultural Diversity

- The district is home to a very diverse group of residents – some have referred to it as the “United Nations”. Nearly 27% of the residents were born outside of the United States. Some are refugees from developing countries. Community members are very aware that cultural and language diversities pose new challenges for community visioning and development.

The Balsz Elementary School District, located east central Phoenix, is home to more than 29,000 residents. The geographic roots are diverse, and scattered across the globe. For example, nearly 4.5% of the population is of Sub-Saharan African ancestry. Those with Hispanic heritage form the largest ethnic group. Nearly forty-five percent (44.4%) self-report that heritage. As revealed in community conversations, residents are aware of this diversity. In the words of one adult, ‘This is a very diverse community - It's like the United Nations there. You’ve got the Somalis, East Africans. Central America... Folks from Europe...’. According to one teacher, up to 18 different languages are being spoken at Crocket Elementary school. BESD even has its own international center: the COFCO Chinese Cultural Center.

Some students and many parents struggle with elementary English proficiency and some do not want to be involved in community life fearing the U.S. and State of Arizona’s strict immigration policies. Of the 7,278 foreign-born residents, 71.4% are not U.S. citizens. In community conversations, residents emphasized the need for English / Spanish communication channels and ESL classes for non-English speakers.

At the same time, the community’s diversity may be understood as the community’s most valuable asset. One key informant observed, ‘Because of how diverse the population is, there is lots of opportunity for them to know and learn about each other and the world as a whole.’
**Relationships in the Community**

- Not all inter-neighbor relationships in the community are ideal, but residents generally report that they are fond of their neighbors and report that people tend to reach out and help their neighbors. At the same time, residents who have lived in the community longer tend to perceive a waning of social interaction among neighbors and community residents in general.

  In community conversations, residents often recalled numerous instances of mutual help and neighbor-to-neighbor assistance. One adult, speaking in reference to his school-aged child, was particularly proud of the fact that ‘All the people know each other now. If something happens, people help each other out.’ Another adult, comparing the Balsz community to others observed, ‘Unlike in other parts of Phoenix, people in the community interact with one another.’

  According to the U.S. Census, nearly half (47.1%) of the households in the Balsz community are comprised of relatives living together (spouses, children, and other relatives). Yet, there seems to be a sense from the community conversations that that the homes could be more welcoming to others in the neighborhood. As one resident put it, ‘I know a lot of people in my street, but never had more than one or two in my house. And that’s my fault, because I was a working mom and had no interest in it. Now, I would really like a sense of community.’ The general message from the conversations is that community members desire to do activities together and create opportunities for people to get to know and engage with each other.

**Attachment of Residents to the Community**

- Among adults, there is a sense that people are leaving Balsz community because they do not feel a part of the community - or because they wish to leave the challenges that they feel plague the community. Moreover, many residents in Balsz are still recovering from the effects of the economic recession and thus are seeking opportunities elsewhere.

  Data from the American Community Survey reveal a relatively high transient resident population within the Balsz community. Indeed, in 2009 alone, one-quarter (25%) of residents moved into the community. One theme emerging from the community is that promoting conditions for long-term tenure of residents must be a priority. As one adult put it, ‘The middle class needs to stay in the neighborhood’.

  Another dimension of community attachment is the relative sense of pride that residents have in being a member of the community. Community conversations reveal that this dimension is high. As one key informant put it, ‘In Balsz the sense of pride is what makes us a community.’ Another key informant acknowledged the community's desire to thrive and take control: ‘It is really a community that is trying to take back ownership of its self.’ A student from Camelback High School highlighted the importance to ‘improve ourselves and recognize that this is our neighborhood.’
Abundant Assets

- Along many dimensions, and from many different perspectives, the Balsz community is abundant with assets. Assets include seniors, family members, parents, children and youth, adults, and schools, non-profit organizations, faith communities, businesses, government agencies, neighborhood associations and many other community-based organizations.

950 businesses including:
- Desert Schools Federal Credit Union
- IO Data Center
- La Quinta Inn
- East Side Bar and Grill
- Marriott-Airport
- Sonic Drive-In
- Jamba Juice
- Frito-Lay
- Apollo
- Hunt Construction,
- General Dynamics
...and many others

Health & Human Services Providers
- Educare Arizona
- Southwest Human Development
- UMOM New Day Centers
- Valley of the Sun United Way
- Terros
- Arizona Center for Disability Law
- Balsz Community Education Foundation
- Advanced Urgent Care

NOAH
- Boys and Girls Club [planned]
- YMCA [planned]

Faith Communities
- St Joseph Maronite Catholic Church
- Church of Jesus Christ of LDS
- St. Agnes Catholic Parish
- Muslim Community Mosque
- Phoenix Christian Assembly

Associations and other organizations
- Greater Orangedale Neighborhood Association
- Lindon Park Neighborhood Association
- Discovery Triangle
- Phoenix Zoo
- Desert Botanical Garden
- City of Phoenix Saguaro Branch Library
- Pueblo Grande Museum
...and many others
Section III: Chapters of the Balsz Story

An analysis of the recurring themes expressed by Balsz community residents and leaders that participated in the scan’s community conversations identified 12 core themes. As noted earlier, the 12 themes formed the basis for the twelve Chapters of the Balsz Story identified in Part A of the scan.

Here, we follow the structure of the twelve Chapters of the Balsz Story – amplifying the summary statements featured in Part A with more content that emerged from the NVivo analyses of the community conversations. Each chapter in this report delineates each of the three sub-themes identified by the analyses. Each sub-theme, in turn, is followed by a short discussion capturing the major details of the community conversations relating to it.

The structure of each chapter is the following: (1) Scan findings, (2) start-up questions for further community conversations, to which all community members are invited, and (3) space for your notes.

Within each chapter, after the Scan Findings are presented, a series of Start-Up Questions that might be used to guide further community conversations are listed. These Start-Up Questions are offered by the lead investigators of the scan, after thoughtful reflection on the insights gleaned from learning from conversations with community residents and leaders throughout the study period – conversations well beyond those formally incorporated into the scanning process itself.

Finally, as noted on the last page of Part A of the scan, the Space for Your Notes sections emphasizes that personal reflection and engagement by community residents is “the most important step of them all” (see page 36 of Part A). To repeat what is recorded there: “It is about you. Getting involved in your own community. Making a difference. Helping our children and youth succeed. They are counting on you. Perhaps we should all follow the advice of a neighbor who gave input to this booklet. He sighed and then said, “Let’s get out of the meeting mentality and get into the action mentality.” What can you do to act? What are your unique gifts that you can share with others, share with our youth and children? How can you get involved?”
## The Chapters: Overview

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– Chapter 1 -
Our Kids: Our Hope

Children and youth are the future of every community. The better are the conditions for them to thrive, the higher the prospects for the community. To place children and youth at the center of community building may not always be easy but it is an investment that yields long-term benefits for all residents.

Scan Findings

Images of Children and Youth

- Children and youth in the community are full of energy, capable, and fun. However, their basic human needs, such as access to food or health care, are often not satisfied. They often lack the support and skills to achieve their goals in life.

Focus group and key informant participants, when speaking of children and youth, expressed their optimism as well as concern regarding the challenges that exist in the community.

Children and youth aged 0-19 comprise of 29% of Balsz population, according to the US 2012 Census. The 2012 Census also reveals that one of out two of the children under 18 (49.4%) lives in poverty. Key informants confirm the difficulties that children face: ‘Kids are struggling more now than they ever had’, and that they are ‘disadvantaged’. Despite these struggles, children in the community expressed energy and hopefulness during the community conversations. One of the elementary school teachers suggested that the ‘positive atmosphere and good attitude of children make substitute teachers want to come back to this school’. According to one key informant, ‘children are courageous … and challenged by those negative forces and what they think society thinks of them’.

The message was clear that that more opportunities were needed for children and youth to ‘make use of their energy’ and their ‘willingness to serve their community’. Participants felt that family units needed to be better supported to provide better conditions for children and youth in the home. One critical need pertains to multi-lingual development and support – often discussed was the need for more bi-lingual English-Spanish opportunities and translations.
Getting Older

- Parents are aware of the difficulties surrounding a child’s transition into being a teen. After 5th grade, there are misunderstandings and challenges in school. Test scores begin to drop. The children seem to need more help so that they do not fall behind.

All five BESD schools are Title I schools (at least 90% of the students receive free or reduced lunch) and face academic challenges as well. Some of the test scores reflect the difficulties of being Title I schools. According to the most recent Arizona School Report Card, BESD as a whole received a grade of B, with two of the elementary schools and the junior high school receiving a grade of C.

According to the participants, student challenges increase during 6th and 7th grade transitions - even for students who excelled previously. As one key informant stated, about this period: ‘What we have seen is there is a drop off academically, especially in math.’ Parents and teachers noted differences during these transitions. Parents stated that it is more difficult to approach teenagers, and that their older children are less likely to support their visits to schools. As one teacher put it, ‘the kids seem very loving and caring and as they grow up they become hardened.’ There was a pervasive sense that more support was needed for the inevitable challenges faced by parents and children alike as transitions are made into the teenage years.

On Their Own

- Parents want children to succeed and want to see hope for their future. At the same time, many of them are trying hard to make ends meet, and busy work schedules often prevent them from providing good supervision. The children need caring and positive adult role models, otherwise they are likely to make bad choices in life.

Scan participants felt that adults in the community cannot - and do not - spend enough time with their children and youth. One parent reinforced this idea by relying what her child once told her, ‘You gave me everything - skateboard [and other things]– but didn’t spend time with me!’ Yet it is clear that parents are struggling to make ends meet in ways that deflect their ability to be with their children: ‘Parents work long hours and kids are unsupervised.’ This only adds to the list of challenges, which include ‘food security, health issues, or just not having a caring adult that really is there.’ There are also few places outside the home that children can go to play under the supervision of caring adults.

As one adult put it, the lack of attention makes ‘children attention-getting behaviors are plentiful’. The general sense is that recognition and respect must be given to children. Participants frequently made note of the need to help establish relationships between youth and positive adults. At the same time, the future is hopeful. As one particularly engaged community volunteer mentioned, ‘We love and care about the youth and we will fight for them. Because our youth is our future.’
Start-Up Questions

• What comes to your mind when you think of children and youth in the Balsz Elementary School District?

• What do you most appreciate about children and youth in your community?

• What can best help students in 6th grade to stay up to date with school?

• What aspects of community life influence development of children and youth positively?

• What aspects of community life influence children and youth negatively?

• How can busy parents find time to spend with their children?

• What does ‘hope’ mean to you?

• How can adults step in as positive role models for children and youth?

• What helps parents communicate well with children and youth?

Space for Your Notes

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Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 1 are on pp. 70-71.
The messages sent to children by adults about success are mixed. Despite a strong desire on the side of the children to be supported and tapped on their shoulders, children and youth in the community encounter both encouraging and discouraging messages. Yet adults are crucial in helping children navigate through uncertainty.

**Scan Findings**

**What Children and Youth Want to Hear from Adults**

- Children and youth in the community desire to hear words of encouragement from adults. They want to be recognized as distinct individuals and want to be treated with respect. They also seek guidance, support, and understanding of their lifestyle.

A student in the community conversations petitioned to adults, ‘*Keep inspiring us to keep trying because even if you’re not doing good now, you will be better later.*’ While said in many ways, this was a common theme across many of the conversations. In order to be successful, students across all want to be encouraged by adults, respected when they speak up, and guided by adults so that they know that they are on the right path. As another student put it, they want to hear things like ‘*Be proud of yourself no matter what*’.

The young people in the conversations expressed the desire to have a voice and being valued for their own goals and aspirations. According to one, ‘*Listen to what I’m saying I want for my life. I have my own goals and dreams that I don’t want to be compared to my brother or sister’s lives*’. They stated that they do not want to be treated rudely. They seek guidance as well as correction. As one stated, they would like to be shown ‘*how not to do wrong things*’.”They would like adults to serve as role models and to ‘*Don’t let them fail...even when they think they’ve failed*.’
Words of Encouragement

- Students appreciate the encouraging messages that they receive from adults, especially when adults thank them for something they helped with in the neighborhood. Some children and youth mentioned that parents and teachers have high expectations for them.

Students in the community conversations emphasized that they ‘hear mainly good things’ from adults and take notice when neighbors appreciate their help, and compliment them by saying things like ‘They raised you right’. They also feel that that teachers support and care for them. And, they feel that they are being positively recognized when they participate in sports and other after-school activities.

Adult participants confirmed that they to encourage children and are aware of the importance of keeping a positive attitude. As one stated, ‘Don’t speak about the negative, speak about the positive.’ Another shared a story from her experience as a volunteer in a school: ‘I have boys who say “I wish I could be a super hero!” I say to them: “You know, you have super powers already” and then help them identify their unique qualities.’ One teacher described the difficulties for many students to accept praise. That teacher spoke to the power on ongoing reinforcement: ‘I keep telling them over and over again that they are smart and beautiful.’

Words of Discouragement

- At the same time, children and youth encountered misunderstandings, discouragement, stereotypes, and even fear from adults. According to the youth, some adults see children and youth as bullies, gangsters-to-be, and generally a cause of disorder in the community.

When discussions moved away from immediate families and classroom teachers, scan participants painted a darker picture. A common discussion point was that positive messaging was – more often than not – mixed with negative or discouraging ones. Students frequently expressed their bewilderment from being blamed for things they did not do. They also spoke to the debilitating effects from adults that don’t believe in them or their potential for success. Some of the children stated they were called ‘mini-gangsters’ or ‘annoying’ by adults.

One female student shared that, during an elevator ride in the library, an adult gave her a strange look and said, ‘I am glad I didn’t grow up in your generation!’ She reflected that it ‘felt really bad.’

It was clear that many of the adult participants were aware that such negative messaging exists in the community. One adult stated that a highly negative attribute of the community was ‘the fear that many people have; especially for young people.’ A teacher confirmed the negative attitude: ‘It is the wrong message to send to the kids, that we often hear: “to get out of here”. There are many options available to them. They need to be told and need to be mentored and inspired by others.’
Start-Up Questions

- What are your hopes for your child’s future?
- What expectations do you have for your child?
- In what places in the community can children and youth meet with mentors?
- What are some ways to encourage children and youth?
- How do adults treat children and youth in the community?
- How do you help them meet those expectations?
- What words of advice for life would you give to a child?
- How can the community strengthen encouraging messages to young people and avoid words of discouragement?
- What positive and negative stories from your own childhood would you like to share with others?

Space for Your Notes

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Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 2 are on p. 71.
Chapter 3
Pathways to Success

There are many different pathways to achieve success in life. Getting education is an important pathway but not the only one. No matter what one does, children and youth should feel appreciated and see a meaning in their work. Otherwise, life may seem like a maze.

Scan Findings

Defining Success

- Adults define success in many ways. Some focus on tangible things like completing college, getting a job, working toward a career, or being debt-free. Others focus on more abstract things like achieving life goals. Some know that completing college can be important, but many do not see this goal as the only way to be successful in life.

All Balsz community members, regardless of age, view education as a pathway to success. Yet, education levels in the Balsz community are relatively low. According to the 2010 American Community Survey, over twenty percent (21.4%) of Balsz residents over 25 years of age do not have a high school diploma.

Yet, participants in the community conversations made it clear that achieving a college education is not the only way to define “success” for children and youth in the community. Alternative pathways to “success” included finding and retaining a stable job. In the words of one teacher, ‘Kids don’t realize that they have options for both college or training.’ One key informant at first had difficulty comprehending why certain students chose cosmetologist training to college enrollment - ‘But then I think, for these girls, it’s a career for them and that in a few years they’ll probably have kids and they’ll be able to support them.’ Several students displayed a similar attitude. They described success in terms of being able to ‘Get good money and to be able to pay every bill’ and ‘Not quitting, even if things are too hard’. One adult recognized that the definition of success can be subjective, ‘Whatever that means to that person. It might mean taking classes about photography, or decorating, or welding. For some people it may mean taking college classes, make sure that they read the newspaper every day, or they do research on all sorts of subjects with the Internet.’
Advice Given by Adults

- Many children and youth have parents, teachers and other adults in their life who give good advice on how to be successful - such as to work hard at school, not quit, keep focused, never stop learning, and be accountable. Unfortunately, not all young people receive such words of advice.

The following quotes summarize the kinds of advice that adults in the community conversations stated that they have provided to children and youth: 'First, always study and do work. Be respectful. Be brave and courageous and don’t fear', ‘Always continue to learn, always continue to be curious and to be informed’, and ‘Be always positive and focused on the future.' Students also reported hearing positive advice and gave the following examples: ‘Don’t do drugs’, ‘Get A’s’, ‘Hang out with the right people’, and ‘Don’t drop out of school.’

One adult described the steps that she has used to advise teenagers: ‘First I want to find out what their passion is. I asked them, what things have you found that really give you a good feeling about yourself? And then build on that because they are so busy trying to impress others with their badness.’

Yet, participants also made it clear that such positive words of advice are not being passed on through all adult-child interactions. When asked what messages adults send to children and youth, a teacher was not alone in responding, ‘Not much.’

How Can Adults Help Children and Youth be Successful

- Many parents want to help their children be successful by being sources of encouragement and support. Some would like to help with homework and create a good environment where children can play and be themselves. Oftentimes, however, parents do not know how to help their children.

Adult participants felt that much more needs to be done in mentoring children and youth, and in inviting positive role models into their lives. They would also like to see children and youth more active in community issues. In the words of one resident, adults need to ‘engage [youth] in the awesomeness of this community.’

Students are asking for more help with schoolwork and projects – a message that was strong and pervasive across schools. They would like to get broader perspective as well - they would like adults to ‘Teach us stuff about life.’ Parents would like to see more information campaigns related to college and opportunities for learning about, and acquiring, grants and scholarships. Many parents would like to be more helpful but feel they are not skilled enough to help on homework.

Overall, there is a sense that that the primary role of adults is to empower the youth. One adult said, to ‘empower [youth] to work for what they want. Not constantly giving the message that you’re less than.’ One clear message was that young people need more opportunities to meet adults who have been successful in their careers: such as firefighters, business owners, and health care professionals.
Start-Up Questions

- What are your thoughts about what makes a person successful?
- What are your hopes for your child’s future?
- How can parents, teachers, and other adults work together help children and youth to be successful in life?
- How can success stories be increasingly shared in the community?
- What are some different pathways to success?
- How can youth be engaged in the ‘in the awesomeness of this community’?
- What are the best ways to overcome youth crime and drug abuse?
- How can better encourage our children and youth to see the value of going to college?
- How can we ask colleges to better work with our children and youth so that they see the value of going to college?
- Is the success of our children and youth being appreciated in the community?
- How can we better connect children and youth with local professionals?

Space for Your Notes

Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 3 are on p. 72.
The family unit is traditionally the best source of support for nurturing strong and healthy children with clear vision for success. Parents have an indispensible role in the upbringing of their children. Yet many families in the community are struggling, which poses challenges for creating a nurturing environment.

Scan Findings

Families Struggling Financially

- A lot of families struggle financially. Low-income families lack access to healthy food, extracurricular activities for children, health care, and transportation options. These troubles have worsened during the recent economic recession.

The Balsz community is home to many low-income families. The effects of low income extend well beyond the capacity to purchase goods. It affects self-esteem, the ability of parents to spend time with their children, access to medical care, access to healthy food choices, and the capacity to provide a stable housing environment. In the community, over seventy percent (70.1%) of occupied housing units are rentals. Nearly eighty percent (79.3%) of owner-occupied housing units are paying a mortgage.

When participants were asked what the main barriers to community improvements were, the most frequent response was poverty. As key informant put it, 'In this community we hope that those low-income areas are able to see a change and become more of a middle class area.' Lack of financial resources directly influences the children’s welfare. In the words of one teacher, 'Families need food, basic services. When kids come to school hungry, they fall asleep as soon as they get here.' Furthermore, access to healthy food options, health insurance, and even basic needs like water, is limited. Some families do not have air-conditioning.

Overall, participants were aware of how the prevailing lack of resources can wear upon the psyche of children and youth. According to one teacher, the prevalence of rentals in the community and the inability for families to repair their houses ‘screams low expectations’ for children.
Parental Involvement and Support

- Many families are struggling simply to get by from day to day with bare necessities. This creates a focus on short-term survival goals and diverts families from the big picture need to help their children find pathways for success.

As one teacher put it, ‘All parents want their kids to succeed’. This truism is echoed over and over again by scholarly research. However, it is clear from the participants that many parents do not know how to help their children succeed. And it was noted that even parents who are motivated and have skills to do so lack the time necessary to help their children well. Again, families struggling with financial issues are necessarily focusing on earnings – often stringing together multiple jobs to sustain their households. Underscoring the bleakness of the financial picture, nearly forty percent (39.2%) of Balsz families with children under 18 live in poverty (2010 American Community Survey). Key informants consistently pointed to the dilemma of low parental involvement with the lives of their youth. As one stated, ‘Parents work a lot of hours and kids are unsupervised.’

Opinions were mixed on how poverty affects the parental motivation to become successful in school. On the one hand, in the words of one teacher, ‘Families in poverty don’t really send that message that education is not of high value.’ On the other hand, examples were offered of the opposite response. In the words of another teacher, ‘We have several neighborhoods and parents that are very active with their kids. I’ve worked in a lot of different neighborhoods and a lot of people think that because these are poorer neighborhoods that parents aren’t involved.’

Parents’ Skills

- All parents want their children to succeed, but they often do not know how to help them. Many parents have difficulties with English, and some are illiterate. Also, many parents have not had any experience with college or trade schools and do not know how to help the children learn more about these options.

As noted earlier, the Balsz community is a diverse community. This fact is partially reflected in the high percentage of English Language Learners in the four BESD elementary schools – percentages, which range from 23.6% to 39.9%. According to the participants, language barriers strongly interfere with parental involvement. One parent stated, ‘The classes are in English and some parents do not understand and cannot help.’ A teacher noted, ‘Parents cannot help students in school because they did not finish school themselves’.

Though these challenges do not exist for all families, scan participants made it clear that in order for youth to be successful, more effort must be put into encouraging parental involvement, and teaching parents how to help their children learn. As one teacher proclaimed: ‘We need to teach parents to be teachers.’
Start-Up Questions

• How are parents influencing their children's futures?

• What can the community do together to provide for families in need?

• What can help our families overcome financial hardships?

• How can we help parents to become more educated and skilled at helping their children be successful in school?

• What are most effective ways for schools to get information to parents?

• How can we as a community help supervise children who are left on their own?

• What will help parents to become more attached to our community?

• How can we get parents become better involved as volunteers in the schools?

• What connections can be made between families to encourage families to help each other in raising children?

Space for Your Notes

Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 4 are on pp. 72-74.
Chapter 5
The Nurturing School

Starting at an early age, the school setting becomes an important environment for a child’s socialization. Teachers and peers become the child’s new companions for many formative years. Therefore, it is crucial that the school provides a safe and inspiring atmosphere for learning.

Scan Findings

Schools as Safe Havens

- Schools in the community, including Gateway Community College, are seen as safe places and points of pride in the community. Children and youth trust teachers at school. However, the community would like schools to be even more engaged in organizing extracurricular activities.

Participants in the scan made it clear that schools are community points of pride. They are understood as the heartbeat of the community, and are thought to be ‘extremely transparent.’ Parents sense that teachers and staff are involved with students and their families, and are appreciative of that fact. As one parent of a junior high student stated, ‘Kids love to be at school.’ An elementary teacher noted that ‘Our school is a safe haven for a lot of the kids, these are safe spaces.’

The positive atmosphere noted in schools was largely attributed to the commitment and quality of teachers, who are generally appreciated by students and parents alike. Crockett students described the students and teachers there as the best things in the neighborhood. It was noted that some teachers go beyond the call of duty – providing students with after school mentoring.

Key informants praised schools for ‘the strides they are making [in academic performance]’. One key informant stated, ‘AIMS scores are up, which in my opinion is partly due to the longer days and semester schedule. I don’t think that story is being told, but student performance is improving.’ At the same time, such achievements come at an increasing burden to teachers. Participants are concerned that they increasingly must ‘teach to the test’ and are ‘already working over and above and beyond the call of duty’.

Parents also appreciated that schools play a role in taking care of children while they are at work - ‘that kids are in school and not being in the streets.’
**Children’s Challenges in School**

- Due to lack of resources and language barriers, some children find it difficult to succeed in schools. A vast majority of students receive free or reduced lunches at school. Teachers offer homework clubs and even provide one-on-one tutoring, but some of the students still struggle.

Despite the support of their teachers, many students in the community fall behind academically due to numerous challenges. Poverty and language barriers have been mentioned above, and were frequently mentioned in the community conversations. One key informant summarized it this way: ‘Academically it’s going to be a little more challenging for students when they don’t have a full understanding of the language or are already coming from refugee camps, where maybe they didn’t have the support educationally that they needed.’

One indication of children’s struggles to obtain basic resources is reflected in the fact that all BESD schools are Title I schools.

**Teacher-Parent Collaboration**

- Teachers and parents want to collaborate with each other, but there are barriers in communication and lack of experience on how to do this well. Parents would appreciate more communication from teachers, and teachers would like to see parents be more involved in their children's lives.

The school can be a place where teachers and parents can meet and work together. One key informant has noted an historical shift in American communities: ‘In the 70s and 80s there was a lot of parent apathy... Then gangs became a problem in the late 80s, early 90s. I started to see more parents coming and getting involved in the schools. I think it was wake up call.’

At the same time, most participants in the scan noted that the collaboration does not always go smoothly. They suggested that lack of parental involvement is one of the greatest challenges in the district. According to one key informant, strong parental involvement is needed at three levels: ‘helping the child at home ... supporting the classroom ... and supporting the school and district.’ When organizing activities, teachers often encounter disinterest from parents. As one suggested, ‘We put out flyers for sports programs – parents not responding.’ At the same time, parents agreed that they would like to receive more information and be provided with more specific volunteer assignments. One key informant observed, ‘Schools do not have the capacity to deal with volunteers.’ In other words, both parents and teachers need to try harder to adapt to one other. The benefits are worth it - as one key informant concluded, ‘The more communication there is [between parents and school], the child will most likely succeed and thrive.’
Start-Up Questions

• What contributes to a welcoming atmosphere in schools?

• How can schools overcome challenges related to the language and cultural differences among students?

• What does a good education provide?

• In what ways could teachers and parents work better together?

• To what extent are high-level community leaders engaged in Balsz schools?

• In your opinion, should schools be community centers?

• How can public schools reach out to private and charter schools?

• How can the community help schools find more financial resources?

• How can schools reach out into the community?

Space for Your Notes
Chapter 6
The Nurturing Neighborhood

Children and youth do not live in a vacuum. On the contrary, the community that embraces them has direct influence on their well being - as well as on the well being of their parents and neighbors. The need to create a nurturing community is a necessary extension of the positive influence of home and school.

Scan Findings

Neighborhood Blight

- Graffiti and neighborhood blight are seen as a major problem, which dampens community pride and has a demoralizing effect on residents. Trash and objects on the ground can even be dangerous for children and families on walks or going to school.

Many scan participants were strongly concerned about the debilitating effects of the increasing levels of neighborhood blight. In the words of one participant, ‘Eliminate blight, which is killing us.’ Graffiti, tagging and vandalism were prevalent concerns. According to one key informant, ‘Vandalism has a demoralizing effect on community members who try their best to keep their neighborhood clean’. Key informants emphasized that solutions need to come from the community. As one noted, ‘You can’t leave it to the City. Community organizations can identify bad areas and mount a clean-up campaign.’

Students themselves are very concerned about the impacts of vandalism and graffiti as well. They identified many issues that make their neighborhood ‘look dirty’ such as animal excrements, litter, cigarettes, and disposed furniture. They were concerned about the quality of the parks. As one stated, ‘Parks require more cleaning’. Another made a connection between the general look of a neighborhood and people’s behavior: ‘Start painting walls and keep the community looking clean and respectable. Maybe people would start acting respectable.’ Students also noted the number of abandoned buildings that are blighted.
Safety

- Residents are concerned about crime, especially robberies, violent crime, and drug distribution. Students especially are worried about constant shootings and drive-bys. Crime can prevent residents from using important gathering places in the community such as parks.

According to police records for the Balsz community for 2011, 196 violent crimes were reported. Among them were 107 aggravated assaults, 71 robberies, 18 incidents of rape, and 1 homicide. In addition, there were 1,539 property crimes (mostly theft and larceny), 156 drug offenses and 16 prostitution crimes.

Participants expressed concern about crime levels they experienced in the community. They generally viewed the open spaces in their community as unsafe. Students mentioned that they were disturbed by the violence in their community. As one put it, 'I hear gun shots more often than I think I should have to.'

They are also aware that their sense of safety varies across different parts of the community. Particular concern was expressed about areas with poorly managed apartment complexes that attract drug dealers. Community parks are seen as another area where concern is expressed about drug abuse.

Many participants hope for more police presence, especially during the time of school children being let out. They noted that residents are often afraid to call the police due to concerns about immigration laws and enforcement. According to one key informant mentioned that 'Domestic violence is not being addressed.' However, teachers appreciated the engagement of police in school safety programs.

Stalled Economic Engines

- Despite its strategic location between the employment hubs of downtown Phoenix and Tempe, the community is struggling to attract and retain successful businesses. While some have seen improvements, most residents feel that lack of employment creates a huge barrier to success for the youth.

In 2010, the unemployment rate in the District was 5.9% for those currently in the labor force; however, only 65.8% of persons over the age of 15 are in the labor force. One must also note that those of retirement age (older than 65 years of age) consist of only 6.8% of the population. Thus, the true unemployment rate is likely much higher than the statistics suggest. The economic recession has had further impact. Increasing foreclosures have deepened structural economic issues.

Participants in the community conversations emphasized that priority needs to be placed on attracting and retaining local businesses, as well as on job training and workforce development. As one participant put it, 'When Motorola pulled out, it really killed our neighborhood.' And another, 'We need more jobs within the community, more businesses being attracted to the community.' Participants also wanted to see local businesses become more active in the community, including being more aggressive in hiring local residents.
Start-Up Questions

• What are the long-term solutions for dealing with blight in our community?
• How can we prevent, rather than react to neighborhood blight?
• How does blight negatively impact our children?
• How can we work together to prevent crime?
• How can our community rid itself of the reputation for being unsafe?
• How do we create more trust between residents and the police?
• How can we attract more businesses to our community?
• How can we encourage more businesses to hire from within our community?
• In what ways can children and youth contribute to economic development?

Space for Your Notes

Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 6 are on pp. 76-78.
Chapter 7

It Really Does Take a Village

People and organizations that care about the community are not only points of pride but essential assets. By coordinating efforts, they can achieve much more than if they worked independently. The whole community is responsible for the well-being of its children: it really does take a village.

Scan Findings

Existing Partnerships and Projects

- Schools, families, and organizations are already forming partnerships to help the children and youth succeed. Many are aware of the Balsz Promise Neighborhood initiative, which has gathered many people and organizations together to create new programs to serve the youth.

  Participants in the conversations were aware of the many school, family, and community partnerships in BESD. They pointed to collaborations between schools and businesses such as Jamba Juice, Frito-Lay, Apollo, Hunt Construction, General Dynamics, and others. They noted that Desert Schools Federal Credit Union provides financial literacy training to adults and funding for community development projects. They appreciated collaborations between the schools and higher education institutions such as Gateway Community College, Arizona State University, and the University of Phoenix. And, many were aware of the contributions of nonprofits such as Literacy Volunteers of America, United Methodist Outreach Ministries and Communities in Schools.

  Many were also aware of Balsz Promise Neighborhood (BPN) initiative. At its bi-weekly meetings, community stakeholders dialogue about how the community can come together to help create conditions in which children and youth can thrive. Indeed, it was at the invitation and with the support of BPN that this Scan was created.

  Some noted earlier, participants appreciated projects by the Phoenix Fire Department such as Smoke Alarms. Many participants expressed enthusiasm for the ongoing effort of the Boys and Girls Clubs to build a club and regional headquarters in the close proximity of Balsz Elementary School.
Desired Partnerships and Projects

• Both residents and representatives of organizations want to see more collaboration. Community members feel that creative partnerships could be created to provide new and enriching activities for the children. They also feel that, by working together, more can be done to make the neighborhoods clean, safe, walkable and aesthetically pleasing.

Overall, participants expressed the desire for more connections and collaborations to help the youth. Many mentioned the need for the community to come together and organize its efforts when presenting their priorities to the City of Phoenix. Several pointed to the potential benefits of the Good Neighbor program that was instituted and dropped in the community. A key informant wanted to, 'Find a way to make the Good Neighbor program work'. Another key informant noted that the community seems to lack the ability to organize itself to put pressure on city hall for resources that could be available to it.

Parents appreciated the BESD ‘Coffee Talks’, which serve as meeting points between schools and parents. One parent suggested, 'Organize a group meeting through Coffee Talks and create a clean-up day, pass out food to the needy.' Parents and students alike were prolific with ideas on how to get community members getting together to beautify the neighborhood and help fight crime. Other suggested collaborations included: preparing after-school programs for students, creating family nights, inviting inspiring speakers to talk to students, establishing co-ops to enhance self-help among residents, building better connections among community leaders, and telling the story of the community with a unified voice.

Inviting Other Stakeholders

• Although some partnerships with businesses are already happening that help the children and youth, most would like to see more. Similarly, many would like to see faith communities be invited to partner with other community organizations so that the youth can be better served.

In general, participants in the community conversations focused on the need to engage two forms of organizations in community building: businesses and faith-based organizations. As noted above, some businesses are active and the participants are appreciative of them. Yet, participants felt more could be done. As a key informant stated, 'Local businesses must be involved.' Another had much to say about what they were not, 'Sometimes business gets excluded 'cause there isn’t a very clear outline of what the expectation is or how to be involved or what the benefit is.'

Faith-based communities were similarly viewed as underrepresented in community service. One participant noted, 'I think there are lots of opportunities but we haven’t established those sorts of relationships with some of the local churches.' And according to another, 'Every church offers something for children.'
Start-Up Questions

• What do you consider to be best examples of partnerships in the community?

• How can new connections be woven among different community groups to better serve our children and youth?

• What needs to happen so that a neighborhood clean-up project will be successful?

• What needs to happen so that our community can speak more clearly to city hall?

• How can existing community gatherings (like “Coffee Talks” in the schools) do more to serve the community?

• How can more businesses be encouraged to serve the community?

• In what ways could faith communities be asked to serve the community?

• How should the story of the community be told in a united voice?

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Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 7 are on pp. 78-79.
How people use free time can be an indication of their aspirations and hope. If there are opportunities for uplifting and enlightening activities, hopes and dreams can grow. If there are not, cynicism and alienation grows. This fundamental truth about human development is particularly pertinent for children and youth.

Scan Findings

Void of Activities

- There is a lack of opportunities for children and youth to spend their time in an enriching way. The situation is especially serious during the summer. Both children and adults want more sports, hobbies, arts and crafts, and mentoring programs for the children and youth.

      A statement made in a focus group says it all, ‘There is not enough for kids to do in this area.’ The message was dominant and recurring. Parents wanted to have their children spending more time in constructive manners, instead of staying inside and watching TV because few alternatives were available to them. They noted the importance of playing with friends in safe places and in structured settings. As one parent put it, ‘for kids, there is no place to play and be kids.’

      Parents appreciated the extended 200-day school year adopted by BESD, and understand that, as a result, the youth have more summer opportunities than elsewhere. However, parents and students alike still see the absence of summer programming on non-school days, and are clear in expressing the need for more after-school activities. They believe there is a strong relationship between the absence of programming and youth getting in trouble. As one student stated, ‘There is nothing to do in the summer’. Students stated that the highest priority for them is the expansion of sports opportunities, such as better soccer and football teams.

      Some suggested that existing assets are being underutilized by the community. According to one key informant, ‘The two best things our community provides are the Phoenix Zoo and the Botanic Gardens. Many people visit the Balsz community when visiting these places, and they don’t even know it.’
Existing Activities

- Some activities, sports, and tutoring programs are available in schools and are appreciated by residents. Perry Park offers basketball and football fields, but the park has no staff or programming and does not live up to its potential.

While participants clearly expressed concerns about the lack of adequate activities for children and youth in the Balsz community, they were appreciative of the opportunities that do exist. Students expressed appreciation for sports programs in the schools, most notably soccer, football, volleyball, and basketball. They take note and are appreciative of the teachers who spend time with them in afterschool activities. In spite of the lack of programming in parks, a student noted that they could go to a park after school and ‘can chill with your friend’.

It was noted that BESD schools provide after-hours programs at discounted rates. Tutoring and homework clubs were noted also as possibilities for students to take part in gardening activities. Additionally, Gateway Community College organizes community events as ‘Gateway Goes to Hollywood’ to which all community members are invited.

There was a general belief that parks in the community (Pierce, Perry and Papago Park) are underutilized resources that do not live up to their potential. For example, Pierce and Kerry parks offer space and facilities but lack any form of programming for youth. Indeed, the closest recreation center is the Phoenix Longview Recreation Center, well outside Balsz community boundaries.

Desired Activities

- Community members are excited about the Boys and Girls Club and YMCA facilities that are coming in a few years, but residents feel strongly that opportunities for youth need to be expanded right away. Children want more sports and parents want more family-oriented activities like drama clubs.

The community is hungry for ‘positive projects’ that can be organized collectively and create ‘a sense of pride’. Some community members would like to see a multigenerational center in Balsz to serve as a gathering place for children and adults. They noted that in the past more family-oriented events were available, such as arts, recreation, music events, and family nights out. According to one participant, ‘We need more sports involvement – soccer, non-profit community sports organizations, city recreation activities, community centers...’.

Participants were aware of and excited about the planned construction of YMCA building on 40th Street and Boys & Girls Club facilities in the community on 44th Street and Belleview. Several participants noted that planning for the Boys and Girls Club was a point of pride for the community. The need for such community centers was seen as urgent. One participant warned, ‘We can’t wait for the Boys and Girls club; we have to find other ways have to organize after-school activities’.
Start-Up Questions

- What after-school and summer programs for our children and youth are you most proud of?
- What new programs and activities would you like to see for youth and children?
- What should be the goals of these programs?
- Who should be in charge of preparing enriching activities for children and youth?
- How can busy parents help each other take care of their children?
- What kinds of intergenerational programs or activities can you envision?
- How can stronger partnerships with Phoenix Zoo and Botanical Garden be established?
- How can parents and teachers collaborate to offer after school activities?
- How can community members prepare activities that are educational and respectful to the cultural differences that exist in the community?

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Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 8 are on p.80.
In order to thrive, every community needs to have places for gathering, sharing and activities. While the Balsz community does not have a natural geographical center, it has potential areas that can serve as community hubs. These hubs can create identity, and offer places where people can grow and learn.

**Scan Findings**

**What is a Hub?**

- Community members want more gathering places, where they can meet with neighbors, relax, learn new things and organize community activities. These places, which serve as the centers of the community, can be thought of as ‘Hubs of Engagement’.

  One participant in the scan reflected the interests of many in saying, ‘**We all need to come together, learn together, work together and support each other**’. In general, participants were speaking to the need for community gathering spaces, and they were specific in what they were searching for. Analyses of the conversations revealed that such gathering spaces are desired to serve seven specific functions.

  First, the participants envision such hubs as places for organized activities, where people can do things positive things together such as playing sports or having family nights out. Second, they see them as places of impromptu gatherings where people can meet and have conversations. Third, they see them as places for easy access to resources, particularly for residents with limited access to transportation. Fourth, they see them as places to build intergenerational connectivity – where children are welcomed and respected. In the words of one participant, ‘**Kids themselves should have the opportunity to say it for themselves – their hopes, dreams and interests**’. Fifth, they see them as places for lifelong learning – examples included parental learning programs. Sixth, they see them as places for getting help – either directly or through referrals to appropriate human service agencies. Finally, they are viewed as places for building a vision for the community. In the words of one participant, ‘**I think there are a lot of people who have a vision. Get them together**’.


**Existing Hubs**

- Some areas like this exist already and are appreciated; examples are: Schools, Gateway Community College, Educare, UMOM, Pierce Park. Some hubs, such as the Zoo and the Botanical Gardens, are underutilized by the community. Important hubs yet to be built are Boys and Girls Club and YMCA.

Participants were appreciative of the fact that the foundations for some community hubs already exist – they mentioned schools, the Educare complex, UMOM, Gateway Community College, Pierce Park, and the coming Boys and Girls Club as examples. Some drew attention to the fact that parks, which could serve as hubs, were not being managed for their potential by the City of Phoenix and/or community groups such as soccer leagues and church youth programs. Additionally, the community has not fully discovered some of its hubs. In the words of one active resident, ‘Gateway Community College is a big secret.’

Being mindful of the benefits of community hubs, collaborators in the Balsz Promise Neighborhoods initiative have developed the idea of “certifying” certain organizations to develop and provide oversight of such hubs. While yet to be implemented, this is one example of a community building action plan that is a direct result of the community conversations. Such organizations would be committed to serving the community holistically and would be responsible for ensuring that information, resources and programming would be available to meet the needs of the Balsz community.

**Desired Hubs**

- In some cases, better care needs to be taken of the gathering spaces that do exist. In particular, the parks need help. They are often littered, underused, and even unsafe.

While respecting the fact that certain elements of community hubs already exist, participants made it clear that they desire much more. They see current gathering spaces as vastly underdeveloped and even unsafe. They want better care taken of public spaces and more opportunities to be incorporated into them. They want well-managed community centers to serve a variety of people and a variety of needs. Places are needed where ‘Kids can get involved with multiple generations.’

As noted earlier, participants expressed many concerns about the parks – they are seen as littered, unsafe, unwelcoming, and without meaningful activities and programs. As they suggested, ‘Make the park a better place, clean it every day,’ and ‘Parks should provide real services.’ They noted that the community has numerous vacant lots where children and youth trespass and do negative things, because they do not have good places to play. The lack of greenery and shade in existing public spaces was a concern for many as well as the danger of walkways and streets leading up to what gathering spaces do exist.
Start-Up Questions

• What are some of the places where you spend time with your neighbors?

• What kind of atmosphere would you like to see at community gathering places?

• What should happen at a community hub?

• How can we make existing hubs more accessible and meaningful to young people?

• What needs to be done in order to have more people make use of the gathering places we already have?

• How can we make gathering places such as parks more safe, meaningful and beautiful?

• What new kinds of community hubs would you like to see in your community?

• When the YMCA and the Boys and Girls Club open, how can they best serve the children and youth of our community?

• How can you work with others to create strong community hubs?

Space for Your Notes

Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 9 are on pp. 80-81.
While community hubs are important, strong communities also have ways to build strong connections among the hubs and among the people and organizations of a community. Connections can be both physical and information-based.

Scan Findings

**Flows of Information**

- There needs to be a more frequent flow of accurate information about what is going on in the community. Coffee Talks at BESD schools are considered valuable and indeed a point of pride for those who participate. But many residents want additional and different forms of communication, such as social media, a community website, newsletters or a community magazine.

  Community conversations underscored the desire to have better information available within the community to keep residents up to date on what events and activities are taking place.

  Several suggested creating a website, newsletter and a magazine outlet for the community. As one teacher put it, 'Make better use of technology to build social networking in and through this community.' Some noted that resources exist within the community to create new technologies - including student clubs and those with experience in technology. In fact, two participants in the community conversations volunteered to be of service in creating a community website, a Facebook site or other forms of social media.

  Beyond providing information about community events and opportunities for becoming engaged in the community, participants noted that communication channels can be used to share inspiring stories from the community. As one participant observed, 'Things would be different if people who grew up here would come back to tell their success stories.' And another, 'In order to better serve youth in the community, we need to know what is necessary and be exposed to what’s out there.'
**Language Barriers**

- The cultural diversity of the community poses challenges in communicating with and understanding each other. There are language barriers between English and non-English speaking community members. There needs to be more effort to engage non-English speakers in community planning.

As noted earlier, the diversity of cultures and languages in the community is both an asset and a challenge for growing relationships within the community. Participants in the scan made it clear that all forms of information and communication must reflect the community’s diversity—or it will not be effective. As one key informant stressed, ‘Language is a big issue in the district.’ Many of the residents of the Balsz community have difficulty speaking and reading English. According to one parent, the ‘[Multi-] lingual aspect should be emphasized’ in all forms of communication.

Many participants suggested that there is a need to overcome the community’s language barriers through more readily available language classes. They noted that basic literacy training is also needed in the community. Their sense is that those needing such training would be receptive. In the words of one participant, ‘Parents want to learn English.’

**Physical Connections**

- People need to be linked physically as well. People are calling for more walkable streets and safe streets, and better transportation options. The Light Rail is appreciated for its connectivity, but limited transportation makes it difficult to get access to it.

Many participants noted that neighborhoods and different places in the community (such as schools and other community hubs) need to be better connected physically. Again, concerns were expressed about safety, access, and the lack of inviting transportation. A formidable challenge identified by participants was the community’s lack of transportation options. One resident noted that this is a barrier for children—‘Lack of transportation – being able to stay after school is huge.’

Corridors designed to connect people bring a community together. One resident described the Crosscut Canal Park Project as one of the major accomplishments within the community. In his words, ‘It’s kind of cemented the area, giving us a point of pride... And more than that it gave us a park area for students, for children, for families, to have a greenbelt in the area, to have some recreation.’ Similarly, another participant pointed to Light Rail as one of the best things in the community. Participants recognized the public buses, but had mixed reactions to them. In the words of a student, ‘Bus[es need to] come sooner and go out further.’

Participants further noted that public walkways are littered with rocks and glass, and stray animals increase fear while walking. Some see good potential with the Grand Canal. One resident implored, ‘Plant trees and get irrigation there’.
Start-Up Questions

• What kinds of information sources exist in the community?
• What new sources of information need to be created?
• What would it take to create a community newsletter?
• How can we include those community members who do not speak English?
• How can our diversity be seen as energy rather than as a barrier?
• How can we make the Balsz community more walkable?
• What changes should be made in public transportation?
• What are some of the ways that gathering spaces can be connected together?
• Whose voices need to be heard in community planning?
• How can we better communicate opportunities to serve our children and youth?

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Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 10 are on p. 81.
Chapter 11 – Growing Leaders

Every community needs leaders to shape vision and open new possibilities. Leaders are connection-makers, people who care and who are willing to stand up for others. How does good leadership contribute to quality of life in the Balsz community? How can more good leaders be tapped to serve?

Scan Findings

Treasuring Our Leaders

- The Balsz community has several compassionate and dedicated leaders who work selflessly for the betterment of the community. In fact, they are mentioned as points of pride in the community. Yet, the challenges are many and they could use the help of an expanding leadership base.

Participants expressed appreciation for the work of community leaders, and identified many as key assets of their community. They noted the many active residents who work at the neighborhood level. In the words of one participant, ‘they are very protective over their neighborhood and that’s wonderful.’ Many participants praised the leadership of the BESD – particularly Superintendent Smith and the dedicated teachers and school staff. Also, many participants expressed appreciation for the work of community leaders who, they noted, work tirelessly to benefit the entire community. And, many individuals from human service organizations were recognized for their leadership roles. The many community leaders were recognized as “Somebody who’s friendly and who goes and invites others to do something.’ And in the words of another, ‘I think that there are strong community leaders in the community that are willing to step up to the plate and spearhead some initiatives that can bring some very positive change to that neighborhood.’ They see leaders as caring, giving back to the community, building connections, reaching out, working towards positive changes, keeping others well-informed, having vision, and creating action.

At the same time, many participants - particularly key informants - suggested that many of those who have already stepped up in leadership roles could use more help.
Finding New Leaders

- The community needs more guidance, and the way to do this is to grow more leaders. More people should be invited to take on leadership roles and be more actively engaged in our community. In the process, care must be taken to ensure that leaders truly represent the diverse groups of the community.

A parent in one of the community conversations captured the feelings of many participants, ‘We need more leadership.’ With great respect for the many current leaders in the community, and the great work they have accomplished, participants sensed that an ever-expanding leadership base would not only help share the burden but also create more even more opportunities for community advocacy and growth. One participant hoped that leadership roles would be open to an increasingly diverse group of people, ‘Gather diverse people from the community together into leadership roles – not all whites as it is now.’ Another asserted, ‘Grow new forms of leadership.’

Many participants made a special point about the need to involve youth in leadership roles (this topic is discussed in chapter 12). They viewed youth as the source of ideas and solutions to community issues – particularly when the focus is on creating meaningful opportunities for youth. As one participant stated, ‘The youth have many ideas, and will work hard – there needs to be a structure for involving the youth as leaders now in the community seek to create change and find solutions.’

Tapping and Empowering Leadership

- Community members feel that new opportunities should be created for leaders to collaborate, share resources, learn from other communities, and preserve their energies. Some feel that The City of Phoenix’s Good Neighbor program should be reactivated so neighborhood leaders can be given resources and support.

Some participants noted that leaders in the Balsz community at times work in isolation of each other. A key informant wished for ‘more mechanisms for connecting leaders and for building a common vision’. Several key informants noted that the collaborating principles guiding the Good Neighbor program need to be emulated and re-instituted. The general sense is that more can be accomplished if leaders work closely together in a coordinated fashion; there would be more learning, more sharing, more vision, and more efficient use of time.

The Balsz Promise Neighborhood (BPN) initiative presents a prime opportunity to continue to grow the leadership base for the Balsz community, just as participants in the scan have envisioned. It has already woven connections among many community leaders and is setting the stage for ever-expanding involvement of residents and organizations alike in community visioning and action. Importantly, opportunities are being created to engage the vision and skills of youth.
Start-Up Questions

- Among the people you know, who do you consider to be a leader?
- What are the characteristics of a good leader?
- What kind of skills and experiences should a leader in the Balsz community have?
- How can we get more people engaged in leadership?
- How can the community show appreciation to their leaders?
- How can existing leaders build stronger relationships with community members?
- What kinds of training should we provide for community leaders?
- How can we encourage more diversity among our leadership?
- In what ways can we encourage leaders to work more closely together?

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Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 11 are on pp. 82-83.
Children and youth are at the heart of our efforts to build a strong community. They are not solely recipients of our help. Rather, they are the wellspring of ideas. And, they are active participants in the life in our community. Their insights are critically needed to more our community forward. Indeed, our youth are our future!

**Scan Findings**

**Children and Youth Sharing Their Gifts**

- Children and youth have many gifts that they can share with others, and they are full of energy. The energy needs to be properly channeled and utilized. Opportunities for youth to take part in community life as responsible citizens must be developed.

Participants in the community conversations were quick to note the gifts and capacities of youth and children, and they want to ensure that there are positive opportunities to be engaged and actively shape the life around them. One key informant suggested, ‘There is nothing that teaches responsibility like caring for another human being.’

One participant shared ideas on how young people can contribute to the community: ‘That’s the most important things for these kids to learn-- that they have gifts that they can give to the community and once they start learning that they have something to give ... that they have talent – even if it’s just an easy going personality... that they can create good in the community rather than always looking behind their backs to see who’s coming after them.’ Participants want opportunities must be created for youth to use their energy ‘in the right way.’ In a similar vein, a teacher stated; ‘People aren’t born bad - it’s more about just tapping into their talents and skills. Letting them see how empowered and in charge of their life they can be - having the quality of life that they want to have.’
**Existing Youth Engagement**

- In many ways, children and youth are already helping make our community a better place. Some are active in the Police Department’s Wake Up program and help pick up trash in the neighborhoods. Gateway Community College students are active in the community by helping organize community events.

The community has already created many pathways for engaging children and youth in the community. Some participants talked about how they try to serve as good examples for children. For example, one parent talked about how she sets a good example to children in the neighborhood by picking up litter in the streets.

The junior high and high school students stated that they enjoyed participating in volunteer activities organized by the schools. They mentioned their involvement in activities such as car wash fundraisers, picking up litter on South Mountain as part of the Wake Up program, and participating in walks to raise awareness about breast cancer. Children from elementary schools described how they were involved in the community by helping people in trouble and by recycling.

Teachers mentioned that many students go beyond the call of duty in being sensitive to community needs. One noted, ‘Some students, when they are done with sports, will go clean up bleachers without needing to be asked.’ At one of the schools, teachers positively mentioned the ‘Make Your Day’ behavioral modification program, which teaches children to be good citizens by learning about the needs of others. At Gateway Community College, students took part in a sustainability project - taking photographs of the community and organizing them for public display and reflection.

**Desired Youth Engagement**

- At the same time, more opportunities for involving youth need to be created. Youth can be more engaged in the community by volunteering, peer-to-peer mentoring, voting, and joining youth advisory boards and councils. Youth need to be told that they have valuable gifts, and our community needs them.

Adults in the conversations wanted to see more youth involvement in the community. As one put it, they need to be more engaged in the ‘awesomeness of this community’. As another stated, youth need to be given ‘something positive they can really accomplish.’ Parents envision older youth as role models, who can positively influence younger children. As one suggested, ‘Have them learn how to be leaders and be productive.’ Participants strongly encouraged youth-mentoring programs.

Key informants who happened to be Balsz leaders would like to include youth in planning and decision-making processes. They pointed to important new engagement opportunities that will follow creation of the Balsz Promise Neighborhood Youth Advisory Council - and the Boys and Girls Club once it is built.
Start-Up Questions

- Why is it important to get children and youth engaged in the community?
- How can youth become involved as leaders in the community?
- What kinds of volunteer activities can be created for children and youth?
- How do we create a broad leadership base of youth – from all neighborhoods and all ethnicities?
- What examples have you seen of children and youth being engaged in their communities?
- What kinds of activities encourage the mentorship of youth by adult leaders?
- What kinds of youth leadership activities would you be willing to organize?
- How can the youth of our community connect with youth leaders in other communities?
- How can children and youth inspire adults to become more involved in the community?

Space for Your Notes

Moving the Community Forward: Helpful Resources for Chapter 12 are on pp. 83-84.
Section IV: Next Steps

In the chapter ‘Next Steps: One at a Time’, Part A of the scan identifies five key steps to building a Balsz community that better supports its children and youth on pathways to success (see pages 35 and 36 of Part A of scan). They are:

1. Build Strong Relationships
2. Formulate a Vision
3. Tap Resources Effectively
4. Act Collaboratively
5. Engage in Ongoing Learning

The literature is abundant with many effective guides, toolkits, and evaluation instruments to guide community members, organizations and school officials through these key steps. We now provide a review of some of the more helpful resources to guide community mobilization and action.

One way to think about the importance of community mobilization is to state the following truism: “It takes a whole community to make a community whole”. Research has shown that healthy and vibrant communities with great capacity for problem solving have people from all walks of life, and organizations with many different forms of missions, all working together to share dreams and organize action (Ohmar & DeMasi, 2009).

1. Build Strong Relationships

The first thing to do is to develop strong relationships among people and organizations in the community. Procedures for doing so are described in depth by excellent guides and toolkits such as:

• *Building Communities from the Inside Out* by Kretzman & McKnight (1993)
• *Weave the People: Threading Healthy Communities* by Hughes (2008)
• *Working systematically in action* by Ferguson et al. (2010)
• *Building school-community partnerships* by Sanders (2006).
• *Building Support for Better Schools* by the Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (2000)
• *Reaching Out to Diverse Populations* by Ferguson (2005b)

• *Community: The structure of belonging* by Block (2009)

After strong and enduring relationships are built within the community, representatives must be gathered from a diverse array of community residents and organizations to engage in the visioning and action planning process. Care should be taken to involve not only current community leaders, but those who are not involved but have wonderful perspectives, gifts and assets to bring to the table.

Care should be taken to include students, teachers, youth, older adults, disabled individuals and groups from very diverse socio-demographic backgrounds, as outlined on page 65 in the above noted *Working Systematically in Action: Engaging Family and Community – A Guide for Facilitators*. It is important to assemble community members and organizational representatives that have a disposition for creating coherence, continuous learning, building relationships, openness to change, and understanding the importance of data gathering (see page 4 of *Working Systematically in Action: Engaging Family and Community – A Guide for Facilitators* and Part III of *The Community Leadership Handbook: Framing Ideas, Building Relationships, and Mobilizing Resources*, both noted above. The workbooks *Building Support for Better Schools: Seven Steps to Engaging Hard-to-Reach Communities* and *Reaching Out to Diverse Populations: What can Schools Do to Foster Family-School Connections?* are particularly helpful in developing strategies to engage under-represented and hard-to-reach populations.

2. **Formulate a Vision**

Once community stakeholders are gathered together, a community vision must be coalesced. The vision forms the basis for school, family and community partnerships and to create effective strategy around that vision (Epstein 2011). Again, there are many guidebooks, templates and worksheets to help community members move through the process. Three of the more helpful are:

• *Building Communities from the Inside Out* by Kretzman & McKnight (1993)


• *Building Home, School and Community Partnerships* by Molly et al. (1995)

• *Building school-community partnerships* by Sanders (2006)

• *The World Café* by Brown & Isaacs (2005)

• World Café: Café to Go: http://www.theworldcafe.com/pdfs/cafetogo.pdf


• *Consensus Organizing* by: Ohmer & DeMasi (2009)

*The Community Leadership Handbook* offers a seven-step plan (and accompanying) worksheets for leading a community through a visioning process, and arriving at a consensus-built statement of vision. Only once a vision is crafted is the community ready to move on to discovering resources and creating resource-fueled action to accomplish the vision. Chapter 5 of *Building Communities from the Inside Out: a Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets* also provides a step-by-step process for mobilizing the community as a whole around its identified vision.

3. Tap Our Resources Effectively

A truism of the community development literature is that resources abound within every community. The key is to identify, mobilize and tap the abundant resources that will ensure that the community moves toward accomplishing its vision. Four important resources are:

• *Building Communities from the Inside Out* by Kretzman & McKnight (1993)

• *The Abundant Community* by Kretzman & Block (2010)

• “Planners and Searchers” by Easterly (2006)


Perhaps the most concise and comprehensive guide to identifying, mobilizing and tapping community resources is contained within Part IV of *The Community Leadership Handbook: Framing Ideas, Building Relationships, and Mobilizing Resources*. The workbook contains 12 tools and accompanying worksheets to help a community move through the following key formative processes:

• Analyzing Stakeholders
• Building Coalitions
• Building Effective Community Teams
• Recruiting Volunteers and Sustaining Volunteers

This workbook emphasizes the mobilizing of the human capital within a community. The workbook *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets* carries a broader focus by understanding resources as being abundant in a community’s associations, organizations and institutions as well. It also acknowledges that many resources reside outside of the community itself, and these resources are capable of being mobilized to support the community vision. That workbook contains specific tools and worksheets for identifying, mapping and unleashing the assets of a community under a five-dimensional plan:

• Releasing Individual Capacities
• Releasing the Power of Local Associations and Organizations
• Capturing Local institutions for Community Building
• Rebuilding the Community Economy
• Providing External Support for Asset-Based Community Development

A helpful resource for developing community strategy for tapping external resources and using its own resources to leverage external resources for creating action around school, family and community partnership strategies is: *Financing Community Schools* by the Coalition for Community Schools (2011).

4. Act Collaboratively

Perhaps the most comprehensive work pointing to the necessity to act collaboratively as we create successful school, family and community partnerships has been developed by Joyce Epstein:

• *School, Family and Community Partnerships* by Epstein (2011)

• *School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook in Action* by Epstein et al. (2002)

• Collective impact by Kania & Kramer (2011)

According to Epstein, the first thing to do in building strong collaborations, as indicated above in *Step 1. Building Relationships* is to assemble the right people, associations, institutions and organizations around the table. Epstein identifies 33 specific categories of representatives that should be built into every school, family and community planning process (Epstein, 2001, p. 65). They are organized into four groups: Schools, Community, Students, and Homes. The Schools group includes:
teachers, superintendent, administrators, secretaries, principals, family involvement staff, other support staff, instructional specialists, custodians, community liaisons, teacher aides, security guards, title 1 staff, and union representative. The Community group includes: elected officials, neighbors, senior citizens, block club representatives, service organizations, fraternities/sororities, youth-serving agencies, family-serving agencies, business owners, police/fire department, churches and synagogues, colleges and universities, county extension office, museum representatives, library representatives. The Students group includes: class officers, peer counselors/mentors, students not involved in extracurricular activities, alternative high school students, homeroom representatives, students who are not “traditional leaders”. The home group includes: parents, residents with no children in schools, families of students, grandparents, older siblings and cousins, other guardians, family-educator service organizations, classroom volunteers, and family advisory committee members, residents both involved and not involved in community affairs, and youth as well as seniors.

Other excellent resources for identifying stakeholders that need to be involved in action planning include:

- *Building Communities from the Inside Out* by Kretzman & McKnight (1993)
- *Building Bridges Toward Excellence* by Sanders & Lewis (2005)
- *Building school-community partnerships* by Sanders (2006)

These resources identify myriad of organizations that need representation in the collaboration building and action planning process, including: Community residents, corporations, small businesses, educational institutions, health care organizations, government and military agencies, community service and volunteer organizations (e.g., Rotary, Boy Scouts, United Way, AmeriCorps), faith-based institutions, senior citizens organizations, youth organizations, cultural institutions, recreation agencies, media organizations, fraternities, sororities, neighborhood associations, welfare recipients, property owners, and many others.

Once the stakeholders are identified, they must be brought together to focus on issues in a way that maximizes the expression of shared values that relate to the community vision, emphasizes democratic decision-making, focuses on making concrete changes, and develops an ever-expanding pool of new leaders to take responsibility for identified changes. The processes for effectively doing so are offered in:

- *Beyond the Building* by Ferguson (2005)
- *New Approaches to Evaluating Community Initiatives* by Connell et al. (1995)
- *Creating Collaborative Action Teams* by Jordan et al. (2000)
• Developing a Collaborative Team Approach to Support Family and Community Connections with Schools by Ferguson (2005)

Many resources, tools and guidebooks exist to help communities move along the pathway of working with stakeholders to create effective collaborations, identify needed action, and follow through identified actions to ensure that the expressed community vision is accomplished. Among the better resources, workbooks and guidebooks are:

• School, Family and Community Partnerships by Epstein (2011)

• School, Family, and Community Partnerships: Your Handbook in Action by Epstein et al. (2002)

• Building Home, School and Community Partnerships by Molly et al. (1995)

• Creating Collaborative Action Teams by Jordan et al. (2000)

• Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy by Melaville et al. (2001)

• The Community Leadership Handbook by Krile (2006)

• Working systematically in action by Ferguson et al. (2010)

In particular, the guidebook Working Systematically in Action: Engaging Family and Community - A Guide for Facilitators offers boilerplate questionnaires and surveys that teams can utilize for assessing what the community needs, and the degree to which various stakeholders in the community are – or can – contribute to stronger school, family and community partnerships.

Each of these resources offer specific, step-by-step approaches for organizing stakeholders, ensuring continued commitment, creating consensus, maximizing decisive action, optimizing performance, maximizing productivity, effectively prioritizing, reflecting community values, building in benchmarks and incorporating measures of accountability for effective action. The guidebook Creating Collaborative Action Teams – Working Together for Student Success offers specific tools to overcome team challenges, problems and roadblocks (see section 6-1) as does Building Home, School and Community Partnerships: The Planning Phase (see p. 22).

One key to success in effectively keeping stakeholders engaged and productive is to stay focused on accomplishments – large and small. Successes must be celebrated regularly and bountifully to help both the stakeholders and the
community as a whole begin to realize that meaningful accomplishments are being made in creating success stories for the community’s children and youth.

Other keys to success for partnership building and planning process success include: shared ownership, sustainability, community-wide leadership, data and evaluation, focus on finance and resource development, broad community engagement, results-based vision, and open communication (Melaville, Jacobson, & Blank, 2011). Particularly important is establishing shared vision, having clearly defined roles and responsibilities, trust and authenticity, effective communication, and affirmation of the talents and gifts of individuals involved in the process. (Sanders, 2006). Comprehensive studies of effective school, family and community partnerships have identified seven “lessons learned” that are worthy of note to community facilitators: Understand that change takes time; place deliberate emphasis on comprehensive, relational and public education; make learning relevant to everyday lives; recognize the creative powers of diversity; utilize the talents and instincts of non-professionals, foster reciprocal relationships; embrace flexibility and trust (Longo, 2007).

5. Engage in Ongoing Learning

The notion underlying this action step is that we need to continually to monitor what is being accomplished, track the impact of the collaborative impacts being produced, learn from others, study best practices, and always – always – wonder whether what we are doing is in fact the best way to spend our time and resources. As Part A of the scan indicates, the two core questions must always be:

- Is this what we should be doing?
- Can we do better?

These questions can be addressed both through informal processes and formal processes. Informal processes include:

- Becoming well-versed in the professional and scientific literature pertaining to the development of effective community visioning and community action
- Become knowledgeable about the keys to successful formation of school, family, and community partnerships
- Invite experts from government, education and nonprofit organizations to share knowledge and offer advice about how to better serve the youth of our community.
- Visit other communities in the metropolitan area who carry similar visions for building pathways for success among children and youth
- Study national best practices in effective school, family, community partnerships from around the country
• Invite critique from organizations that are adept in assessing community programs and evaluating levels of success.

In terms of more formal mechanisms for answering the questions “Is this what we should be doing?” and “Can we do better?”, the literature is abundant with easily accessible evaluation and assessment tools that can be implemented within a community. These tools can be helpful not only in helping stakeholder planning and action teams stay on task, but also in helping to determine whether stakeholder activities are producing real impact in the community. Some of the best evaluation and assessment tools for these purposes are provided in:

• *School, Family and Community Partnerships* by Epstein (2011) (see pages 49 and 107-115)

• *Building Home, School and Community Partnerships* by Molly et al. (1995) (see pages 208 and 330)

• *Beyond the Building* by Ferguson (2005) (see p. 116)

• MyPlanPHX: http://www.myplanphx.com

Studies of the most successful school, community and family partnership activities throughout the country have determined that the activities are usually guided by “logic models.” A “logic model” is simply a visual device that depicts what outcomes and impacts a team hopes to create in the community, so everyone becomes clear about exactly what the team hopes to accomplish. For the purpose of building successful school, family, and community partnerships, these models describe exactly what the partnerships hope to accomplish. Examples include: “Students succeed academically”, “students are physically healthy”, “parents are involved in children’s academic success.”

Once again, there are many manuals, toolkits and templates to help define such desired outcomes. They all serve to give guidance to community stakeholders on how to organize action that gets the community where it wants to go. Some of the more helpful “logic model” resources include:


• *Community Schools Results Framework and Indicators* by Coalition for Community Schools (2011b)

• *Community Schools Evaluation Toolkit* by Coalition for Community Schools. (2011a)
• A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections by Henderson & Mapp (2002)

In addition, particularly helpful, visual and indicator specific resources for developing a “logic model” to guide school/community/family partnerships are available on websites established by the Coalition for Community Schools (www.communityschools.org) and the Southeast Educational Development Laboratory (www.sedl.org).

Again, the power of having each community form such a logic model lies in articulating – and knowing – precisely what the desired outcomes of the partnerships and action plans must be. By so knowing, all actions surrounding the partnerships will be targeted to real change in the community.

However it is accomplished, all community action must be anchored in a thirst for ongoing learning. Ultimately, the aspirations, desires, and challenges of a community’s children and youth are dynamic and ever-changing. And accordingly, so must be the processes set in motion to serve them. By participating in ongoing learning to see what we can do better, we maximize the options and chances for their success.

Section IV: References

Next Steps


Kretzmann, J. P., & McKnight, J. L. (1993). Building communities from the inside out. A path toward finding and mobilizing a community’s assets. Evanston, IL: Northwestern University


Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. (2000). *Building support for better schools: seven steps to engaging hard-to-reach-communities.* Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. Available at: http://www.sedl.org/pubs/family27/building_support.pdf

Section V: Resources Toolbox

This final section of Part B offers a repository of helpful publications, toolkits, and websites for the reader who wishes to learn more about creating community vision and action around the goal of building pathways for success for children and youth.

The section is organized into two parts.

First, an annotated list of Resources to help the community move forward is provided for each of the Twelve Chapters of the Balsz Story reviewed in pages 21 through 58 of this report. The expanded list equips the interested reader with even more information on how to create progress around each of the twelve themes identified as important by participants in the Scan's community conversations.

Second, the report concludes with a selected bibliography of best practices in building effective school, family and community partnerships. Much has been learned about the power of community partnership building to help children and youth succeed, and this reference section is designed to help interested readers gain a solid understanding of that knowledge base.

Resources Toolbox for the 12 Chapters
Expanded Set of Helpful Resources for Twelve Chapters of the Balsz Story

Chapter 1: Our Kids: Our Hope

  ❖ Reviews the influence of family attitudes and behaviors upon children's success, suggesting that all families care about their children - and students want their parents to help -, but not all parents know how to help. The review also suggests that non-engagement of families is not the fault of the families but of the system.

  ❖ The book provides an eloquent introduction into developmental theory, especially on the connections between positive youth development and community well being.

- This book states a profound vision for every community to base its development on the assets that it already owns. According to the authors, abundant community has the capacities of: Kindness, generosity, cooperation, forgiveness, mystery, and acceptance of fallibility.

### Chapter 2: Believing in Children & Youth


- Suggests that parental attitudes toward success can strongly affect children’s attitude toward success, and school achievement, including parental achievement expectations for their children, perceptions of their children’s interests and abilities, and degree of affective relationships formed.


- Reviews literature on what contributes to the success of children and youth in schools, drawing attention to the fact that all parents want their children to succeed but often do not know how to be of help. The book offers step-by-step advice for parents on how to create more supportive environments at home for their school children, and how better partnerships can be developed between families and teachers to help children excel in their learning.


- Reviews how student success is shaped by the roles of adults who act as mentors and role models, and who generally believe in the students and their potential.


- Shows the enhancing effects of positive messaging and destructive effects of negative messaging upon child development.


- A guide for creating effective communication and learning bonds between adults and youth in organizations.
Chapter 3: Pathways to Success


- Examines research of parental attitudes toward children and how the form of messaging to their children can impact self-efficacy and achievement.

College 101: http://college101.org

- Introduces students to various aspects of college life and which helps them prepare for and cope with challenges that may arise.

FAFSA Toolkit: http://www.pheaa.org/partner-access/fafsa-toolkit.shtml

- Guides students and their parents through the application process for Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA).


- Highlights the necessity of creating multiple pathways to success for high school youth, especially helping them prepare for the challenges of the labor market.


- Research providing evidence of success of the SEED Foundation’s practices and programs to promote college enrollment of low-income students. The practices revolve around four levers: Academic Rigor and Curriculum, College Matching, Social and Non-Cognitive Skills, and Financial Aid and Scholarships

Chapter 4: The Nurturing Family


- Summarizes what families can do to best prepare their children for readiness into kindergarten.

- Provides a comprehensive review of factors in the home affecting children's success in schools, and how teachers can work with families to maximize conditions in the home that contribute to student success; also examines mitigating factors that undermine success in the home and ways to overcome them. Suggests that parental attitudes toward success can strongly affect children's attitude toward success, and school achievement, including parental achievement expectations for their children, perceptions of their children's interests and abilities, and degree of affective relationships formed.


- Reviews research on family contributions to student success, and outlines twelve specific strategies for families to create foster learning in the home environment as well as ten specific strategies for increasing homework performance at home.


- Provides a comprehensive review of factors in the home affecting children's success in schools.


- Reviews nineteen forms of parental engagement that can foster student success.


- Gives a five-point plan for helping families create effective learning environments at home.


- A report from the United Kingdom emphasizing the *how* and the *where* of learning and showing that learning does not stop outside of the classroom boundary.

- Gives a start-of-the-art review of thirty years of research on family engagement in schools; lists many best practices in maximizing parental involvement in creating student learning environments, and many best practices describing how teachers can work with families to create better home-based learning experiences.

### Chapter 5: The Nurturing School

Awesome Library: http://www.awesomelibrary.org

- Up to 37,000 different educational resources for teachers, parents, students, and librarians.


- Provides a comprehensive review of how teachers can create welcoming environments in schools and engage parents and other community members in the children’s learning experience; offers six recommendations for how teachers can build stronger, more nurturing environments involving parents relating to school environments.

CommonSense Media: http://www.commonsensemedia.org

- Website whose goal is to promote media literacy and empower children and youth to use electronic media effectively and safely.

Class Brain: http://www.classbrain.com

- Pre-K through 12 educational materials, organized based on target audience: kids, teens, parents and teachers, and based on various topics.


- Identifies ten specific strategies that school administrators can create to foster more nurturing school environments through the engagement of families and community members.

- Reviews six strategies that schools can create to maximize student success (beyond normal teaching and curricular strategies): Parenting (assisting families with creating home conditions that maximize learning), Communicating (about student progress and available programming in the context of that progress), Volunteer Recruitment (engaging families in school activities), Learning at Home (maximizing connection between school learning environments and home learning environments), Shared Decision-Making (about governance and targeted outcomes), and Collaborating with the Community (coordinating community resources and engagement).

Fact Monster: http://www.factmonster.com
- Educational website covering topics learned in elementary, middle and high schools.

- Reviews research on teacher-initiated methods to involve families in schools, and lists 30 strategies for strengthening family, community and school partnerships centered on student learning.

The Khan Academy: http://www.youtube.com/user/khanacademy/featured
- A website with educational videos from all major sciences.

- Identifies factors and specific performance indicators pertaining to building a nurturing school environment; factors include: attachment, identity, bonding, climate, equitable sanctions and processes, non-autocratic administrative/decision-making processes, involvement, trustworthiness and respect, peer relations, extracurricular activities, autonomy in student projects, and student voice.

National Geographic Education:
http://education.nationalgeographic.com/education/?ar_a=1
- Exciting facts from all around the world that children can learn about in an interactive web-based environment (Beta version).

PBS Kids: http://pbskids.org
- Fun and playful videos and interactive games that enhance the learning and curiosity of pre-school and elementary school students.
Study Guides and Strategies: http://www.studygs.net
❖ Useful ideas for organizing time and other resources to get the most out of studying. The website provides translations of the materials in many different languages.

TED: Ideas Worth Spreading: http://www.ted.com
❖ A website with a large database of publically accessible innovative lectures (TED Talks) related to current social, political, educational, and technological issues.

**Chapter 6: The Nurturing Neighborhood**

❖ A short review of effective parenting principles: talking with one’s child, sharing life lessons, building self-esteem and trust, and providing guidance.

❖ Identifies two neighborhood-related predictors of student success: "students live and learn in stable and supportive environments" and "student communities are desirable places to live".

❖ Stresses the importance of mentoring adults beyond the family and schools as key factors for student success.

❖ Describes a City of Phoenix program that helps residents fight graffiti.

- Outlines significant neighborhood health indicators and their relationship to student success; examples include: child homicide rate; trauma rate, low-birth weight rate, delinquency rate, teen childbearing rate, teen drug violation arrest rate, child maltreatment rate, poverty rate, vacant houses, and housing code violations.


- A controversial, yet thought-provoking theory correlating community aesthetics with overall safety levels.


- Builds the case that healthy neighborhoods create success in schools.


- Suggests that community engagement is much more than service learning, but rather developing mutually beneficial relationships between community and schools.


- Reviews the literature on, and gives a visual model of, the relationship between community climate, strong social networks, economic development, neighborhood safety and student success.


- Essays on research on practice of ‘kith and kin care’ and its policy implications.


- Provides a comprehensive review on school-community connections, outlining major factors underlying successful conditions in the homes and communities that support children in school.

- Stresses the role of developing strong neighborhoods and relationships as key factors in student success.

**Chapter 7: It Really Does Take a Village**

Coalition for Community Schools: http://www.communityschools.org

- An alliance that promotes best educational and youth development practices by the means of research briefs, reports, and toolkits. Many of the materials in this Part B of the scan come from the Coalition for Community Schools.


- Identifies five strategies for generating resources to sustain community partnerships with schools.

Education Northwest - Creating Strong Schools and Communities: http://educationnorthwest.org

- Offers many resources and toolkits for gathering community organizations from all sectors to create strong schools as centerpieces of success.


- Reviews seven forms of community engagement in schools, and nine methodologies for engaging community partners in student learning outcomes.


- Provides conceptual framework and procedures for engaging community stakeholders in defining and accomplishing student success.


- Reviews research on effective partnership building for student success, and identifies thirteen forms of partnership creation.
❖ Offers a model and practical advice on how to create new structures and leadership for school, family and community partnerships.

National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education: http://www.ncpie.org/Resources
❖ A research and practice network, which popularizes parental involvement. The website contains resources organized by target audience:

National Network of Partnership Schools: www.csos.jhu.edu/p2000
❖ A website of another research network that was founded by Dr. Joyce L. Epstein from Johns Hopkins University. Contains state-of-art materials and toolkits (a fee is often required).

❖ Reviews factors influencing success of school/community partnerships, examines case studies of effective school-community partnerships, and offers a model of how to form strong partnerships targeted to student success.

Southwest Educational Development Laboratory (SEDL): www.sedl.org
❖ An organization that has for 40 years been working on research, development, and dissemination of effective educational practices.

❖ Offers ten specific strategies for strengthening neighborhoods, families and schools through creative partnerships.

❖ Reviews 249 school, family and community partnerships, and concludes that six factors impact the quality of programs: commitment to youth, strong community relationships, the right mix of organizations, common vision, external encouragement, and results focus.
Chapter 8: Enriching the Experiences


- Reviews the Search Institute’s 40 internal and external universal building blocks of healthy development for youth; specifies the kinds of opportunities needed to support youth empowerment and constructive use of free time; reviews the important roles of safe spaces, challenging experiences and involvement of caring people on a regular basis.


- Offers strategies for starting, building and supporting a healthy community that gives abundant opportunities for youth.


- Suggests that resilience and competency building are central to helping youth navigate adolescence in healthy ways; drawing on the literature and a survey of highly regarded youth development programs, strategies are offered for developing effective goals, environments, and activities for youth in a community.


- Evaluates 48 youth development programs designed to create nurturing environments for children and youth, and summarizes impact on reduction of negative behaviors, such as substance abuse, violence, and mental disorders, and on promoting positive development such as self-efficacy and student achievement.

Chapter 9: Hubs of Engagement


- Discusses the importance of community hubs as important places for gathering, learning growing and sharing, and as places to build identity, gain security and share information for residents.

- Provides a summary of the benefits of well-run parks as places to gather, to play, and to promote healthy lives and communities.


- Describes how to build strong relationships in a community through strategic communication to share information and strengthening of community bonding processes

**Chapter 10: Linking Together**

10,000 Solutions: http://10000solutions.org

- The 10,000 solutions an ASU community innovation crowdsourcing website that invites its visitors to post short videos with ideas to promote betterment of different communities. The website also includes videos related to Balsz District:  
  http://10000solutions.org/search/node/mary%20moore (by Mary Moore)  
  http://10000solutions.org/search/node/rick%2520avellone (Rick Avellone)  
  http://10000solutions.org/tags/hon394 (by ASU Honors students)  
  http://10000solutions.org/tags/hon394?page=1 (by ASU Honors students)


- Reviews best practices and mechanisms for increasing communication within a community around issues and information important to student success; identifies seven types of communication needed between schools and parents.


- Toolkit to help communities organize themselves around creating viable public transit opportunities with the emphasis on the planning of transit stations.


- Reviews pathways through which effective communication can be developed and distributed throughout communities to identify problems, offer solutions and mobilize the community toward better vibrancy and health.
Ng, Deborah (n.d.) How to Create Online Community Newsletters. Available at: http://www.dummies.com/how-to/content/how-to-create-online-community-newsletters.html
- Basic guidelines for creating effective community communication tools.


- Ideas for street improvement and for creating initiatives whose goal is to improve the safety of streets in urban areas.

Valley Metro Frequently Asked Questions:
http://www.valleymetro.org/need_help/faqs
- Useful information related to public transportation options in the Balsz district.

Walkable America. (n.d.). Walkability Checklist. Available at:
http://www.walkableamerica.org/checklist-walkability.pdf
- A survey template that can be used by a community to determine how walking-friendly it is and how it can achieve improvements in this regard.

**Chapter 11: Growing Leaders**

City of Phoenix (n.d.) Phoenix Neighborhood & Volunteer Toolkit. Phoenix, AZ: The City of Phoenix. Available at:
- A toolkit developed by the City of Phoenix by the Neighborhood Services Department that outlines pathways for strengthening neighborhood participation in Greater Phoenix.

- A database maintained by the City of Phoenix that enables community leaders to publish information about neighborhood associations and block watch groups.

- Outlines six characteristics of strong leadership for growing school, family, and community connections: "We vs. I" approach, Emphasis on trust and relationship building, Diverse perspectives, shared leadership roles, shared responsibility, appreciation of gifts and assets of others.


- Offers concepts, tools and worksheets for strengthening existing community leaders and mobilizing new ones to create community change.


- Suggests that many school/community engagement strategies fail because the schools drive the strategies; leadership must be grown from within the community to foster "authentic participation" characterized by inclusivity, relevance, trust and focus on larger structural inadequacies.

### Chapter 12: Involving our Children & Youth

Hands on Greater Phoenix: http://www.handsonphoenix.org

- A volunteer recruitment database that specializes in volunteer opportunities in the Greater Phoenix area.


- Provides case studies and discussion about the ways that youth-led research and evaluation can help link youth and community development goals and outcomes.


- Explores how youth redefine their community as a result of active research and participation in community affairs; identifies ways in which to make service learning more than acts of charity but true interaction and engagement with community issues.

- The authors’ reflection on the lessons learned from working on projects to engage youth in organizational and community governance.


- Describes projects that engage urban youth in community change through participatory processes; Demonstrates the importance of adult allies in youth-led projects, the creation of safe spaces, and the building of trust and relationships.


- Database of volunteer opportunities; includes a section with virtual volunteer projects that can be done from the comfort of one’s home.

Volunteer Match: http://www.volunteermatch.org

- Resources for creating effective volunteer events; contains a database of volunteer opportunities and toolkits for organizers.


- Summary of the main reasons why youth should be moved into leadership roles in community organizations.


- A comprehensive toolkit with a set of worksheets to help young people implement a community projects.
Resources Toolbox for S/ F/ C Partnerships
Best Practices in Building Effective School, Family and Community Partnerships


Coalition for Community Schools: http://www.communityschools.org


Ferguson, C. (2005a). Beyond the building: A facilitation guide for school, family, and community connections. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. (sedl.org)


Ferguson, C. (2002). What do we mean by “family and community connections with schools”? Research Brief for National Center for Family and Connections with Schools. Austin, TX: Southwest Educational Development Laboratory. (sedl.org)


Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Families, Youth and Schools. (2011). Family-school partnership websites. Lincoln, NE: Nebraska Center for Research on Children, Families, Youth and Schools. (fsp.unl.edu)


Sanders, M. G. (2001). The role of “community” in comprehensive school, family and community partnership programs. The Elementary School Journal, 102, 19-34.


