

# CREATING AN ENVIRONMENT FOR LIVING AND LEARNING (C.E.L.L.) THROUGH COMMUNITY EDUCATION: A COMMUNITY FACILITATOR'S PERSPECTIVE

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A community facilitator, in this instance, is a liaison between the schools and community; a person involved in a school-community relations program—whose task it is to deal with school community needs. A temporary position within the structure of the Hawaii State Department of Education, and under the immediate direction of the Leeward District Superintendent's Office, facilitating communication between school administrators, staff and community is the essence of the position.

## Community Education

The human body is made up of many cells working together as a whole living unit. Similarly, a community can be viewed as a "whole living unit." The cells are the community groups, schools, business organizations and the residents of all ages. Community education is a philosophy that brings together the many cells in a community, especially the schools and residents, to create an environment for living and learning.

Education has always been the responsibility of the schools but, because of increased growth and complexity, interdependence between the schools and community is necessary if the schools are to function as effective educational institutions. The challenges to community education are the ubiquitous emotional, psychological and socio-economic problems of today as manifested in violence, vandalism and rising crime in schools and community. In response, there is an increase of social and economic services, as well as community groups and organizations. A focus is needed whereby the many different "cells" in the community can come together, not only to resolve the many problems in schools and community but to create a better environment for living and learning.

Community education can be viewed as a practical and vital concept. The focus of community education is the creation of a link between the schools and community for providing an environment for living and learning where the intention of schools and community is to work together in harmonious

cooperation.

There are many successful programs that can be used as examples of community education. Some of these are the Adult Education Program of the State of Hawaii Department of Education which offers academic and occupational courses, the Continuing Education program operated by the University of Hawaii, and the many courses for all ages on hobbies and leisure time activities offered by the Department of Parks and Recreation of the City and County of Honolulu. One concept of community education, then, emphasizes a comprehensive education program for a wide range of age groups and brings together the school and the community. Another concept of community education is seen in those activities and programs that bring together the school and community to resolve a variety of problems and to achieve goals that build community. This concept of community education has become one of the major considerations of the Center for Adult and Community Education Development housed in the College of Education at the University of Hawaii-Manoa. The center has set five goals for the 1978-79 year. They are:

1. To encourage and support citizen involvement in school and civic affairs.
2. To improve cooperation among institutions and agencies which promote/require community involvement.
3. To establish new community schools and maintain/improve existing models.
4. Plan and implement a wide variety of training programs.
5. To spearhead the responsibility for creating effective and efficient adult and community education oriented degree programs at the University.

The first three of these goals are already operational at the Waipahu Intermediate School. They reflect the efforts of the school to promote greater involvement between the school and the community



of Waipahu and, in the process, to serve as a model for one form of community education.

### **Waipahu**

Waipahu is a growing community located in the Leeward District of Oahu and is about five miles from Pearl Harbor. It was originally a sugar plantation that started in 1897 with scattered homes, rice fields, banana trees, roaming cattle and approximately 10,000 people scattered over 30 to 40 miles in this small rural town.

Over the years, Waipahu has grown into an urban city with increasing population, shopping centers, businesses and housing. In the 1970 census data, the dominant ethnic groups were Filipino (32%), Caucasian (28%), and Japanese (26%), but this has changed dramatically in the intervening years. The Caucasian population decreased and an influx of Filipino and Samoan newcomers settled in Waipahu.

It is a popular place for immigrants from Asia and the Pacific Islands. Dynamic growth has taken place in the past five years and the population has increased to about 30,000 people. This rapid change has caused some hardships on the schools and community of Waipahu. The immigrants suffer because of the cultural differences, adjustment problems, and the socio-economic life-style in Hawaii that is often very different from the societies from which they come. Language is an initial barrier between the immigrants and locals and a basis for conflicts. There is a great amount of progress in Waipahu but many problems and needs have developed in this growing city.

### **Waipahu Intermediate School**

The school, made up of 7th and 8th graders with an approximate enrollment of 1,000 students, and, because of its effort in promoting parent and community involvement with the school, can serve as a model for community education.

At Waipahu Intermediate, there are PTA meetings which usually are conducted in a formal manner in the cafeteria. Experience shows that parents respond better in small groups than in the larger formal setting of the PTA meetings. So, in addition to the PTA meetings, more informal "coffee hours" are planned by the faculty in each subject area department to facilitate communication with the parents and build interpersonal relationships between parents, teachers, and administrators. One instance would be the coffee hour planned and coordinated by the fine arts department. There were refreshments and slides, posters and information about student achievements, and about the details of the fine

arts program.

Parents are notified through the school bulletin and sometimes they are reminded again by notices sent home with the students. As the coffee hour progresses, everyone gets acquainted. The main focus, however, is on how parents can help their children succeed in class and how the parents can become more directly involved in the school program.

As a finale, the principal gives a short speech and opens a question and answer period. The discussion that follows brings out the many school programs and concerns of the parents. It is not necessarily a problem solving session as much as an opportunity for parents to express their concerns in an open and accepting atmosphere. Parents are often relieved to find that their individual concerns are shared by others. To expose and openly discuss the problems usually reduces tensions between parents and school officials. Simple problems are resolved immediately; others take longer; a few perpetually make their appearance. For example, parents felt that two lunch lines did not allow students to move fast enough so that all the students could be fed during the lunch period. Therefore, a third line was created to speed things up. Remedial programs, programs for the gifted, student safety and other issues and school policies are discussed openly for suggestions and feedback from parents.

As parents increasingly feel that they can express their concerns, a positive feeling of trust and confidence builds and a rapport develops between the school personnel and the parents. Such a conducive atmosphere for two-way communication becomes a significant step in developing school-community relationships and is a primary goal for programs in community education.

School administrators in Waipahu involve themselves in the community through membership in the Waipahu Community Association and the Waipahu Business Association. An example of the Waipahu complex schools and the community working together is the yearly beautification project. In planning the project, many meetings are held at night and during the weekends in which work parties are organized for picking up trash, painting old walls, cleaning and renovating areas, and planting trees and shrubs. Work is done at the school and throughout the community. The underlying themes are "building pride and making Waipahu a better place in which to live." The project spans several months and features contests, prizes, T-shirts, posters and even a parade featuring the Waipahu High School Band. Teachers, outreach workers and other school officials are involved in varied activities some of which may go



unnoticed but which form the backbone of a long and friendly relationship between the schools and the community. The beautification project is only one activity that exemplifies the first and second goals of community education for 1978-79 listed above. In addition the school now offers a number of after school programs that serve a large and varied clientele.

Waipahu Intermediate also has a large and expanding program to assist recently arrived immigrant students in both the school and in the wider community. The program is directed by an Acculturation Worker; the main purpose of this position is:

. . . to identify and assist students from different cultural backgrounds in communicating and interacting with others to minimize overt negative behavior among students in the school and community. An acculturation worker identifies and formally counsels potential problem students by interviewing, holding discussions, counseling and rap sessions; develops extracurricular activities which will promote better understanding between the newcomer and the local students; interviews and counsels parents to promote better understanding between the school, home, and the community; provides orientation to the newcomer and his parents; provides parents with information about the school; refers students and/or parents to other public and private agencies for additional services and information; serves as liaison between school and other agencies concerning the newcomer; informally provides language assistance to the newcomer with communication problems; participates in community activities to help in the solution of community problems; provides orientation to teachers, other staff members and local students concerning newcomer's cultural background and communication problems. . . .<sup>1</sup>

This position is highly effective because of its "personal" contacts and outreach ability. One project of the Acculturation Worker involves working with the Y.M.C.A. using the University of Hawaii student volunteers who conduct recreational activities that enhance interaction between local and immigrant students.

However, it is apparent that many of the problems facing the newcomers are also similar to those facing the local students. Children and teenagers face problems of adolescence whether they are immigrants or locals. The only difference is the disadvantage of the newcomer having to cope with

a different environment. The Acculturation Worker at Waipahu Intermediate School works with the immigrants, but a major portion of his time is working with all the students that need help. Adolescent problems are especially prevalent at an intermediate school age because it is a time of emotional and physical change, and a transition into young adulthood.

The Community Facilitator has the unique position of being a full-time school-community liaison and a resource person whose task it is to initiate innovative ideas and programs to alleviate the rise of school violence and vandalism. This is an unprecedented program of the Hawaii State Department of Education and it allows greater communication and broader perspectives between the school and community. It is a position that develops personal relationships between people in the school and community, and is a tangible program based on improving communication and cooperation.

School safety is a primary concern for students and preventive measures for reducing school violence are constantly sought. Hawaii lags behind the national trend of increasing crimes in school but is rapidly gaining each year. The causes of violence and vandalism are as many and varied as the answers and possible solutions. The Community Facilitator does not solve problems *per se* but attempts to create an atmosphere conducive to resolving difficulties by improving school-community relations.

The Community Facilitator is involved with many meetings outside of school. For instance, the Waipahu Community Association has formed a special group called the Advisory Committee on Education (A.C.E.) which specifically studies and suggests ideas and plans to prevent school violence and vandalism. Likewise, the Waipahu Business Association has taken an active role in forming a committee on violence and vandalism. These committees respond to school needs and are reflective of the community's concern. The community's support for the schools is indicated through these groups and other active organizations.

The role of the Community Facilitator has been expanded to include work with a multitude of social and professional agencies, such as the Waipahu Inter-Agency Council, which serves as a coordinating body, referral service and clearinghouse for information about their programs. Exposure to and knowledge of the community is important to facilitate school-community relations. The significant advantages of this position are the Community Facilitator's visibility and availability as a resource person to the school and community.



## Elements of Community Education

There are eight minimum elements to a community education program that are defined by the federal government. They are:

1. *School involvement.* The program must provide for the direct and substantial involvement of a public elementary or secondary school in the administration and operation of the program.

2. *Community served.* The program must serve an identified community which is at least coextensive with the school attendance area for the regular instructional program of the school involved in the administration and operation of the program, except where special circumstances warrant the identification of a smaller community.

3. *Public facility as a community center.* (i) Program services to the community must be sufficiently concentrated and comprehensive in a specific public facility, including, but not limited to a public elementary or secondary school, a public community or junior college, or a community recreation park or center, in terms of scope and nature of program services (which may not be limited to one or a limited number of areas such as recreation or adult education), hours of service and other characteristics to constitute such facility as a community center. (ii) Satellite or mobile facilities related to the community center may be used by the center for the provision of a portion of program activities and services, and such satellite or mobile facilities may include nonpublic facilities which are made available for use by the public.

4. *Scope of activities and services.* The program must extend the program activities and services offered by, and uses made of, the public facility in terms of the scope and nature of program services, the target population served, and the hours of service. For example, where a public or elementary or secondary school is used as the facility, while the concept of community education would encompass (rather than merely being an add on to) the regular kindergarten through twelfth grade instructional program, the school would need to provide additional programs, activities, and services beyond the regular kindergarten through twelfth grade instructional program.

5. *Community Needs.* The program must include systematic and effective procedures (i) for identifying and documenting on a continuing basis the needs, interests, and concerns of the community served with respect to community education activities and services, and (ii) for

responding to such needs, interests and concerns.

6. *Community resources and inter-agency cooperative arrangements.* (i) The program must provide for the identification and utilization to the fullest extent possible of educational, cultural, recreational, and other existing and planned resources located outside of the school (including but not limited to, services of volunteers) to enhance the size and quality of the program. (ii) The program must also be designed to encourage and utilize cooperative agreements and other arrangements among public and private agencies to make the maximum use of existing talents and resources and to avoid duplication of services.

7. *Program clients.* The program must be designed to serve all age groups in the community, including preschool children, children and youths in school, out-of-school youths, adults, and senior citizens, as well as groups within the community with special needs for community education services and activities, such as persons of limited English-speaking ability, mentally or physically handicapped or other special target groups not adequately served by existing programs within the community.

8. *Community participation.* The program must provide for the active and continuous involvement, on an advisory basis, of institutions, groups, and individuals including, but not limited to, local community colleges, social, recreational and health groups, and persons broadly representative of the community served, including representatives of parents of students in the regular instructional program of the school involved in the administration and operation of the program and the residents of the community, in the planning and carrying out of the program, including involvement in the assessment of community needs and resources and in the program evaluation."<sup>2</sup>

The programs at Waipahu Intermediate School seem to incorporate these eight minimum elements.

For example:

1. *School involvement*—Waipahu Intermediate School has direct involvement with the programs through administration and operation.
2. *Community served*—educational programs serve varied and identified target groups in the community.
3. *Public facility*—program services are sufficiently concentrated at public facilities such as Waipahu Intermediate and Waipahu Community School, Waipahu Community





4. Library, and Waipahu Cultural Garden Park.
4. Scope of activities—many of the programs are beyond the regular instructional program and are already demanding extra time from volunteers during the nights and weekends.
5. Community needs—systematic procedures for identifying, documenting, and responding to the community needs, interests, and concerns include recommendations from the Waipahu Community Association (through their surveys and meetings) and other agencies in the community, but more importantly, there are statistical data from the media and the schools about rise in crime. Problem indicators such as fights, truancy, and vandalism are systematically documented by the schools.
6. Community resources and cooperative arrangements—professional, social, and community agencies are direct resources, and cooperative arrangements are ongoing, e.g., YMCA volunteers, contact with the Waipahu Inter-Agency Council, and other community groups.
7. Clients—programs are primarily designed to serve intermediate students and their parents, but extend to other age groups.
8. Participation—there are advisory groups at every level of the school and community, such as PTAs, principal advisory groups, Leeward District Advisory Council, and community resources are readily available for participation.

The extent to which these elements are incorporated in each specific program is different and depends on the characteristics of each program. However, the

Waipahu schools and community seem to be increasingly engaged in programs of community education.

#### Perspective

The broader view of education as seen from the perspective of community education can add more insight to the present programs and enhance the involvement with the community. The public school plays a large role in the educational process but is limited in facilitating the eight minimum elements of community education because of lack of money and personnel. Nonetheless, the eight minimum elements of community education can be incorporated to a small degree in the public school to initiate long term development.

The concept of community education should be a perpetual challenge for the schools and community and serve to bring everyone together in a cooperative relationship. The overall value of community education is creating an environment for living and learning. It is exciting to see community education at work in Waipahu.

#### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Job Description of the Waipahu Intermediate School Acculturation Worker. Derrick Mukai, 1978.

<sup>2</sup>Federal Register, United States Government, Vol. 40, No. 240.

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