THE POLICYMAKERS' PROGRAM

The First Five Years

VOLUME I

Statewide Strategies for Improving the Well-Being of Children and Families

the danforth foundation

JULY 1998

Sponsored by
THE DANFORTH FOUNDATION
In partnership with
Education Commission of the States
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Governors' Association

The Policymakers' Program: The First Five Years

Strategies for Improving the Well-Being of Children and Families

Volume I

The Danforth Foundation
1 Metropolitan Square
211 N. Broadway St.
St. Louis, MO 63102
314 588-1900 • Fax: 314 588-0035

JULY, 1998

The Danforth Foundation
1 Metropolitan Square
211 N. Broadway Street
St. Louis, Missouri 63102

Cosponsors

Education Commission of the States
707 17th St., Suite 2700
Denver, Colorado 80202

National Conference of State Legislatures
1560 Broadway, Suite 700
Denver, Colorado 80202

National Governors' Association
444 N. Capitol Street, NW,
Suite 267
Washington, D.C. 20001

Advisory Board Members

CONTENTS

FOREWORD

Why aren't our children learning more? How do we explain the increase in reported abuse of very young children? Why are so many young people in trouble in so many different ways—experimenting with drugs and alcohol, performing poorly in school, dropping out, becoming parents when scarcely more than children themselves, or running afoul of the juvenile justice system? Why is it that, along with their morning coffee, Americans so frequently have to absorb newspaper accounts of tragic failures to protect children and families by the very public agencies created to protect them? And, why is it that the more policy we develop about these problems, and the more money we spend, the harder it is to see success?

A big part of the answer to these questions is that many American families are in trouble. They are in trouble everywhere, and in the inner-city, they are in crisis.

Another part of the answer is less obvious but equally significant: Over the years, well-intentioned state policymakers—governors, legislators, and agency officials—have created so many different programs to meet the needs of children and families that the service delivery system itself is in trouble. It has become so fragmented and diffuse, cumbersome and inefficient, that it's hard to make it work, and it often fails to meet the needs for which it was designed.

Working with a blue-ribbon advisory board, the Danforth Foundation, in cooperation with the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association, has created a careful balance of "top-down" support for "bottom-up" reform to address these challenges. The Policymakers' Program is designed to help state and local leaders create a vision for children and families—and to define a process for achieving their vision that respects the unique traditions of each state and its communities. As a ten-year initiative, launched in 1992, the Policymakers' Program will end in 2002.

At the heart of the Policymakers' Program is a new way of thinking about how states and communities can best provide services. This new way of thinking emphasizes customers instead of clients, results as opposed to resources, prevention in place of correction, decentralization and deregulation instead of control and compliance, and collaboration and coordination in place of turf-protection and buck-passing. Above all, it insists that the family is the customer, not solely the child or an individual parent. And it seeks large-scale institutional change in how government operates rather than isolated demonstration projects designed to provide protective cover for on-going failure. This new way of thinking is not for the faint of heart.

Now in its sixth year, the Policymakers' Program has helped more than 300 legislators, agency heads, and governors and their advisors from some 40

states rethink human service organization and delivery in their communities. From those 40 states, the program selected 15 state teams (ranging in size from 12 to 27 people) and helped them develop comprehensive and coordinated community action plans tailored to their specific needs.

This approach has required a broad vision, included many participants, and developed new and important collaborations—new arrangements between state agencies, municipal and county governments, frontline service providers, and families. The program that is described in this report is based not only on good research but also on the reflections and experiences of friends and colleagues with years of experience in service design and delivery. Whether active in government—as executive staff, legislators, agency heads, superintendents, teachers, or social workers—or community consumers of state and local services, these colleagues fully understand the "Catch-22" nature of government organization and the frustrating variety of ambiguities and complexities accompanying service delivery.

This two-volume report describes the origins and development of the Policymakers' Program in its first six years. Volume I explains why and how the Policymakers' Program was created. It also describes how the program operates and includes brief overviews of state action plans—descriptions of how states and communities organized themselves and what they accomplished. It addresses how individual states and communities have benefited from the program. Finally, it draws some lessons from the history of the effort in the hope they may prove useful to philanthropic groups, state leaders, and others interested in supporting comprehensive community efforts to improve services for children and families. This volume is rounded out with five appendices describing the highlights of the program's introductory meetings in each of the first five years.

The companion Volume II provides detailed information on how the program was implemented, accompanied by tools for those who might want to replicate it, including letters inviting participation, meeting agendas, and a variety of frameworks related to large-scale institutional change.

In closing, I want to stress the significance of the "Lessons Learned" section in Volume I. The lessons include how the Foundation and its partners learned to work collaboratively with each other; ways to translate state policy into practice; how to develop and sustain collaborations across legislative committees and between agencies of government; and what must be considered when trying to bring a model program to scale.

Our experience with the Policymakers' Program demonstrates that states and communities are rich in resources, ideas, and goodwill. There is no shortage here. There is a commitment to addressing our most urgent domestic problems in new ways, especially through productive collaborations that involve the sharing of resources and joint accountability for results.

To the extent there is a shortage, it can be found in the sparsity of models showing how to transform these good intentions into reality. The Policymakers' Program helps fill this gap. It set out to engage policymakers in

the difficult task of improving the life chances for vulnerable children. It did so by helping policymakers create sound programs to support families so that their children can succeed in school and life. In that spirit, this report is dedicated to helping policymakers transform their ideas and goodwill into effective programs to improve results for children and families.

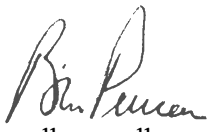
Robert H. Koff
Vice President
The Danforth Foundation

PREFACE

Every policymaker in every branch of government wants better results for every child. That the promises of life have not been fulfilled for all of our children is not for lack of interest or lack of trying. It is this basic understanding that has made the commitment of the Danforth Foundation to the Policymakers' Program so very important.

This is a program that has pursued a simple belief that there is nothing we can not accomplish for our kids and their families if we start out together and stay together. And so year after year and state after state, the Policymakers' Program has worked to bring the right people together in a way that permits them to reach the right results—as they see them. The blueprint for this process follows. I have led and attended many hearings, meetings, and conferences. I believe that this is the single best process yet developed to allow state and local policymakers to do all that they can do to deliver on the promises of birth in America.

It is a program and a process that has evolved throughout its life, as should we all. Much more can and must be done. Because of the Policymakers' Program, the support of the Danforth Foundation, and the participation of hundreds of poicymakers, I am confident it will be.



Bill Purcell
Advisory Board Chairperson and
Policymakers' Program Director
The Child and Family Policy Center
Vanderbilt Institute for Public
Policy Studies

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This report is a publication of the Danforth Foundation. It was written by Sharon Brumbaugh, James Harvey, and Beverly Parsons. They were generously supported in developing the document by staff from the Foundation's program partners—Gerrit Westervelt of the Education Commission of the States, Julie Davis Bell, and Jack Tweedy at the National Conference of State Legislatures, and John Barth at the National Governors' Association—and by Karen Edwards and Bill Purcell at Vanderbilt University's Child and Family Policy Center.

Many individuals and organizations made the Policymakers' Program possible. The Danforth Foundation wants to express its appreciation to them. Their support, help, and guidance underlie whatever successes the Policymakers' Program can claim.

The first acknowledgment goes to Danforth's three partners in the effort: the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association. The Foundation appreciates the many substantive contributions of the executive directors of these three organizations, Frank Newman, Bill Pound, and Ray Scheppach, respectively. In addition, the program benefited from the dedication of current and former staff at each of the associations, including Alex Medler, Chris Pipho, and Gerrit Westervelt from the Education Commission of the States, Louise Bauer, Julie Davis Bell, John Myers, Shelley Smith, Sheri Steisel, and Jack Tweedie from the National Conference of State Legislatures, and John Barth, Patricia Brown, Paul Goren, Linda McCart and Susan Traiman from the National Governors' Association. The Policymakers' Program could not have been launched without the hard work and dedication of the staff at each of these organizations over the years.

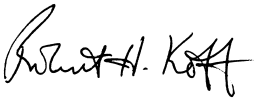
Next, the remarkable contributions of the members of the advisory board must be noted. All of them were generous with their time and unstinting in their efforts to provide their best guidance on how to get the most from the Policymakers' Program. In particular, the contributions of Representatives Ron Cowell (Pennsylvania) and Wilhelmina Delco (Texas), and Senator Jeb Spaulding (Vermont), are gratefully acknowledged. Each traveled many miles to represent the program ably at professional meetings and to share the lessons learned with their colleagues in state government.

Significant contributions also came from the four "co-founders" and long-term consultants to the program—Sharon Brumbaugh, James Harvey, Ken Nelson, and Beverly Parsons. They gave years of service to the effort and their collective capacity for insight and thoughtful reflection on how to proceed was invaluable.

Bill Purcell, Chairman of the Program Advisory Board, was exceptional. For several years, while serving as Majority Leader of the Tennessee General Assembly, he served on the program's advisory board, becoming chairman in the second year of the program's operation. In that capacity, he never failed

the second year of the program's operation. In that capacity, he never failed to generate interest and excitement among his colleagues in state legislatures across the country about what the program was trying to accomplish. Since 1997, from his new position as Director of the Child and Family Policy Center at Vanderbilt University, Mr. Purcell has assumed leadership of the program on behalf of the Danforth Foundation. The program has benefited immeasurably from his considerable talents. Many of the ideas that guide and shape it are Bill Purcell's; his judgments about how it should develop have been unerring. Throughout the life of the program, he has served as a model of compassion for the needs of vulnerable children and families and a source of great intellectual integrity for the program.

Finally, the contributions of 300 program participants from across the country were superb. Whatever their backgrounds—as governors, aides, legislators, or agency officials—each of them took program events seriously and returned home eager to improve service delivery. Each year, their suggestions and comments helped make the Policymakers' Program a better experience for their successors, and helped create better communities for the citizens they represent.



Robert H. Koff
Vice President
The Danforth Foundation

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Why aren't our children learning more? Why are so many young people in trouble in so many different ways—experimenting with drugs and alcohol, performing poorly in school, dropping out, becoming parents when scarcely more than children themselves, or running afoul of the juvenile justice system?

A big part of the answer to these questions is that many American families are in trouble. They are in trouble everywhere, and in the inner-city, they are in crisis.

The service delivery system is in trouble.

Another part of the answer is less obvious but equally significant: The service delivery system itself is in trouble. It has become so fragmented and diffuse, cumbersome and inefficient, that it's hard to make it work, and it often fails to meet the needs for which it was designed.

The Policymakers' Program is designed to help state and local leaders create a vision for children and families—and to define a process for achieving their vision that respects the unique traditions of each state and its communities. As a ten-year initiative, launched in 1992, the Policymakers' Program will end in 2002. Now in its sixth year, program has helped more than 300 officials from some 40 states rethink service delivery in their communities. From those 40 states, the program selected 15 state teams (ranging in size from 12 to 27 people) and helped them develop comprehensive community action plans tailored to their specific needs.

THE MISSION

The Policymakers' Program has an ambitious mission: **engaging state policymakers in the task of ensuring that all children and youth succeed in developing into healthy and productive citizens, capable of learning not only in school but throughout their lives.** Within that broad umbrella, the Policymakers' Program was designed to create five results for children and families:

1. A safe environment for children
2. Children coming to school ready to learn
3. Improved student achievement
4. Healthy families
5. Healthy and productive communities

Within this mission, the Policymakers' Program recognizes four key realities about today's policy environment:

1. The education and human service systems are under enormous stress and have difficulty coping with today's demands.

2. Neither schools nor social service agencies can assume full responsibility for the development of young people and effective education for all. Policy has to be grounded in the assumption that the first responsibility in these areas rests on the family
3. To provide first-rate services and education to children, youth, and families, new patterns of inter-relationship and responsibility among federal, state, and local levels of government must be developed.
4. Although the problems are universal, most solutions are local.

State and local agencies and personnel need to become more entrepreneurial, active, and flexible.

After five years of program operations, it is increasingly clear that a major reorientation of policy thinking is required to improve the delivery of education and other services. State and local agencies and personnel need to become more entrepreneurial, active, and flexible.

In many ways, according to the research presented to program participants, the attributes that characterize effective programs are undermined by the attributes of most existing government systems. Research consistently shows that effective programs in many education and social service areas are comprehensive and flexible, responsive and individualized, and provided by frontline workers encouraged to exercise a great deal of discretion. But most programs are the reverse—fragmented and categorical, rule-driven and standardized, and delivered by front-line workers who are hemmed in by so many restrictions they have hardly any discretion at all. It is no accident that although effective programs continually reinvent themselves because they are relentlessly oriented toward solving problems, existing systems change little over time.

A Unique Structure

The Policymakers' Program consists of two parts, both supported by the Danforth Foundation and implemented with its three cooperating partners, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association. The first part is comprised of a series of meetings on an annual cycle; the second part includes financial support and technical assistance, also funded by the Foundation. With this support and these resources, state teams and state-and-community teams are encouraged to develop action plans to reinvent service delivery in their areas.

States have developed and implemented a broad array of change strategies in response to the Policymakers' Program. One of the attractive features of the program is that it makes no effort to impose a template or blueprint on state actions. There is no attempt to force a "one-size-fits-all" solution on state leaders.

- **New York** recently passed legislation on school-community collaboration, supported by pooled funding from six state agencies and full-time staff.

- **Utah**, through its FACT (Families, Agencies, and Communities Together) initiative, has implemented collaborative funding for communities to better serve at-risk children and their families.
- **Vermont** initially built statewide public ownership over improving outcomes for children, youth and families and then helped the city of Barre identify areas in need of attention by packaging data in a user-friendly fashion.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

The most successful participating states demonstrated five major benefits.

Program participants invariably describe the value of their participation in glowing terms. Over the years, participants have identified five major program benefits in their states:

1. Building relationships among key leaders who, in their own arenas, can support the new directions
2. Establishing a shared conceptual framework among leaders regarding what must be changed to achieve better results for children and families
3. Helping leaders produce concrete action plans
4. Providing leaders with specific examples of what works
5. Beginning to document the effects on children

The most successful participating states demonstrated most of these major benefits during the life of the program.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Over the five years of the program, nine significant steps appeared most critical to advancing state action plans. Program planners began thinking of these as key elements of success.

1. **Start with Numbers.** The use of data to aid decision making and evaluate results has been an integral part of the Policymakers' Program from the outset. The most effective teams turned out to be those which built data usage into their plans to monitor the conditions of children and families and to tie data to specific benchmarks of achievement.
2. **Think of Systems, Not Programs.** "If you are building a house and you leave a plank out, the house is basically all right. But if you leave a plank out of a boat, it sinks," one expert told program participants. Build boats, not houses, was his advice—that is to say, think comprehensively about government systems, not narrowly about government programs.

3. **Adopt Collaboration as a Way of Life.** Collaboration is not just a question of "What can you do for me?" or "What can I do for you?" It is more than simply coordination and cooperation. Collaboration implies shared budgets, joint accountability for results, integrated professional development activities, and the development of new relationships across branches of government, between government agencies, and between state and local units of government. The most effective collaboration is grounded in the question: "What together can we do for the people we are supposed to serve?"

4. **Engage the Public in Terms It Can Understand.** The most effective programs demonstrated strong, clear communication strategies, both within and across agencies and between government and the public. The Policymakers' Program has consistently emphasized that engaging the public on its own terms—using communication as "public engagement"—is vital to the service reform agenda. It is a method for involving the public in designing system change.

5. **Develop Capacity in Local Communities.** As experienced in most of the participating states, persuading state agencies to collaborate is child's play compared to the challenge of creating a system of "devolution," designed to put authority and decisions for the same programs in local hands. It is the difference between "horizontal" service integration at the state level and a combination of "vertical" integration between state and local agencies and "horizontal" integration at the community level.

6. **Create a Critical Mass of People Who Care.** Creating and sustaining the conditions for successful systems reform involves human resources in a big way. The human side of the equation has at least two dimensions: first, finding the right people and investing in them, and second, finding enough of them. Most state teams discovered they had to create a critical mass of people who understood what needed to be done, and they had to expand the size of the state team dramatically when it returned from Policymakers' Program events.

7. **Beg, Borrow, and Steal Effective Policy Ideas.** "There are very weak patent-infringement laws prohibiting state governments from stealing ideas from each other," one state official told his peers at a Policymakers' Program meeting. His advice: beg, borrow, and steal good ideas from every source. As this participant's comments make clear, when leaders from Missouri, Pennsylvania, and Iowa describe shared ideas about governance, statewide congresses, or budgeting for results, their colleagues from other states sit up and pay attention.

8. **Follow the Money.** Talking about systems reform is cheap and easy. The real action occurs when you budget resources to put

Key Elements of Success

- Start with Numbers
- Think of Systems, not Programs
- Adopt Collaboration as a Way of Life
- Engage the Public in Terms It can Understand
- Develop Capacity in Local Communities
- Create a Critical Mass of People Who Care
- Beg, Borrow, and Steal Effective Policy Ideas
- Follow the Money
- Insist on Results

behind the rhetoric. Several states in the Policymakers' Program are addressing one of the biggest political and programmatic challenges in the change process—budgeting and reallocating financial resources. Too often, changes are piloted with somebody else's money. Unfortunately, when the outside money disappears, the changes generally disappear too. If reform is to take root and grow, the official systems of the state, and the financial resources backing them up, must be redesigned to nourish change.

9. **Insist on Results.** Finally, one of the foundation themes of the Policymakers' Program from the outset was the need to insist on results, assess progress, and be accountable to the public. One expert told participants they needed to worry about five major outcome and assessment measures: (1) outcome measures on the status of children; (2) self-evaluating delivery systems with ongoing evaluation; (3) systematic and timely performance assessment; (4) a reliable information system; and (5) public information about children's welfare and the performance of the system. "If you're going to get into this," he said, "you have to be serious about it."

LESSONS LEARNED

In addition to those key elements of success, important lessons have been learned about mounting these efforts. How should they be initiated? Who should be involved? When is the right time to begin? If another foundation or association wanted to start something similar, what could it learn from the experience of the Policymakers' Program? Ten lessons appear to be most important:

1. **Give Ownership Away**. At the program design level, no single individual or organization possesses all of the relevant knowledge and expertise required. Program design is improved immeasurably when the circle of ownership is expanded so that more people feel they have a stake in the program's success. Similar considerations apply to program implementation—both at the state and community levels. State officials have a much better understanding of what is required to assist communities within their borders than national program designers; and nobody understands community needs better than community leaders, either civic or elected. It is not an abrogation of responsibility to give program ownership away to state and local leaders, but an act of faith in the basic good sense of democratic decision-making at the community level.

2. **Work with Intermediary Organizations.** One of the keys to getting the Policymakers' Program off the ground quickly was the Foundation's ability to work with several respected organizations representing key state-level constituencies. The Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association each

brought their own expertise and point of view to bear, and each of them helped provide instant credibility for the effort.

3. **Model the Behavior You Seek**. Two convictions are essential to the Policymakers' Program. First is the notion that state agencies and leaders need to be much more open to new ideas. Second is that new styles of cooperation and collaboration must be developed. Danforth and its partners found their behavior needed to model both of these convictions.

   In being open to new ideas, Danforth and its three partners wound up with a Policymakers' Program in the fifth year that they had not envisioned in the first. It includes a state and community Summer Institute, on-site technical assistance, convening teams prior to participating in the Institute, and state-specific briefing papers.

   Moreover, Danforth and its partners often found themselves engaged in the same tug-of-war with each other (and within their own organizations) that they were trying to diminish or eliminate at the policy level. Working through these challenges was time-consuming and difficult. Although not always successful, it was always time well spent.

4. **Rely on Peers to Carry the Message.** Without a doubt, the most successful aspect of the Policymakers' Program was its reliance on a mix of experts to describe problems and to frame solutions while state officials and legislators described how they had approached the problem. The extent of cross-fertilization of policy ideas from state to state was one of the more visible aspects of the program's success, an aspect directly attributable to the program's decision to rely on peers to make the case and carry the message.

5. **Build the Capacity to Support Collaboration**. Sustained collaboration occurs only when funds, time, and personnel are allocated to its accomplishment. State and local policymakers need to understand the power of data in creating a climate conducive to change, supporting new policies, and sustaining change agendas over time. Improving outcomes for children is dependent on measuring, tracking, and reporting outcome data. Policymakers and foundations should not underestimate the importance and the difficulty of this challenge. Building this capacity in states and communities is critical if changes in practice and policy are to continue.

6. **Understand that Different Communities Are at Different Stages.** It is impossible to overstate the need for flexibility in initiating and supporting an effort such as this. Each of the participating states is at different stages of development in terms of collaboration and cooperation, and a program such as the Policymakers' Program needs to respect that diversity. In the end, respecting the process required to move the change-agenda along became almost as important as the agenda. Change takes time. Here, process became the vehicle for developing shared understandings and a commitment

to a vision of new possibilities; for clarifying who was responsible for what and why they were responsible for it; for holding individuals and agencies accountable; and for helping governors and legislators get their policies aligned.

7. **Collaboration is Simply a Means to an End.** Although process is important, the program had to continuously guard against letting the process become the point of the whole exercise. Collaboration (or the process of collaboration) is not an end in itself; it is simply a means to an end. Attaining the end, that is, delivering services more effectively so that state and community agencies can actually demonstrate results for children and vulnerable families, required going beyond the vocabulary of cooperation to address the practical difficulties of collaborative implementation. It required taking up tough and difficult issues such as joint budgeting, shared accountability, and assessment of results. But after all, that was the point—improving results for children by delivering services more effectively, not collaborating simply for the sake of collaboration.

8. **Focus Relentlessly on Practice, Data, and Results.** One of the most effective strategies the Policymakers' Program developed was a means of sidestepping partisan and ideological disputes by concentrating on best practice, poring over data, and insisting on meaningful results. Most of this strategy, particularly the emphasis on data and results, was conscious and planned.

   When data and results are presented in a user-friendly fashion, policymakers immediately see their value. The lessons learned here are that data need to be comprehensible; evaluations need to be related to policy questions; and policymakers need to participate in selecting the indicators, because that way they come to understand what is being measured and why it is important.

9. **Stability is Essential.** The need for continuity amidst change is a paradox; nonetheless, stability is critical to the systems-change agenda. The continuity required is not stability in the system, but stability in the change agenda and the reform impulse. The loss of powerful champions in either the legislative or executive branches can be fatal to the reform effort, hence there is a significant need to bring on board mid-level employees capable of keeping change on track, regardless of what happens at the top. Unless the bureaucracy is on board, whenever turnover occurs at the top, the most regressive features of the status quo will almost inevitably resurface.

10. **Visionaries Have to be Practical Too.** A second paradox of the change process is that while vision is important, reformers who don't have their feet on the ground aren't likely to get very far. Visionaries have to be practical too. To get anything done in a public environment, reformers need to make sure they bring the right people to the table. In an environment that is not only public but also political, the plan must be something that provides for some

Lessons Learned

- Give Ownership Away
- Work with Intermediary Organizations
- Model the Behavior You Seek
- Rely on Peers to Carry the Message
- Build the Capacity to Support Collaboration
- Understand that Different Communities Are at Different Stages
- Collaboration is Simply a Means to an End
- Focus Relentlessly on Practice, Data, and Results
- Stability is Essential
- Visionaries Have to be Practical Too
- Don't Underestimate the Power of Leadership

demonstrable results within two years. Vision was one of the most important attributes the Policymakers' Program tried to develop during its processes. But to move forward, the vision needed to be harnessed to an effective plan. In the end, it turned out the visionaries had to be practical, too.

11. **Don't Underestimate the Power of Leadership.** Over the years, states that have been the most successful in moving forward in their education and human services collaboration have had powerful leaders as advocates within the legislative and executive branches of government. In particular, progress appeared to be enhanced by a supportive governor, bipartisan legislative leadership, and a history of collaborative leadership on the part of the heads of state agencies responsible for such areas as education, human services, and health. Leaders willing to create and expand such a history is essential.

A Foundation for the Future

Danforth and its partners have put down a sturdy foundation for future success with the Policymakers' Program. Several hundred state leaders from dozens of states have been exposed to the ideas underlying the program. Teams from 15 states have completed a detailed process for developing statewide plans. Two communities in two states have become formally involved in the effort. As the program has moved forward, the partners have learned a great deal.

What remains to be seen is whether the promise at the state level can be duplicated in local communities. It also remains to be seen if success in a relative handful of communities can be brought to scale and replicated broadly elsewhere. Finally, it is of paramount importance that participating teams and state personnel become self-sufficient. They must develop their own capacity to handle data, to develop good reports, to become team facilitators, and generally to move consistently toward the changes they seek on their own—after the Foundation and all its consultants have left. These remaining challenges will define the agenda of the Policymakers' Program for the next five years.

THE POLICYMAKERS' PROGRAM: THE FIRST FIVE YEARS

Early in 1992 the Danforth Foundation convened a group of policymakers and experts to explore the possibility of establishing an "Education Policymakers' Institute" to help state leaders improve schools. As these discussions proceeded, however, it became clear that the effort needed to be broader and more encompassing, extending well beyond children, education, and a single institute. To be genuinely effective, school-improvement efforts needed to take parents and families into account. For many of these children and families, the community infrastructure also needed to be examined—child care, job opportunities, economic development, health and mental health services, child protective services, and the juvenile justice system. It was obvious that a one-shot institute could hardly take up and address this multitude of issues in a thorough or thoughtful fashion. The Foundation decided it must redefine its focus and examine learning through these broader lenses—families, communities, and intensive, ongoing support of the professional growth of policymakers.

The Policymakers' Program's mission: engaging state policymakers in the task of ensuring that all children and youth succeed.

THE MISSION

The Policymakers' Program was launched as a concept with an ambitious mission: **engaging state policymakers in the task of ensuring that all children and youth succeed in developing into healthy and productive citizens, capable of learning not only in school but throughout their lives.** The Foundation made a ten-year commitment to this effort.

Within that broad umbrella, the Policymakers' Program was designed to create five results for children and families:

1. A safe environment for children
2. Children coming to school ready to learn
3. Improved student achievement
4. Healthy families
5. Healthy and productive communities

The program's mission and goals, so easy to state, have proven frustrating and difficult to attain. Only in 1998, after five full years of operation, is the Policymakers' Program able to see patterns of impact and draw together some lessons from its experience.

THE INHERITANCE OF PROBLEMS FROM THE PAST

Today's policymakers have inherited many problems. Indeed, the policymaking process has, over the years, left state leaders with a fragmented and diffuse set of programs. Policymakers find themselves like mechanics with a toolkit

split between standard and metric wrenches; sometimes the tool fits the problem, but often it doesn't.

In some ways, policy fragmentation is a natural consequence of defining who's in charge. At one level, this problem is little more than the familiar issue of turf protection. Different legislative committees jealously guard their policy jurisdictions from each other. Executive and legislative leaders keep a wary eye on each other to ensure their individual prerogatives are respected. Frequently, partisan differences contribute to policymaker tensions.

Policy fragmentation is a natural consequence of defining who's in charge.

But at a more fundamental level, the challenge involves profound policy and philosophical issues. Education is traditionally understood to be a state responsibility and a local prerogative. Parents bear the major responsibility for their children, not government agencies. Protecting children (or spouses) is a difficult, complicated, and sensitive thing, requiring clear bounds on government's relationship with families. Against the backdrop of these issues, how should intergovernmental relations be understood in a federal-state-local system? And, what is the relationship of the family (and the individual) to the state?

Whatever the cause or causes, fragmented policymaking has led to fragmented policy. Most states now have many disconnected program and funding streams with a cumulative impact that is much less powerful than it should be.

Paradoxically, the very programs designed to support families, to educate and to protect children—education, health, human services, employment counseling and job placement, public assistance, juvenile justice, and mental health and early childhood programs—often work at cross purposes. They are overseen by different legislative committees, budgeted separately, and administered independently. And, at the end of the line, these services are often provided through distinct delivery systems, which may be prohibited from sharing case-load information with each other because of concerns about privacy.

During a program review some years ago, **Florida** officials identified one family that, in a single 30-month period, experienced:

- 40 referrals to different community providers;
- 17 separate evaluations;
- 13 different case managers; and
- 10 independent treatment plans, including three family support plans, a foster care plan, and a protective services plan.

A researcher told of a similar tale recounted by a **Pennsylvania** woman. Over several weeks, she had to endure 55 different interviews with social workers from 30 different agencies, all demanding a separate case history which they refused to share with each other because of concerns about confidentiality. Recalling her efforts to maintain a consistent account for each of these caseworkers, the women commented: "You know, you have to be smart in Philadelphia to be poor."

To their credit, many states and communities have begun to take up these challenges. Still, too many children and families are poorly served under the status quo. Inevitably, some fall through the service cracks, sometimes with tragic consequences.

The fragmentation of the service-delivery system must be addressed. Public agencies can't maintain their credibility in the midst of this confusion. Taxpayers can't be expected to support such inefficiency and lack of accountability. Fraud, waste, and abuse are likely to be encouraged when the left hand doesn't know what the right hand is doing. Above all, children and families in need of protection, life's necessities, and a decent future may be left to shift for themselves if corrective action isn't taken.

New patterns of inter-relationship and responsibility… must be developed.

A New Way of Thinking

At the heart of the Policymakers' Program is a new way of thinking about how social systems function. The Policymakers' approach emphasizes simultaneous doing and learning. The program's sponsors believe in investing in people and leadership development and are committed to the power of "learning-while-doing" to shape and guide actions to reach goals.

The Policymakers' Program recognizes four key realities about today's policy environment:

1. The education and human service systems are under enormous stress and have difficulty coping with today's demands. High demand for services and insufficient or poorly allocated resources are significant sources of tension. The existence of many centers of power at the state and local levels, combined with overlapping jurisdictions and complicated application procedures, make it difficult for people to obtain the services they need. At the same time, these conditions also complicate any efforts for improvement.
2. Neither schools nor social service agencies can assume full responsibility for the development of young people and effective education for all. Policy has to be grounded in the assumption that the first responsibility in these areas rests on the family. In the few cases where the immediate family is unable or incapable of responding, services should be comprehensive, incorporating the contributions of other family members, service providers, and community leaders as well as those who receive services, those who prepare service providers, and other units of government.
3. To provide first-rate services and education to children, youth, and families, new patterns of inter-relationship and responsibility among federal, state, and local levels of government must be developed. Top-down approaches need to be rethought, the command-and-control mentality must be reined in, and more effective patterns of collaboration and coordination need to be invented and implemented.

4. Although the problems are universal, most solutions are local. Moreover, although national leadership on these issues is frequently urgent, state policymaking is the key intersection at which federal, state, and local capabilities to deal with these problems can be drawn together and pointed in the right direction.

After five years of operating the program, it is increasingly clear that a major reorientation of policy thinking is required to improve the delivery of education and other services. State and local agencies and personnel need to become more entrepreneurial, active, and flexible (Table 1). They are asked to move away from old service models emphasizing crisis intervention, state direction, and the ad hoc delivery of discrete, isolated (and largely undocumented) services to a new model focused on prevention, cooperation, and coordination, and locally driven, results-oriented, data-based decision making.

A major reorientation of policy thinking is required to improve the delivery of services.

In many ways, according to the research presented to program participants, the attributes that characterize effective programs are undermined by the attributes of most existing government systems. Research consistently shows that effective programs in many education and social service areas are comprehensive and flexible, responsive and individualized, and provided by frontline workers encouraged to exercise a great deal of discretion. Unfortunately, most programs are the reverse—fragmented and categorical, rule-driven and standardized, and delivered by frontline workers hemmed in by so many restrictions they have hardly any discretion at all.

Moreover, the most effective programs are preventive and shaped by client needs. They collaborate across systems, demonstrate a pattern of mutual trust between client and agency, and insist on accountability in the form of results. What we have instead runs directly counter to these characteristics. Most of our program orientation is crisis-directed, defined by agency preferences, suspicious of collaboration, oriented toward immense case loads and the impersonalization accompanying them, and comfortable with accountability shaped by inputs instead of results. It is hardly any accident that although effective programs continually reinvent themselves because they are relentlessly oriented toward solving problems, existing systems change little over time.

Progress toward the new way of thinking encouraged by the Policymakers' Program is slow, but apparent. All too often, quick fixes, silver-bullet solutions, and expectations of nearly instantaneous change dominate the policy discussion. From the beginning, however, this program has emphasized that change occurs incrementally in a multi-stage process that moves away from maintenance of the existing system towards predominance of the new model.

There should be no misunderstanding. Different actors (e.g., elected state officials, members of the general public, state agency officials, and local service-providers) may be at different stages of the process at the same time. For example, elected state officials may be ahead of the public in becoming aware of the need for change, but might be behind local leaders in their willingness to explore alternatives. Or, some local service providers may be intent on maintaining existing systems, while their clients are demanding something new.

Table 1
A New Way of Thinking about Social Systems

FROM		TO
Crisis intervention	➜	Prevention, recognizing and developing the untapped capabilities of youth
Little attention to documenting the impact of changes	➜	Well-designed documentation of changes in conditions for children, youth, and families
Isolated services	➜	Coordinated services for children and families with multiple needs
Welfare	➜	A work force and community-building emphasis including economic development
State directives	➜	State government working with communities as equal partners
State decisions	➜	Community capacity building (empowering communities to identify their needs and design their own systems to meet those needs)
Defined programs	➜	Flexible initiatives grounded in philosophies that can then be converted into programs or projects at a local level
Activities detached from results	➜	Locally driven, results-oriented decision making and budgeting
Categorized funds	➜	Decategorization and flexibility of state and federal funds

CHANGE—A MULTI-STAGE PROCESS

Although each of these actors may be in a different place within the change process, all of them seem to go through essentially the same six stages:

- **Stage 1: Maintenance of the Old System.** Maintaining the system as originally designed is paramount. Participants do not recognize that the system is fundamentally "out of sync" with today's world. New knowledge about learning, service provision, or organizational structures has not been incorporated into the structure.
- **Stage 2: Awareness.** Multiple stakeholders become aware that the current system is not working as well as it should, but they are unclear about what is needed instead.
- **Stage 3: Exploration.** Frontline workers, administrators, and policymakers study and visit places trying new approaches. Then they try new ways, generally in low-risk situations.

- **Stage 4: Transition.** A critical number of opinion leaders and groups commit themselves to the new system and take more risks to encourage change in crucial places. They selectively reject old ways of operating.
- **Stage 5: Emergence of New Infrastructure.** Some elements of the desired new system are operating on a fairly wide basis. These new ways are generally accepted.
- **Stage 6: Predominance of New System.** Most elements of the system generally operate as defined by the new model. Key leaders begin to envision even better systems.

Although actors may be in a different place within the change process, all seem to go through six stages.

In essence, the Policymakers' Program is an effort that operates at the interstices of stages 2, 3, and 4. It works to help key leaders, already aware that what is in place is not good enough, to begin to explore their alternatives and position their states for the transition that is needed.

During its first years, members of the Policymakers' Program have witnessed stage 5, "Emergence of a New Infrastructure," beginning to take shape. In 1993, for example, many state officials saw little reason to coordinate their activities and frequently resisted efforts to encourage collaboration with their colleagues in other agencies. Today, while coordination and cooperation are hardly the norm, this kind of thinking is largely taken for granted and active agency resistance is harder to identify. At the outset, a command-and-control mentality dominated state policy thinking; today, partnerships with local agencies and community capacity-building are equally likely to be on display. While categorical funding defined state programs as the 1990s began, flexibility and deregulation of funding are the watchwords as the decade draws to a close. Although the Policymakers' Program cannot take credit for these changes and makes no effort to do so, it has played a role in encouraging them.

Indeed, the Policymakers' Program has itself experienced a similar metamorphosis. Launched to improve state policymaking procedures, it tacitly assumed that local practice would fall into line with state changes. As it enters its second five-year period, the program has come to recognize that making a genuine difference in the lives of children and families requires building collaboration at the local level and developing stronger partnerships between state and local units of government.

What is most encouraging is that program participants explicitly recognize the conceptual transformation they have been invited to encourage. They consistently identify the development of a new way of thinking about how systems operate and how change occurs as one of the major benefits of their participation.

A Unique Structure

The Policymakers' Program consists of two parts, both supported by the Danforth Foundation and implemented with its three cooperating partners. The first part is comprised of a series of meetings on an annual cycle; the second part includes financial support and technical assistance, also funded by the Danforth Foundation (Technical Assistance).

The Annual Meeting Cycle

The annual meetings are the framework on which the program builds time for sustained collaboration among policymakers across traditional boundaries of turf and authority. Two separate meetings are held each year. The Legislative Chairs' and Governors' Meeting is held in January. The Summer Institute focuses on creating linkages on the local level.

The Policymakers' Program consists of two parts:

- *a series of meetings on an annual cycle*
- *financial support and technical assistance*

Since the program began, Danforth estimates that more than 300 state officials from about 40 states have participated in the January meetings; and 15 state teams (ranging in size from 12 to 27 people) have completed the Summer Institute.

These meetings were (and are) invariably intensive and demanding, beginning early in the morning and running late at night. They give state teams the opportunity to hear from national and international experts on a wide variety of issues—ranging from demographics, poverty, and social trends to polling analysis and the theoretical underpinnings of social change. Participants are also active presenters in their own right, with legislative chairs, for example, describing to their colleagues from other states how their legislature plans to deal with the latest federal directive on child care, skills training, or welfare reform. Program "alumni" often serve as key resources at the January meeting and the Summer Institute. Finally, each meeting provides sustained team-building time to encourage the state team to develop and refine its state action plan; indeed, time for team-building and planning predominates the agenda during the Summer Institutes.

The value of these meetings is indisputable, but difficult to capture. In the first years of the program, many participants commented that the program represented their first opportunity as legislators from education and human services committees to come together to discuss the clients they shared in common. In some cases, it was first time these legislators had ever talked together about issues involving children and families. Today, the idea of collaboration between education and human services policymakers is no longer a foreign concept.

January Legislative Chairs' and Governors' Meeting

States officially begin their involvement in the program by sending a cross-agency leadership team to the Legislative Chairs' and Governors' Meeting in January of each year, about the time most legislative sessions begin. Teams typically include a representative of the governor, ranking majority and minority members of major education and human service committees, and

key agency heads. Teams are introduced to the rationale for system change, key issues for states to consider, general strategies for promoting change, attributes of successful programs, and implementation issues. They also learn about the opportunity to submit a proposal to the Danforth Foundation to participate in a five-day Summer Institute, with a larger team (perhaps 12-15 people) made up of state and community leaders.

State and Local Policymakers' Summer Institute

Making change happen requires local action.

The Summer Institute began in 1992 with primarily state-level leaders. By 1996, however, program designers realized that unless states can mobilize local action it is difficult to document results for children and families. State government, like its national counterpart, is often too far away to influence results decisively. Making change happen requires local action. The new Summer Institute, in 1997, establishes a local-action mechanism that simultaneously informs state leaders of the need for policy change and empowers local communities to act.

The first State and Community Policymakers' Summer Institute began with teams from Barre, **Vermont,** and University City, **Missouri.** Each community team consisted of key community leaders and service providers as well as a core group of state agency leaders, including the heads of the Departments of Human Resources and Education from both states. At the Institute, teams devoted five days to developing their own state-specific action plan for addressing key issues related to children and families. The success of this pilot convinced the Advisory Board of the Policymakers' Program that this component should be considered a fundamental element in the remaining years of the program.

Teams at the Summer Institute are made up predominantly of local leaders representing communities that have not had a serious opportunity to tackle action planning for improving conditions for children and families, but that are committed to change. The teams also include key state leaders who participate to give specific assistance to the community leaders and to understand better what modifications are required in state policies, structures, practices, norms, and expectations if other communities are to benefit and take similar steps. See Appendix A for a list of Summer Institute team members from 1993 to 1997.

Technical Assistance

The second element of the Policymakers' Program is made up of technical assistance (supported by Danforth) to help states develop their plans combined with mini-grants to begin implementing them.

State and state-and-community teams are selected to participate in the summer institute in the early Spring. Teams accepted for the Summer Institute receive substantial technical assistance before, during, and after the Institute. The program supports development of briefing papers on state demographics, student achievement, and social indicators; professional facili-

tators at pre-institute planning meetings and during the Institute itself; and funding for team meetings in the state prior to the Institute. The facilitator helps establish two meetings of the team before the Institute to begin the process of problem identification and planning.

The program, tailored to meet the needs of individual states, encourages early identification of team members and extensive pre-institute planning with the assistance of consultants and facilitators. At these pre-institute meetings, several major tools, developed with Danforth Foundation support, are provided to the state teams. These tools, described more completely in Volume II, have included:

The program is tailored to meet the needs of individual states.

- a state-specific demographic report developed by Harold "Bud" Hodgkinson, a prominent demographer who concentrates on issues related to children, families, and education;
- an analysis of "What's Working" in terms of policy to improve student achievement, developed by the RAND Corporation's David Grissmer; and
- a guide to concepts of system change, developed by Beverly Parsons of InSites, a Support Network for Educational Change

The facilitators not only help assemble the teams and meet with them prior to the institute, they also assist their teams during the Institute and are available to them after it.

Finally, following attendance at the Summer Institute, teams are encouraged to apply for a foundation mini-grant, normally no more than $15,000, to be used to begin implementing their action plan and to document the results for children.

The map (Figure 1) identifies the 40 states that have participated in the Policymakers' Program since its inception. It includes states that sent teams to the January meeting and identifies the 15 states that continued their involvement through the Summer Institute—either the state-level institute held each year from 1992-1997 or the more recent State and Community Institute.

The program designers' goal is to end the 10-year program with at least a handful of states capable of documenting genuine and lasting local improvements for children and families. At the same time, the Advisory Board hopes the program elements associated with the program—the January meeting and the Summer Institute—will be operating so effectively by the time Danforth support ends in the year 2002 that state leaders and other funders will be interested in continuing them.

State and Local Responses

States have developed and implemented a broad array of change strategies in response to the Policymakers' Program. One of the attractive features of the program is that it makes no effort to impose a template or blueprint on state

actions. There is no attempt to force a "one-size-fits-all" solution on state leaders.

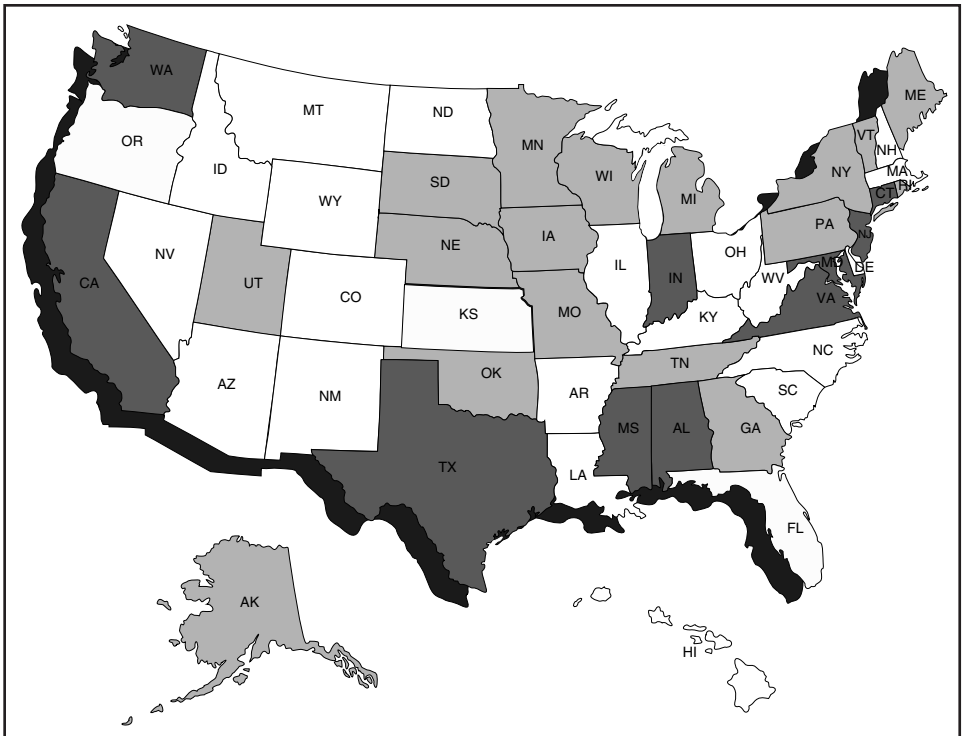


FIGURE 1 — PARTICIPATION MAP

Implicit in the program design is the incredible economic, demographic, and ethnic diversity of American states and communities.

Implicit in the program design is the incredible economic, demographic, and ethnic diversity of American states and communities. This variety complicates the Policymakers' effort greatly. Some states actively attempt to shape local policy; others are steadfast in their commitment to local control. Counties and cities are likely to define local government in many states; in other states, major local issues are decided on the basis of broad participation in town meetings. Economically, demographically, and culturally, Vermont has little more in common with Florida or Massachusetts than Wyoming has with California or New York. The challenge of improving government services is common everywhere; but in every state it presents itself anew and differently.

Each participating state team did what it thought best in the context of its own state's needs and accomplished what it could. Embedded in the program is the belief that states and communities must design their own approaches to systems reform. All of the states approached the problem from their unique perspectives (Table 2). For a variety of reasons, some efforts did not advance very far. In other states, however, significant progress was reported. For example:

- **New York** recently passed legislation on school-community collaboration, supported by pooled funding from six state agencies and full-time staff, to provide technical assistance to local governments and schools in support of school-based and school-linked services. Grants are awarded to counties wishing to foster new partnerships to improve the well-being of children, youth, and families.
- **Utah**, through its FACT (Families, Agencies, and Communities Together) initiative, has established a framework for collaborative service-delivery systems and implemented collaborative funding for communities to better serve at-risk children and their families. In order to help communities build local capacity for this new framework, 20 state employees are being trained as technical assistants.
- **Vermont**, with strong leadership from the heads of the Agency of Human Services and the Department of Education accompanied by significant legislative support, initially built public ownership of the importance of improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. By 1997, state agencies were ready to help the city of Barre identify areas in need of attention by packaging data in a user-friendly fashion and categorizing key indicators by county and school district.

Participation in the Policymakers' Program was a powerful means of building trust among key … leaders within their state.

In short, the Policymakers' Program encouraged states to experiment with a number of promising strategies for improving program delivery. Some of these experiments were successful; others were less so. Nonetheless, in about half of these states, programs leaders believe their efforts helped improve service delivery. In no state does the program claim full credit for what developed. In most instances, however, it helped accelerate developments already underway.

In the remaining years of the program, the program will concentrate its efforts on the link between state and local policymaking and action through the State and Community Summer Institute. The intent will be to work with communities in states such as **Vermont** that have already completed the State Institute or in states that have successfully gone through a similar experience on their own, without the benefit of the Policymakers' Program.

PROGRAM BENEFITS

Program participants report major policy initiatives and statewide change as well as significant individual growth and increased clarity about issues as a result of participating in the Policymakers' Program. Participants have been able to apply the new way of thinking advocated by the program to the work they do within their education and human services systems regardless of whether or not the entire team made progress on its plan.

Many participants commented that their participation in the Policymakers' Program was a powerful means of building trust among key (formal and informal) leaders within their states. And that trust is laying the foundation for long-term change.

Table 2
State Strategies: Strength in Diverse Approaches

State (Institute Participation)	Strategy
Alaska 1996	Planned to develop a benchmarking process and improve data collection and analysis to help develop integrated and flexible community-based service systems.
Georgia 1994	Planned to develop a collaborative governance structure and implement changes to improve child health and development, family functioning, and school performance.
Iowa 1994	Building on existing history of decategorization of state funding, Iowa has concentrated on broadening and deepening collaboration among state agencies and on providing technical assistance to six communities.
Maine 1996	Planned to develop a "Communities for Children" initiative, a collaborative partnership between state and local governments to empower local communities to identify problems and to develop solutions based on local needs.
Minnesota 1993	Focused on school finance by encouraging a new Coalition for Education Reform and Accountability to recommend maximum use of existing resources for education and the transfer of additional resources from other public programs.
Missouri 1997	Having brought five state agencies together for joint budgeting in Caring Communities initiative, used program to engage schools on a pilot basis in University City.
Nebraska 1994	Planned to encourage establishment of a statewide system for serving children and families by creating three model communities with the capacity to coordinate support systems and provide greater citizen access.
New York 1996	Concentrated on children's health, safety, and achievement and enacted legislation on school-community collaboration backed up by pooled funding from six state agencies.
Oklahoma 1997	Planned to encourage economically sound communities capable of supporting needs of children and families by developing public/private partnerships, building local capacity, and improving data collection and reporting.
Pennsylvania 1993	Attempted to improve services for children and families by expanding state team; reviewing services; improving cross-department training; and encouraging the governor to sponsor a statewide Children's Congress
Rhode Island 1997	Aimed to ensure that children enter school ready to learn and leave it prepared for productive lives by a variety of means including economic development, collaboration across state agencies, and the development of a children's budget.
South Dakota 1995	Hoped to improve access to high quality child care services and encourage awareness of needs by providing a template for community change and improving data collection to identify gaps in services.
Tennessee 1997	With a seven-part agenda covering the health, safety, and learning of children and youth, planned to increase community involvement in identifying needs and to improve agency connections with public schools and higher education.
Utah 1995	Building on history of collaborative efforts to improve state policy on children, youth, and families, planned to improve communication among agencies, document problems, and strengthen agency budget flexibility and collaboration.
Vermont 1993 & 1997	With support from the departments of education and of human services, and the governor and legislative leaders, launched a statewide series of community forums on the importance of school-community collaboration. Worked with the city of Barre in the first State and Community Summer Institute in 1997.

Participants in the program invariably describe the value of their participation in glowing terms. "This time was a gift," said one state director of social services. Policymakers is "the most innovative program available to state officials," said a legislator, "the state government equivalent of winning the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes." Said another legislator: "I can't think of a single piece of legislation we've passed as a result of participating in this, but I know that what I've learned at these meetings has touched every citizen of my state."

Over the years of the program, participants have identified five major benefits resulting from the Policymakers' Program in their states:

1. Building *relationships* among key leaders who, in their own arenas, can support the new desired directions
2. Establishing a *shared conceptual framework* among leaders about the assumptions, structures, norms, and practices that must be changed to achieve better results for children and families
3. Helping leaders produce a concrete *action plan* that moves theory to action
4. Providing leaders with specific examples of *what works* (or shows promise of working) in other states and communities
5. Beginning to *document the effects* on children

The Policymakers' Program was a powerful means of building trust … . That trust is laying the foundation for long-term change.

The most successful participating states demonstrated most of these major benefits during the life of the program.

In **Vermont,** for example, leaders of the state's Agency of Human Services and Department of Education won the backing of the governor and legislative leaders for a series of community forums throughout the state after participating in the Policymakers' Institute in 1993. These forums were designed to help citizens better understand the issues involved with improving outcomes for **Vermont's** children and to solicit citizen views on what the state and local communities could do collectively to better support children and families. These forums set the stage for an ongoing state-local partnership that appears to be getting results in the form of improved results for children.

The team developed an expanded strategy for working with local communities.

Missouri, in contrast, used the program to maintain and intensify the momentum the state had already created with its "Caring Communities" program. A council of the five directors of the state departments of Social Services, Mental Health, Health, Elementary and Secondary Education, and Labor and Industrial Relations supports this partnership at the state level. A Chief Operating Officer for Caring Communities coordinates the work of this collaborative group, oversees the implementation of policy decisions, and acts as the liaison between the state agencies and the local community collaboratives that have been identified as Caring Communities. With that framework in place at the state level, **Missouri** officials used the Policymakers' Summer Institute to help a school-community team from

University City, a suburb bordering St. Louis, incorporate the concepts of Caring Communities into their schools.

By 1992, **Iowa** already had language for decategorizing funds in the state code. Moreover, 92 of the 99 counties in the state were already taking advantage of it. A key feature of decategorization, and a major incentive for county interest, is that counties can carry money over from year to year; this approach encourages more thoughtful local spending and long-term planning (since unspent funds don't have to be returned to the state), and encourages early intervention, typically less costly than fixing problems after they occur. In the three years since **Iowa** attended the Policymakers' Institute in 1994, a major emphasis has been on continual conversations between state agency leaders to encourage greater local collaboration. Significant activity is directed toward technical assistance for six communities to advance local collaboration and to develop workable models.

The seeds for **Utah's** current efforts were also planted several years ago. In 1989, the legislature appropriated $100,000 to each of the three main service areas—health, education, and human services—to do both prevention and early intervention in a collaborative way. In 1991, the legislature acted again to form an interagency Task Force for Children and Youth at Risk. Known as ACT (Agencies Coming Together), this task force was funded and initiated to look at ways to deal with multiple funding streams to produce better results. By 1993, with the active support of a new governor, the initiative changed from ACT to FACT (Families and Agencies Coming Together), and following the state's participation in the Policymakers' Institute in 1995, the acronym was changed to stand for Families, Agencies, and Communities Together.

In 1995, a team of 27 people from **Utah** attended the Policymakers' Institute. Nearly all the team members were part of the FACT task force and represented diverse constituencies. Through the Institute, the team developed an expanded strategy for working with local communities. The team also developed the basis for recently passed legislation that appropriates $900,000 in education funds to fully finance existing FACT initiatives. It also establishes a framework for collaborative service-delivery systems, amends current laws governing programs for at-risk children and youth, and amends the budgetary procedures to implement collaborative funding. Twenty state employees are currently being trained as technical assistants to communities to help them build local capacity for this new framework.

In August 1997, one year after the **New York** state team participated in the Policymakers' Institute, a major goal of the team became reality when the governor signed legislation on school-community collaboration. This bill strengthened a previously formed Task Force on School/Community Collaboration to include the Division of the Budget and the Housing and Community Renewal Agency as members, to outline in the statute the goals of the Task Force, and to give the Task Force the statutory power to waive certain regulations across all member agencies in pursuit of better results. To support this initiative, six state agencies pooled $150,000 each and assigned

a full-time equivalent staff person to provide technical assistance to local government and schools to deelop school-based and school-linked services. Fourteen counties have received collaboration grants from these funds (up to $50,000 per county) to improve the well-being of children and families by fostering new partnerships between school and county or municipal government agencies. The State Education Department offered an additional $150,000 in funding for school-community partnerships which include the United Way. These grants will link the private sector with public agencies to improve health and school readiness outcomes.

The Policymakers' Program has stimulated a lot of different activities in many different kinds of states and communities. It has served as a springboard for action, building connections and relationships, establishing shared frameworks, helping develop action plans, providing good examples of effective programs in practice, and documenting results. At every stage of the process, it has respected state integrity and local priorities.

At the heart of the philosophical shift is the concept of thinking and acting systematically.

KEY ELEMENTS OF SUCCESS

Over the five years of the program, nine significant steps appeared most critical to advancing state action plans. Program planners began thinking of these as key elements of success.

1. **Start with Numbers**

   At one of the earliest meetings sponsored by the program, advisory board member Wilhelmina Delco, the first African-American women elected to the **Texas** House of Representatives, advised state-level participants to start defining problems through data so that the public could understand their significance.

   "We politicians," she said, "always have to worry about the numbers. Let's start with the numbers and what they mean. We need to define this problem so people understand why it's important."

   The use of data to aid decision making and evaluate results has been an integral part of the Policymakers' Program from the outset. Harold "Bud" Hodgkinson of the Center for Demographic Policy in Washington, DC presented a detailed report on the demographic challenges facing the nation (and its individual states) at one of the first meetings of the program (see Appendix B). He also developed a demographic report for each state attending a Summer Institute. In addition, David Grissmer of the RAND Corporation developed and presented "What's Working," showing the relationship between potential policy changes of various kinds and student-achievement data for each Summer Institute state team.

   The reports of Grissmer and Hodgkinson were presented in briefings to a range of stakeholders, primarily legislators, in a state meeting before the Summer Institute. In their action plans, state

"We politicians always have to worry about the numbers."

W. Delco

leaders are encouraged to build on these efforts by including ways of gathering, presenting, and using data to monitor results for children and families, to evaluate effectiveness, and to make decisions about needed policy change. (Examples of additional information on the Grissmer and Hodgkinson reports can be found in Volume II.)

In brief, starting with numbers—and ending with them—became a touchstone of state progress. The most effective teams often turned out to be those that built data usage into their plans—incorporating the collection, presentation, and use of data not only to monitor the conditions of children and familie, but also to assess efforts tied to specific benchmarks of achievement.

The real mistake we have consistently made is adopting a piecemeal, uncoordinated approach.

2. **Think of Systems, Not Programs**

"When most of us start thinking about building new institutional structures," a former Reagan-administration official told participants in 1993, "we unconsciously think the way a homebuilder thinks—with separate functional structures for separate needs." At the time, Martin Gerry, the former federal official, was serving as director of the Austin Project in Texas, a comprehensive effort to revitalize a depressed Texas community.

He went on, "But when you think about...human services, you need to think about building boats, not houses. If you are building a house and you leave a plank out, the house is basically all right. But if you leave a plank out of a boat, it sinks." Build boats, not houses, was Gerry's advice—that is to say, think comprehensively about government systems, not narrowly about government programs.

At the heart of the philosophical shift discussed at the outset of this report is the concept of thinking and acting systemically. It involves moving from isolated, individual services to comprehensive and coordinated efforts on behalf of families with their many different needs. It requires moving from tightly defined, often rigid, programs and categorical funding to efforts that are much more flexible and that provide greater discretion at the local level. It means that leaders consciously think about, and take advantage of, the connections and relationships between and among different systems in order to concentrate public programs for the greatest effect. Finally, it depends upon planning and evaluation as effective tools for improving system operations in place of ad hoc efforts put in place with good intentions while hoping for the best.

Former consultant David Hornbeck, now superintendent of schools in Philadelphia, described a problem common to schools that, in fact, can be applied across the board in human services. "The real mistake we have consistently made," said Hornbeck at one meeting, "is adopting a piecemeal, uncoordinated approach. Instead of a solid diet of reform, we have ended up with a menu of mush."

Systemic and comprehensive agendas lie at the heart of the state plans in the most successful states. They are making serious efforts to integrate services, both vertically and horizontally (i.e., from states to communities as well as across state agencies), so that fewer children and families fall through the cracks. They are thinking systems instead of programs, building boats instead of houses.

3. **Adopt Collaboration as a Way of Life**

Collaboration is not just a question of "What can you do for me?" or "What can I do for you?" Collaboration cannot simply be skin deep. Expectations need to be changed so that coordination and cooperation are at the top of agency agendas. It is the means to an end, not the end itself. It requires developing a level of trust that promotes shared responsibility and a willingness to be accountable.

Collaboration is much more than just cooperation. Collaboration implies shared budgets, joint accountability for results, integrated professional development activities, and the development of new relationships across branches of government, between government agencies, and between state and local units of government. It has both vertical and horizontal dimensions. The most effective collaboration is grounded in the question: "What can we together do for the people we are supposed to serve?"

Collaboration is clearly central to the Policymakers' Program, but state leaders quickly discovered that collaboration is not a panacea. It is a difficult, often painful and time-consuming process, that can delay decision-making. But the most effective state teams found that time spent developing trust and cooperation at the outset was made up many times over down the line in more effective and efficient delivery systems.

Iowa, for example, with its insistence on empowering local communities through decategorization and limits on out-of-home placements was able to reduce the number of out-of-home placements from 4,000 in 1987 to 1,100 in 1995.

South Dakota finished the 1995 Summer Institute and set its sights on its child care system. The state team stressed three things: awareness of a major need for child care programs in the state, availability of child care, and quality of child care. The team succeeded, according to Bobbi Brown of the governor's office, "in creating a huge awareness of child care issues across the state and in state government."

Following the Institute, the **Utah** team followed several simple principles, according to State Representative Lloyd Frandsen. The first was identifying and acknowledging the problem—a duplicative, inefficient system, which started at the top and was part of the budgetary process itself. The **Utah** team pushed successfully for two pieces of legislation—one requiring coordination of services, the other dealing with the budget process.

The rhetoric of coordination and cooperation is the easy part of systems reform. The reality of collaboration is far different. But if public services are to be redesigned to improve the quality of life and the life chances of disadvantaged children and families, units of state and local government have to be prepared to adopt collaboration as a way of life.

4. **Engage the Public in Terms It Can Understand**

"I was not always a good mother," a poor, single parent of three children, aged twelve, eight, and three, told Policymakers' participants at one meeting. With impressive self-possession, she described her family's history to a room full of complete strangers: "Once, I lost custody of my children. I lost more than custody; I came to understand I had lost a part of my life."

Participants were exposed to two different approaches to community building—an asset model and a prevention model.

In the face of such experiences, said Rex Brown, senior fellow at the Education Commission of the States, bureaucratic rhetoric is woefully inadequate. Phrases such as "Creating a collaborative planning team for coordinated services...creating developmentally-appropriate curriculum...instituting staff development appropriate to the learning styles of minority children...and reaching out for multicultural curriculum, while monitoring and evaluating progress," scarcely begin to connect with such human pain, he said.

Fortunately, the young woman quoted above got her life back together, with the help of Pinellas County's "Healthy Families" and its comprehensive array of programs for child care, transportation, drug abuse treatment, and job counseling and referral.

One of the most important parts of these efforts is strong, clear communications, both within and across agencies and between government agencies and the public. According to nationally known public opinion analyst Daniel Yankelovich, founder of The Public Agenda Foundation, the process by which the public comes to judgment on complicated public issues is complicated and lengthy. The length and complexity of the process must be respected by leaders who want to bring about long-lasting, deep-rooted, comprehensive system change. The conventional communications model engages an uninformed public through a one-way process emphasizing single-step transmission of simple information. It is time to move from that point of view to "public engagement," a new, two-way model that emphasizes ongoing dialog about important values while respecting the public's expertise in certain areas. (See Appendix D for more detailed information on the processes of public engagement.)

Genuine engagement with the public can lead public agencies into new and different territory. It is unlikely, for example, that Florida International University would have gone into the lice-eradication business on behalf of the parents at Feinberg-Fisher Elementary School in South Miami if it had not engaged in a dia-

log with local parents. According to FIU officials, school leaders complained that parents were uninvolved and disengaged—uninterested in attending school meetings.

What FIU learned was that parents wanted to be consulted. When FIU and the school started the RAINMAKERS program, a parent-run effort to bring the community's concerns to the schools, the first thing the program turned to was the issue of head lice, a problem in every school in the country, but a virtual infestation at Feinberg-Fisher. Through the "LiceBusters" program, lice are now ancient history at Feinberg-Fisher.

Communications are important. Effective state and local leaders build communication strategies into their plans, strategies that cross roles and encourage genuine dialog in place of one-way delivery of information. These strategies are designed to build ownership and commitment among the full range of stakeholders—agency officials and members of the public alike.

"The political difficulty is that there is very little political mileage in letting local people decide their own fate."

G. Stangler

5. **Develop Capacity in Local Communities**

Despite an interest in encouraging change at the community level, the Policymakers' Program at the outset concentrated on encouraging greater collaboration and cooperation at the state level. The emphasis was on the development of state plans, encouraging greater policy coherence at the state level, and deregulating the state apparatus as it related to service delivery. Even though all of this work was designed to improve services at the local level, bridging the gap between policy at the state level and practice in communities was a formidable challenge, one not fully articulated and addressed until the program had completed its first three years.

Participants in the program were exposed to two different approaches to community building—an asset model and a prevention model. The asset model outlined a process for discovering a community's capacities and assets, building and strengthening those positive factors, and focusing them on achieving desired results. The prevention model involved working with the community to identify risk factors and protective factors and developing a plan to address these factors.

The major community-building challenge centers around finding the right balance between the respective responsibilities of state and local units of government. As Missouri social services director Gary Stangler phrased it at the January 1998 meeting: "If the attributes of successful local programs include people who break the rules, what does that imply for those of us at the state level, legislators and members of the executive branch, who are responsible for making and enforcing the rules? How do we demonstrate that the phrase 'entrepreneurial government' is not an oxymoron?"

As experience in Missouri and elsewhere demonstrates, getting five state agencies to collaborate on a program such as Caring

Communities is child's play compared to the challenge of a system of "devolution" designed to put authority and decisions for the same programs in local hands. It is the difference between "horizontal" service integration at the state level and "vertical" integration between state and local agencies.

"Our challenge at the state level," says Stangler, "is to resist the temptation to regulate what people at the local level should own. The political difficulty is that there is very little political mileage in letting local people decide their own fate."

Developing capacity in local communities all comes down to the same thing—policy has to affect people.

Along with a team from University City, a St. Louis, **Missouri** suburb, Stangler and state leaders were among the first to participate in the State and Community Summer Institute. The local team included the school superintendent, a school board member, the deputy city manager, and a community leader. At the Institute, the University City team developed a comprehensive strategy aimed at producing working parents, healthy children and families, children prepared to enter school, and graduates ready to enter work or continue learning.

Putting the plan into place isn't always easy, acknowledges Lynn Beckwith, Jr., University City school superintendent. "Sometimes the plans made in July don't mean much when you return home and school starts in September," he says. But the plan represents a beginning.

Barre, **Vermont,** went through a similar epiphany when its team participated in the same state and community Summer Institute. "Being a child shouldn't hurt," noted Cheryl Mitchell, deputy secretary of the Office of Human Services in the **Vermont** Governor's Office. Yet, she went on soberly, data showed child abuse was up in the city of Barre—and so were teenage pregnancy rates, alcohol and substance abuse, and abuse and neglect of adults. Barre is a blue-collar town of granite workers, according to its part-time mayor Paul Dupre. "Our idea at the Institute was that we had to get ideas from the grassroots, from parents; and we needed to get to parents through parents." The team came up with a "Learning for Life" initiative and is just now beginning to proceed toward making sure that everyone understands they are part of the solution.

Platitudes about lifelong learning or the importance of reducing teenage pregnancy are easy to come by. Bringing these sentiments to life requires more than good intentions; it takes commitment and resources. The Summer Institute appeared to nurture both. At the 1997 institute, for example, state-level participants made immediate commitments of resources for the plans developed for University City and Barre, saving both communities the lengthy process of seeking funds.

Developing capacity in local communities all comes down to the same thing—policy has to affect people. Government is no substi-

tute for the family. As Mayor Dupre of Barre put it: "The focus has to be on going to the neighbors and saying: 'Joe, what can you do on this block?'"

6. **Create a Critical Mass of People Who Care**

Creating and sustaining the conditions for successful systems reform involves human resources in a big way. The human side of the equation has at least two dimensions: finding the right people, and enough of them, to get the job done and investing in these human resources.

According to **Vermont** State Senator Jeb Spaulding, state leaders "need to understand that the most important thing is to create a critical mass of people who understand" what needs to be done. The composition of state teams is critical, according to Spaulding, and a good team might include chairs of legislative committees, the commissioner of education, the commissioner of human services, a variety of policy specialists, and someone from the governor's office.

Successful implementation required careful attention to the human face of reform.

Ted Sanders, former Superintendent of Instruction in **Ohio** now serving as chancellor of Southern Illinois University, agrees with this assessment. Although **Ohio** never participated in the Policymakers' Program, its Governor's Education Management Council (which included major corporate leaders, educators, and leaders of the General Assembly) was an early model of collaboration and coalition-building.

When **Pennsylvania,** an early participant in the program, began its involvement it quickly learned that ownership of the process had to be "given away." "You need to give a lot of thought to bringing as many of the right people as you can to the table as soon as possible," says State Representative Ron Cowell. "Then you have to expand the group quickly."

"In a week at the Policymakers' Institute," said **Vermont's** Con Hogan, "you can build a hell of a team. You are going to need that team and then you will have to expand it when you get home. But with the right team you can get the job done."

"There are very weak patent-infringement laws prohibiting state governments from stealing ideas from each other."

K. Concannon

With the right team in place, it is time to turn attention to human resource development. One of the most important and most overlooked system-reform strategies is investing in the people needed to make reform happen. People at all levels of the system—elected officials, state agency leaders, midlevel managers, front-line service providers, community leaders, volunteers, and everyone else involved in the process—must be encouraged and provided with programs and processes designed to broaden their knowledge, to deepen their understanding, and to develop and apply new skills as they redesign their roles and responsibilities.

Policy actions in support of this human resource development goal are diverse. **Utah** trained state personnel to rethink their roles,

to go from being managers to being technical assistants. **Missouri** emphasizes training and team development in its Caring Communities program. **Vermont,** with its strategy of statewide public meetings, demonstrated thoughtful commitment to giving state and local officials (and citizens) time to become adjusted to new ways of thinking. Whatever the means—formal training sessions, informal town meetings, or careful program redesign efforts —successful implementation required careful attention to the human face of reform.

"The real action occurs when you galvanize budget resources."

S. Cunningham

7. **Beg, Borrow, and Steal Effective Policy Ideas**

The key lever possessed by leaders at the state and local levels is control of policy. Identifying and implementing strategic mandates, incentives, policies, and special carrots and sticks help restructure systems around the new conceptual framework. One source for these ideas is to simply look around, particularly at Policymakers' Program meetings.

"There are very weak patent-infringement laws prohibiting state governments from stealing ideas from each other," quipped Kevin Concannon from Maine's Department of Human Resources. His advice to his colleagues in the Policymakers' Program: beg, borrow, and steal good ideas from every source. Following his own advice, he reports, **Maine** "shamelessly stole Gary Stangler's cooperative governance model from **Missouri.**"

And the **Maine** team also adopted an idea put forward by University of Washington sociologist David Hawkins at the January meeting: making sure that each child has one reliable adult on whom he or she can depend. "We set out to see what we could do to create one reliable person who cares about each child," says Concannon. "It's not a new grant mechanism. Our idea is that we should try to get all of our various programs in alignment with this concept."

One of the values of the meetings sponsored by the Policymakers' Program is that they provide opportunities for state leaders to learn how their peers in other states translate the new philosophy into concrete actions and how they support implementation. As Concannon's comments make clear, when leaders from **Missouri, Pennsylvania,** and **Iowa** describe shared governance, statewide congresses, or budgeting for results, their colleagues from other states sit up and pay attention.

States can adapt to their own situations. Like **Maine,** several other states developed their basic follow-up concepts based on ideas they learned about either in January or at the Summer Institute. **Utah** leaders, already well-advanced in concepts of joint planning when they first encountered the Policymakers' Program, had their ideas reinforced at the meetings and subsequently enacted legislation institutionalizing collaborative service delivery for at-risk chil-

dren. **Georgia** created a state-level policy council for children and families along with authorizing local community partnerships. **New York** developed an interagency state council to remove regulatory barriers to collaboration. Often the key motivator was hearing what the neighbors down the street were planning.

8. **Follow the Money**

"No matter how good our ideas, if we don't do something about budgeting, then our budgeting processes usually get in the way of implementation," according to **Pennsylvania's** Ron Cowell. Sally Cunningham, deputy director for services of the **Iowa** Department of Human Services, agrees. "Talk is cheap," she declares. "The real action occurs when you galvanize budget resources."

Marv Weidner, director of policy and strategic planning in **Iowa's** Department of Management, described for participants a system of focusing government on results and tying performance measures to the budget, as a way of "getting more bang for the buck."

Throughout state government in **Iowa**, 17 agencies and 56 different programs are now using this "Budgeting for Results" system. Benchmarks were developed by scouring existing strategic plans for results-oriented measures, convening focus groups and conducting public opinion polls to identify key issues, and developing baseline data to establish numerical targets for benchmarks. Then the state agencies established results-oriented performance measures that helped them describe to **Iowa** citizens what they were getting for their tax dollars.

Stressed Weidner: Legislators don't need most of the information they get in budgets. "Budgets give you wonderful data on supplies and travel costs and full-time-equivalent employees—the kind of information agency managers have to have. But unless legislators are interested in managing the agency, that's not useful information to them. Legislators need to know how things work and how to make them work better. That's where budgeting for results comes in. It's not an end in itself, but a means to an end of improving services for kids and improving accountability."

Iowa and some of the other states in the Policymakers' Program are, in fact, addressing one of the biggest political and programmatic challenges in the change process—budgeting and reallocating financial resources. Too often, changes are piloted with somebody else's money—funds external to conventional state systems. Such resources are essential for initiating change and developing new models. Unfortunately, when the outside money disappears, the changes generally disappear too. If reform is to take root and grow, the official systems of the state and the financial resources backing them up, must be redesigned to nourish reform.

A major area of attention has been the movement away from categorical programs and services to results-oriented budgeting and allocations across state agencies and programs.

As a result, a major area of attention among state leaders in this program has been the movement away from categorical programs and services to results-oriented budgeting and allocations that cut across state agencies and programs.

As **Missouri's** Gary Stangler observes, promoting change requires changing how systems are financed. Says Stangler: "Turf is money. Money is Power. Therefore, turf is power. In government, nobody gives up power readily, and nobody gives up money easily either."

In particular, says Stangler, "Don't try to solve these problems of coordination with more advisory boards. We don't need them. If you need to create boards, establish them with some real authority over funds. Follow the money. "

"[We agreed] to create some indicators of progress so that we could measure what we were doing and report on our achevements to the public."

R. Cowell

9. **Insist on Results**

Finally, one of the foundation themes of the Policymakers' Program from the outset was the need to insist on results, assess progress, and be accountable to the public.

"You need to worry about accountability and rewards and sanctions," Philadelphia superintendent David Hornbeck told participants, describing a comprehensive approach to school and service reform he has helped implement in **Kentucky, Washington, Missouri, Ohio,** and Philadelphia. In these areas he got the process started with a "gap analysis" to measure the breach between needs and services. Tracking the "gap" is one way to measure results.

"Our state team left the Policymakers' Institute in St. Louis last year committed to several things," said **Pennsylvania's** Cowell during a panel discussion. "One of the most important was an agreement that we had to create some indicators of progress so that we could measure what we were doing and report on our achievements to the public."

Julie Koppich, deputy director of PACE (Policy Analysis for California Education) on the Berkeley campus of the University of **California,** had a similar story. She described a major analysis of the needs of the state's children *Conditions of Children in California*. Begun in 1984 as an annual report on education, it has recently expanded to cover an array of children's issues, ranging from family life, finances, and child care to physical and mental health, child abuse, and the juvenile justice system.

One recent edition of the report generated major attention in the state around three issues: under-served children, service fragmentation, and a de facto state policy of providing social services on a "triage" approach—like doctors on a battlefield, social workers divide clients into three categories: those who are likely to get better by themselves, those for whom nothing can be done, and those who will receive attention.

Martin Gerry from the Austin, **Texas,** project provided perhaps the final word on the topic. "If collaboration is to work, you must have outcome measures," he told participants. He cited five assessment needs:

- outcome measures on the status of children;
- self-evaluating delivery systems with on-going evaluation;
- systematic and timely performance assessment;
- a reliable information system; and
- public information about children's welfare and system performance.

Describing a comprehensive assessment strategy in Austin to foster healthy child development, Gerry said it gathered data on such things as fetal alcohol and drug addiction, infant and youth mortality, low-birth-weight babies, immunizations of 2-year-olds, access to appropriate child care, school readiness, educational achievement by age, and graduation rates of 7th and 8th graders.

He concluded: "If you're going to get into this, you have to be serious about it."

LESSONS LEARNED

In addition to those key elements of success, important lessons have been learned about mounting these efforts. How should they be initiated? Who should be involved? When is the right time to begin? If another foundation or association wanted to start something similar, what could it learn from the experience of the Policymakers' Program?

In the course of the first five years, the Danforth Foundation and its partners—the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association—developed a much deeper understanding of the complexity of initiating and sustaining statewide change processes than they possessed at the outset. They have learned about the importance of the leadership team; the critical need for technical assistance; and the complexities of vertical and horizontal integration. Ten lessons appear to be most important:

1. **Give Ownership Away.** The Foundation's initial instinct was to work with state policymakers in a formal process that would help state leaders help themselves. It was only after a lengthy planning effort, involving several formal meetings and conversations with state leaders, associations, and experts of various kinds that the basic shape of the Policymakers' Program began to emerge.

   In addition to the Foundation, many different organizations consider themselves to be important stakeholders in the program, including members of the advisory body, alumni teams, and the

three major partner organizations. Indeed, as leaders of the state teams made clear, their success back home often depended on their "giving away" ownership of their plan; in essence, when the state teams were expanded on returning from the Summer Institutes, the program succeeded in creating new stakeholders in the success of the effort.

In short, the initial lesson came in two parts. At the program design level, no single individual or organization possesses all of the relevant knowledge and expertise required. Program design is improved immeasurably when the circle of ownership is expanded so that more and more people feel they have a stake in the program's success. Second, similar considerations apply at the point where the program is implemented—both at the state and community levels. State officials have a much better understanding of what is required to assist communities within their borders than national program designers; and nobody understands community needs better than community leaders, either civic or elected. It is not an abrogation of responsibility to give program ownership away to state and local leaders, but an act of faith in the basic good sense of democratic decision making at the community level.

2. **Work with Intermediary Organizations.** One of the keys to getting the Policymakers' Program off the ground quickly was the Foundation's ability to work with several respected organizations representing key state-level constituencies the program wanted to reach. The Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association each brought its own expertise and point of view to bear and each of them helped provide instant credibility for the effort.

   In essence, their participation announced that participation in this program was something governors' offices, legislative chambers, and the state superintendent of instruction should consider. Staff of each of these organizations, in addition, then turned out to be of key assistance not only in arranging for the many meetings involved with the program, but also in organizing state teams and getting them oriented.

   In one sense, working with intermediary organizations is simply another example of "giving ownership away." But as a practical matter, it is also much more than that. State-level officials, particularly those state legislators who serve part time, have many demands made on them and very few ways of checking the authenticity and good faith of those making the demands. Often these officials may be asked to respond with little more than instinct to guide them on what to do. The participation of Danforth's three partner organizations made it immediately clear to busy legislators, governors' offices, and state agency officials that the Policymakers' Program was something to take seriously.

3. **Model the Behavior You Seek.** Two convictions are essential to the Policymakers' Program. First is the notion that state agencies and leaders need to be much more open to new ideas. Second is that new styles of cooperation and collaboration must be developed. Danforth and its partners found their behavior needed to model these convictions.

   At the outset, the program was designed to encourage local change by influencing state policy. It took several years before the four partners were able to act on what was apparent from the first day—while local behavior could be influenced by state policy, it could only be changed by bringing local decision makers into the discussion. In being open to this new idea, Danforth and its three partners created something in the fifth year, the State and Community Summer Institute, that it had not envisioned in the first year. Being open to new ideas also led the program to begin providing on-site technical assistance to state and state-and-community teams, convening teams prior to the Summer Institute, and providing state-specific briefing papers. When the program began, Danforth and its partners had not understood that such assistance would be required.

   Moreover, Danforth and its partners often found themselves engaged in the same tug-of-war with each other (and within their own organizations) that they were trying to diminish or eliminate at the policy level. By the early 1990s, officials at Danforth were concerned that the Foundation's support of policy work by its three partners, while important, had created a series of independent and unrelated conversations. During these conversations, officials from the governors' offices spoke with each other, legislative chairs convened with their peers, and state-level education officials shared their concerns largely among themselves. Danforth was determined to encourage much more cross-fertilization among these powerful constituencies.

   Moreover, within the Foundation itself and its three partners, staff responsible for early childhood programs, education, or human services were likely to be as isolated from each other as were their counterparts in state capitols. And between the partnering organizations, it was not always clear why the staff for the governors' association, for example, should go out of its way to cooperate with staff from the state legislatures' conference. Finally, all four organizations had to learn what they were trying to teach in the Policymakers' Program—that the focus of attention needed to move from federal to state policy, and from there to community implementation.

   What became apparent is that the organizations themselves had to model the behavior they were asking of legislators and others. Working through these challenges was time-consuming and difficult. Although not always successful, it was always time well spent.

4. **Rely on Peers to Carry the Message.** Without a doubt, the most successful aspect of the Policymakers' Program was its reliance on a mix of experts to describe problems and frame solutions while state officials and legislators described how they had approached the problem.

   Many of the presentations provided at the Policymakers' Program meetings were intellectual tour de forces (see Appendices for proceedings of these meetings). But the highlights of each of these meetings for state-level participants were the panels and presentations where colleagues and peers described their problems and their programs. It was immediately clear that these presentations were instantly credible to program participants as their peers, without regard to partisanship or state size, described their successes and failures, their triumphs and frustrations.

   Equally important, it has become apparent over the life of the program that an idea presented by a state agency head at a January meeting, for example, was likely to reappear the following summer or the next year in a plan developed under the leadership of a legislator from a different state. The extent of cross-fertilization of policy ideas from state to state was one of the more visible aspects of the program's success, an aspect directly attributable to the program's decision to rely on peers to make the case and carry the message.

In the end, respecting the process that is required to move this agenda along became almost as important as the agenda.

5. **Build the Capacity to Support Collaboration.** Whenever public officials get together to talk about redesigning government services, all of them genuflect obediently in front of the altar of collaboration. The term itself has a sort of iconic quality with which few can argue. But in the tough bureaucratic environment of state and local government, "you find that people who collaborate should be shot," Gary Stangler, social services director in **Missouri,** told program participants early in the program's life. Agency collaborators are like traitors in World War II, Stangler said, "people who collaborate with an enemy invader. By and large that's how our bureaucracies think about coordination."

   Sustained collaboration occurs only when funds, time, and personnel are allocated to its accomplishment. State and local policymakers need to understand the power of data in creating a climate conducive to change, supporting new policies, and sustaining change agendas over time. Improving outcomes for children is dependent on measuring, tracking, and reporting outcome data. Policymakers and foundations should not underestimate the importance and the difficulty of this challenge. Building this capacity in states and communities is critical if changes in practice and policy are to continue. Collaboration also requires the capacity to undertake joint and/or compatible data collection and generation of state and community reports that provide policymakers with a clear understanding of the issues facing children and families.

6. **Understand that Different Communities Are at Different Stages.** It is impossible to overstate the need for flexibility in initiating and supporting an effort such as this. Each of the participating states is at different stages of development in terms of collaboration and cooperation, and a program such as the Policymakers' Program needs to respect that diversity.

   The program sponsors did not enter the arena of state policy making naively. The four partners had a long history of working with state leaders and seeing the connections between state structures; they knew about the complexities of public policy making and leadership. The sponsors understood that turnover in elected leaders and the need for politicians to create new programs for which they could take credit created challenges for initiatives that required many years of sustained effort to see results.

   These sponsors also knew that partisan politics often made it difficult for key leaders to come together and represent a unified front in the face of competing interests. Financial problems, inequities, legal battles, and the federal-state-local nexus all posed potential barriers to long-term systems change that would result in improved outcomes for children and families.

   In the end, respecting the process that is required to move this agenda along became almost as important as the agenda. Change takes time. Here, process became the vehicle for developing shared understanding and commitment to a vision of new possibilities; for clarifying who was responsible for what and why they were responsible for it; for holding individuals and agencies accountable; and for helping governors and legislators get their policies aligned. The challenges of straightening out such diverse policy areas as professional development, funding, accountability mechanisms, and organizational structures so that what was decided at the mountain summit actually results in the implementation of something effective at the base cannot be overstated. **Vermont** officials, for example, wound up holding town meetings all over the state to explain their vision of collaborative services. The greatly maligned bureaucratic standby of "process" often turned out to be the launching pad of progress.

   Despite the challenge of process and differences in where communities found themselves, the sponsors of the Policymakers' Program took the position that people of good will and good sense exist in elected and appointed positions of power everywhere. If brought together in a certain kind of environment, these people could create new possibilities and remove barriers that none could remove individually. The program confirmed both the difficulties of the challenges and the possibilities arising from new connections.

7. **Collaboration is Simply a Means to an End.** Although process is important, the program had to continuously guard against letting the process become the point of the whole exercise. Collaboration

Collaboration requires taking up tough and difficult issues such as joint budgeting, shared accountability, and assessment of results.

(or the process of collaboration) is not an end in itself; it is simply a means to an end.

While respecting the process required to move a policy agenda along, therefore, program designers continually pressed to get beyond it. They acknowledged that agreement needs to be reached on the big ideas, that getting the right people to the table is critical, and that all parties need to engage in a full, and sometimes acrimonious, discussion of the issues. Without that base, nothing would happen; but even with it, success was not guaranteed.

The Policymakers' Program insists on data and assessment as integral parts of the design.

Attaining the end, that is, delivering services more effectively so that state and community agencies can actually demonstrate results for children and vulnerable families, required going beyond the vocabulary of cooperation to the practicalities of collaborative implementation. What kinds of services will be delivered and by whom? How do multiple state agencies budget for results? Who decides the question of who decides? Where can caseload information be shared without violating personal privacy? Why can't we get better information on results? Encouraging something to happen at the point of contact with children and families requires agency officials to go well beyond the collaboration simply for the sake of collaboration. It requires taking up tough and difficult issues such as joint budgeting, shared accountability, and assessment of results. But after all, that's the point. Collaboration is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

8. **Focus Relentlessly on Practice, Data, and Results.** One of the most effective strategies the Policymakers' Program developed was a means of sidestepping partisan and ideological disputes by concentrating on best practice, poring over data, and insisting on meaningful results. Most of this strategy, particularly the emphasis on data and results, was conscious and planned.

   Information on best practice was presented in two ways. First, program "alumni" were encouraged to return to Policymakers' events to give new participants the benefit of their experience. In addition, program staff combed the literature for briefing materials on effective collaborative programs and frequently brought representatives of the best of these examples to Policymakers' Program meetings. The 1995 January meeting, for example, heard about the RAINMAKERS program, a comprehensive effort in Miami schools to involve parents and grandparents in the schools (see Appendix C). In 1997, participants heard about the importance of comprehensive preventive approaches from a researcher at the University of Washington (see Appendix E). The program defined such efforts as "best" practices because they were accompanied by information demonstrating their value to children and families.

   In addition, the Policymakers' Program is one foundation-supported effort that insists on data and assessment as integral parts of

the design. In this regard, the program often came across significant resistance to efforts to look at data to determine what works or how to allocate resources. The way programs are funded sometimes mitigates against data collection and evaluation. Habits of disbursing funds without evaluating results also play a part. And the fact that state and local data are rarely well "packaged," while state and local officials often don't have the analytical skills required to deal with data, also enter the picture.

Moving the Policymakers' Program agenda forward required overcoming this resistance. What seemed apparent was that the more easily packaged and readily understandable data and evaluations can be made, the more policymakers at the state and local level are likely to use them. Data and evaluations need to be user-friendly. People who don't understand statistics or data-driven analysis are often uncomfortable around both. This discomfort can be increased when results are presented replete with incomprehensible and poorly explained terms—or when statistical experts take issue with each other about either methodology or findings. In such situations, many policymakers are inclined to throw up their hands and ignore the results.

To get anything done in a public environment, reformers need to make sure they bring the right people to the table.

But, as the experience in **Vermont** indicates, when data and results are presented in a user-friendly fashion, policymakers immediately see their value. The lessons learned here are that data needs to be comprehensible; evaluations need to be related to policy questions; and policymakers need to participate in selecting the indicators, because that way they come to understand what is being measured and why it is important.

9. **Stability is Essential.** The next lesson appears to be so straightforward that at first blush it hardly needs to be expressed. Long-standing systems change cannot develop amidst instability in the system. But on another level, the need for continuity amidst change is a paradox; nonetheless, stability is critical to the systems-change agenda.

The continuity required is not stability in the system, but stability in the change agenda and the reform impulse. The implicit need for this type of stability was the basic reason the Policymakers' Program was launched as a ten-year effort.

The road to reform in education and many other social service areas—housing, job training, welfare-to-work, and community development—is littered with the wrecks of many perfectly good ideas that have been discarded. Reforms have foundered because of lack of long-term stability at the top in most executive branches of government. Turnover on legislative committees frequently has the same effect. The loss of powerful champions in either the legislative or executive branches can be fatal.

There is a significant need to bring on board mid-level employees capable of keeping change on track, whatever happens at the top. Unless the bureaucracy is on board, whenever turnover occurs at the top, the most regressive features of the status quo will almost inevitably resurface. Professional development for midlevel managers is critical, both to provide them with the skills needed to implement joint programs, with joint budgets and accountability schemes, and to move them to new levels of understanding to help them bring along both new subordinates and new supervisors.

10. **Visionaries Have to be Practical Too.** A second paradox of the change process is that while vision is important, reformers who don't have their feet on the ground aren't likely to get very far. Visionaries have to be practical too. That's one reason the program emphasized winning the loyalties of midlevel agency people for the reform agenda. It's also the reason the program encouraged strong accountability and a results orientation as counterbalances to decentralizing authority to the community level. Pre-Institute planning, the development of state-specific papers, and the presence of facilitators all grew out of the practical realization that making the best use of the Summer Institute required a lot of advance work.

The program … encouraged practical ideas to move the agenda along in the short-run, not pie-in-the-sky proposals … .

To get anything done in a public environment, reformers need to make sure they bring the right people to the table. Without that, there is almost no hope of developing an effective or workable plan. The **Utah** and **Rhode Island** teams were among the many that made sure their teams were bipartisan so that ownership of the plan was widespread.

In an environment that is not only public but also political, the plan must be something that provides for some demonstrable results within two years. The program was always aware of the two-year election cycle. It encouraged practical ideas to move the agenda along in the short-run, not pie-in-the-sky proposals that would still be unfinished when the new millennium had come and gone. In addition, the program paid a lot of attention to the planning ambiguities associated with elections, trying to make room for November election-year changes in the makeup of state teams for the following January.

The most successful states clearly paid attention to the practicalities of their plans and their activities. Policymakers' leaders in Vermont persuaded the governor not to apply the "savings" from reducing the number of people on public assistance to the general fund, but to put the "savings" back into the program. Missouri officials successfully positioned the Caring Communities effort by arranging for agency leaders to testify jointly before budget committee and by creating an oversight group of deputies to develop budget and policy.

Vision was one of the most important attributes the Policymakers' Program tried to develop during its processes. But to move forward, the vision needed to be harnessed to an effective plan.

11. **Don't Underestimate the Power of Leadership.** Over the years, states that have been the most successful in moving forward in their education and human services collaboration have had powerful leaders as advocates within the legislative and executive branches of government. In particular, progress appeared to be enhanced by a supportive governor, bipartisan legislative leadership, and a history of collaborative leadership on the part of the heads of state agencies responsible for education, human services, and health—in the absence of such a history, the willingness to begin creating such a history is sufficient.

    Conversely, the absence of such support is almost always fatal. Indeed, the absence of any of these elements—gubernatorial, legislative, or agency cooperation—can by itself be enough to stifle progress. Leadership at the state level is critical. Progress was often hindered by political changes before a critical mass of support had been established, turnover in state houses or state capitols, turf protection, insufficient attention to the need to build local support;,and lack of team leadership or positioning within the state. Effective leaders understand the importance of touching all the bases and getting their allies on board before moving ahead.

A Foundation for the Future

Danforth and its partners have put down a sturdy foundation for future success with the Policymakers' Program. Several hundred state leaders from dozens of states have been exposed to the ideas underlying the program. Teams from 15 states have completed a detailed process for developing statewide plans. Two communities in two states have become formally involved in the effort. As the program has moved forward the partners have learned a great deal.

The program sponsors are convinced that, in the first five years of this effort, they have demonstrated the feasibility of horizontal integration at the state level. The possibility of putting in place comprehensive change in the delivery of state education and other services needed by children and families is no longer at issue. Program designers are able to point to solid success with such efforts in a half-a-dozen or more states; most are fairly small and rural, a handful are larger, sometimes involving substantial urban areas. Whatever their size, the promise of delivering essential services that are decentralized, de-categorized, and coordinated in an accountable environment is beginning to be realized. The argument about its feasibility is over. The foundation for the future has been laid.

What remains to be seen is what kind of building will take shape on this foundation. In particular, we need to find out whether the promise at the state level can be duplicated in local communities. In two communities in two states (Barre, **Vermont** and University City, **Missouri**), an experiment is underway within the Policymakers' Program. They are attempting to integrate service delivery both horizontally and vertically—horizontally between agencies at both the state and local levels and vertically between state and local units of government. It also remains to be seen if success in a relative handful of communities can be brought to scale and replicated broadly elsewhere. Finally, it is of paramount importance that participating teams and state personnel become self-sufficient. They must develop their own capacity to handle data, to develop good reports, to become team facilitators, and generally to move consistently toward the changes they seek on their own—after the Foundation and all its consultants have left.

These challenges will define the agenda of the Policymakers' Program for the next five years.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For additional information about the Policymakers' Program, contact one of the following:

Bill Purcell, Program Director
The Child and Family Policy Center
Vanderbilt Institute for Public Policy Studies
(615) 343-9865

Gerrit Westervelt
Education Commission of the States
(303) 299-3600

Julie Bell
National Conference of State Legislatures
(303) 830-2200

John Barth
National Governors' Association
(202) 624-5300

Robert Koff
Vice President
The Danforth Foundation
(314) 588-1900

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Summer Institute Team Members

The team members who attended the Summer Institutes were:

Alaska – 1996

Mark Begich
Jeanee Book
Tom Brice
Kathy Fitzgerald
Floyd Guthrie
Abbe Hensley
Shirley Holloway
Mike Irwin
Bruce Johnson
Larry LeDoux
Annalee McConnell
Karen Perdue
Margaret Pugh
Barbara Jean Renoux
Nila Rinehart
Bob Rubadeau
Bruce Scandling
Chrystal Smith
Theresa Tanoury
Roseanne Turner
Marilyn Webb

Georgia – 1994

Larry Atwell
Janet Bittner
Jeannie Jones
Richard Marable
Vivian McMillan
James Mullins
Jim Puckett
Pam Shapiro
Georgianna Sinkfield
Maretta Taylor
Sharon Trense
Tommy Upchurch

Iowa – 1994

Christopher Atchison
Michael Connolly
Horace Daggett
Lois Eichacker
Betty Grundberg
Ginny Hancock
Myrt Levin
John Mullen
Charles Palmer
Al Ramirez
Elaine Szymoniak
Gretchen Tegeler

Maine – 1996

Duke Albanese
Freda Bernotavicz
Kevin Concannon
Mary Dionne
Nadine Edris
Barbara Eretzian
Michael Fitzpatrick
Jeffrey Joyner
James Libby
Denise Lord
Charles Lyons
John Martin
Marjorie Medd
Sawin Millett
Ernestine Riesman
Susan Savell
Richard Tyler

Minnesota – 1993

J. Ashley Anderson
Julie Brunner
Roxanne Foster
Lee Greenfield
Mindy Greiling
Don Helmstetter
Jane Krentz
Helen McLean
Becky Montgomery
Ann Schluter
George Steiner
Tom Triplett

Missouri – 1997

Robert E. Bartman
Lynn Beckwith, Jr.
James Cotter
Gloria Davis
Nova Felton
Gayle Hobbs
Kathy Martin
Gregory Rose
Juanester Russell
Joan Solomon
Gary Stangler
Khatib Waheed
Betty Porter Walls
Deborah Wells
Susan Zelman

Nebraska – 1994

Ardyce Bohlke
Doug C. Christensen
Arturo J. Coto
John Downs
Polly Feis
Lynne Friedewald
Jean Lovell
Terri Miller
Gerry Oligmueller
Mary Piper
Jessie Rasmussen
Knute Rotto
Ed Schulenberg
Don Wesely
Ron Withem

New York – 1996

William Bassett
Robert Bennett
Ellen Grant Bishop
Barbara Brundage
Barbara Clark
Charles D. Cook
Ron Dougherty
Newell Eaton
Geoff Flynn
Larry Gloeckler
Roger Green
John A. Johnson
Becky Meyers
Rose Pandozy
Judish Rizzo
Thomas Roach, Jr.

Karen Schimke
Alana Sweeny
Lois Wilson

Oklahoma – 1997

Sandy Ingraham
Tom Kemper
Peggy Leininger
Mary Meritt
George Miller
Kathy Otis
Kevin Pipes
Donna Richardson
Anne Roberts
Mark Seikel
Betty Boyd
Ben Brown
Bernest Cain, Jr.
Glenda Cobb
Floyd Coppedge
Stephen Dow
Sandy Garrett
Gloria Griffin
Bob Harbison
Linda Higginbotham
Garth Splinter
Deborah Taggart
Gary Thielen
Opio Toure
Penny Williams

Pennsylvania – 1993

Kevin Blaum
Clarice L. Chambers
Ron Cowell
J. Joseph Cullen
Chaka Fattah
Robert E. Feir
Gary Ledebur
Gerard Longo
Annette Palutis
Helen Wise
Sandra Zelno

Rhode Island – 1997

Lee Baker
Grace Beiser
Nancy Benoit
Leo Blais
Sherry Campanelli
Donalda Carlson
Virginia da Mota
Michael DiBiase
Guy DiBiasio
Ellen Eggeman
Christine Ferguson
William Hollinshead
Thomas Izzo
Linda Katz
Dennis Langley
Joseph Le
Tricia Leddy
Jay Lindgren, Jr.
Patricia Martinez
Peter McWalters
Ragan Meriwether
Patricia Nolan
Larry Pucciarelli
A. Kathryn Power
Hillary Salmons
Beverly Scott
Jeanne Shepard
Paul Sherlock
Frank Spinelli
Allan Stein

South Dakota – 1995

Deborah Barnett
Bobbi Brown
Marlys Engebretson
Phylis Graney
Carol Heltzel
Gary Heusel
Carole Hillard
Tim Koehn
Jan Nicolay
Keith Paisley
Laura Schad
Lola Schreiber
Virginia Tobin

Tennessee – 1997

Stephanie Barger
William Clabough
Ed Davis
Mike Dedmon
Ann Duncan
Mary Ann Eckles
George Hattaway
Mai Bell Hurley
Mike McGill
Ann McGintis
Ronald Ramsey
Linda Rudolph
J. V. Sailors
Fredia Wadley
Jane Walters
Denise Williams
Nancy Woods

Utah – 1995

John Arrington
Holly Balken
Roger Christensen
David Dangerfield
Beverly Evans
Richard Ferre
Lloyd Fransen
J. Brent Haymond
Corrine Hill
Bryant Howe
Joseph Hull
Terry Johnson
Michael Kjar
Steven Kukic
Myron March
Jean Neilsen
Carol Nixon
Linda Parkinson
Douglas Peterson
Kerry Steadman
Howard Stephenson
Isaac Thompson
Evan Wilcox

Robin Arnold-Williams
Cherran Zullo

Vermont – 1993

Ross Anderson
Bob DiFerdinando
Ann Dunn
Cornelius Hogan
Dennis Kane
Ted Marble
Peg Martin
Rick Mills
Cheryl Mitchell
Jeb Spaulding
Otho Thompson

Vermont – 1997

Lyman Amsden
David Baker
David Batchelder
Jennifer Benton
Hal Cohen
Paul Dupree
Al Gasior
Cornelius Hogan
Marc Hull
Doreen Huskes
Leo Lauber
Jon Mendelkorn
Cheryl Mitchell
Carolyn Moulton
Kristin Ready
William Sullivan
James Taffel
Carole Wageman
Tommy Walz

APPENDIX B

Ten Ground Rules for Reinventing State Education and Human Services

1994 Highlights

From the
Legislative Chairs' and Governors' Meeting
of the Policymakers' Program

THE DANFORTH FOUNDATION

Cosponsored by

Education Commission of the States
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Governors' Association

San Diego, California
January 20-23, 1994

PREFACE

In January of this year, 101 state legislators, governors' aides, analysts, researchers, and association staff members made their way to San Diego at the invitation of the Danforth Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association.

Representing 19 states, they came from the East coast and the West, from the Gulf of Mexico and the Canadian border. They held one belief in common: State education and human service programs must be reinvented and coordinated if today's children and youth are to become tomorrow's healthy and productive citizens.

They arrived armed with the passion of their convictions and the power of their ideas. And they arrived prepared to act, ready to start designing an action plan for coordinated state change.

Participants in the meeting heard the case for dramatic system reform from nationally known state legislators, analysts, demographers, and educators. They listened to business leaders outline the revolution in school-to-work expectations. They spoke with elected and appointed state leaders about the value of the Policymakers' Program. They discussed one of the best-known local collaborative efforts, San Diego's New Beginnings program, with the people who designed and implemented it.

Attendees challenged each other in formal sessions and brainstormed in team meetings. In hallways, at dining tables, and informal gatherings around the coffee pot, the question was always the same: How can we do a better job of preparing our people for the future? From these participants, the Danforth Foundation's Policymakers' Program intends to invite six to eight states to a Policymakers' Congress in May, at which state teams will begin to formulate problem statements and state team-building strategies to address education and human service policy issues. These problem statements and plans will serve as an application to a five-day summer Policymakers' Institute for three states.

No report could do justice to the depth and quality of the presentations and discussions. This document tries to capture the main features of the conversation, to describe a new way of thinking about state education and human service delivery systems, in 10 ground rules:

1) Start with the numbers: Define the problem.
2) Acknowledge the system is broken.
3) Crystallize a vision.
4) Create a critical mass of people who care.
5) Change expectations: Collaboration is not an afterthought.
6) Build boats, not houses.

7) Understand that education reform and welfare reform are the same thing.

8) Follow the money.

9) Burrow into the bureaucracy.

10) End with the numbers: Insist on results.

To those who were able to be with us, our thanks. To those who will join us in the future, we hope these highlights are a useful summary of the conversation so far.

Robert Koff
Program Associate
The Danforth Foundation

Ground Rule One—Start with the Numbers: Define the Problem

"We politicians always have to worry about the numbers," said Wilhelmina Delco the first African-American woman elected to the Texas House of Representatives. "And when I look at them I get worried. I can get votes for prisons in seconds, but it takes long haggling to get votes for education and human services.

"But let's start with the numbers and what they mean. We need to define this problem so people understand why its important. We know that older Americans are growing faster than young people. If we don't do something about unwed mothers, we face a future of old people waiting for Social Security checks, younger people waiting for food stamps and public assistance, and people in the middle supporting both. That's not a recipe for economic growth."

In a fascinating tour de force, demographer Harold (Bud) Hodgkinson laid out the demographic challenges facing the nation and suggested that state officials could map these trends within their own borders. Demography, said Hodgkinson, relies on simple, rigid, scientific rules: "If you weren't born, you don't count. Some people have more kids than others. Some people move more often. Some people live longer. Today's children will become tomorrow's adults. And, every decade, people get exactly 10 years older."

Here's what the numbers tell us:

- Twenty-three percent of today's children are born in poverty.
- Twenty-five percent are born to unwed mothers; two-thirds of the mothers are teenagers.
- Fifty percent of low-income children live with a single parent.
- For every "hyper-poor" inner-city child there is a "hyper-poor" rural child (defined as an income at half the poverty rate).
- Minority children will be half of all America's children by 2025 and half of all Americans by 2050.

While all of these changes are going on, said Hodgkinson, we are stagnating economically. "For every high-skill job we create, we also create nine low-skill jobs. We simply have to reinvent our service delivery systems," he said, "and understand that all of our institutions are dealing with the same customer."

Hodgkinson's advice: Focus on kids. "The chance of a high school dropout becoming a prisoner is greater than the chance of a smoker getting cancer." And he pointed to the success of Head Start graduates to make his point. At the age of 21, 59 percent of Head Start graduates are employed, versus 32 percent of non-Head Start students. High school graduation rates: 67 percent for Head Start, 49 percent for non-Head Start. College attendance: 38 percent for Head Start, 21 percent for non-Head Start. Arrested: 31 percent of Head Start students at the age of 21, 51 percent for those who never attended the program.

Finally, Hodgkinson noted that state officeholders could map these demographic trends in their own states very easily. "Get your hands on the publication 'Kids Count,' published by the Annie E. Casey Foundation. It maps most major demographic trends on a state-by-state basis. You also need to look at within-state incidence of, for example, rates of poverty; that is a little harder, but it can still be done. The Bureau of the Census provides county data you can use to pinpoint families in the greatest trouble."

Ground Rule One:
Start with the numbers to get a handle on the problem.

Ground Rule Two— Acknowedge the System is Broken

"Why can't we point to more progress in making sure that every child has a legitimate shot at achieving his or her full potential?" asked Bob Wehling, vice president for public affairs, The Proctor and Gamble Company. The answer: We do not approach the problems of children in a comprehensive, "holistic" fashion.

But we have now reached the point, he said, where we are willing to consider comprehensive solutions. "We have learned in business that meaningful reform occurs only when the pain of not changing is worse than the pain of change." In education and human services, the pain of business as usual exceeds the trauma of reform.

"We need to do better," said Jan Backus, Vermont's senate health and welfare chair. "We are all trying to solve the same problems with distinct, repetitive, badly coordinated programs. It is not working. Yet we spend two-thirds of our funds on education and human services."

"Acknowledge the system is broken," said Martin Gerry, director of the Austin Project at the University of Texas. "It is structurally broken, and it is badly broken." According to Gerry, the system is failing in three key areas: Families are providing less time and nurturing for their children; neighborhoods are collapsing due to factors such as concentrations of poverty and the erosion of commercial tax bases; and government is "dysfunctional," providing an array of services, but no system of services. Fixing government is not enough. "Policymakers have to aim at all three problems."

"We need to start thinking in terms of universal services," said Gerry. "Now we operate programs. That is not good enough. The definition of a program is that someone won't get the service! The definition of a pilot is that you won't get the service for very long. And the definition of an entitlement is that, as time passes, you'll get less and less."

"In the United States, we offer services based on an 'edge of the cliff' model. Either you qualify and receive the service, or you don't qualify and fall off the cliff." In Europe, services are universal, financed by a sliding fee scale, based on ability to pay.

The "second lunacy" of our current approach, according to Gerry: "Failure is rewarded with more money. The more you succeed, the less you receive." Gerry's Austin Project is a nonprofit agency, overseen by a broadly-based board involving parents, school, health and nutrition agencies, mental health services, family courts and social services providers, Head Start, law enforcement agencies, substance abuse facilities, and local universities.

The project operates in two low-income neighborhoods (5,000 children) and incorporates four major components: 1) healthy child development, 2) neighborhood functioning, 3) economic development, and 4) career paths. One of its key strategies puts three-member teams of visiting nurses, parents-as-teachers, and family advocates in place, all three universally available for every family in the target neighborhoods.

Concluded Gerry: "Our broken system puts the family on a train and shuttles it from station to station. At each station, a different professional examines the family. We are trying to fix the system by stabilizing the family in one station and putting the professionals on the train."

Ground Rule Two:
Before you can fix the system, you have to acknowledge that what we have is not working. The system is broken.

GROUND RULE THREE — CRYSTALLIZE A VISION

In a passionate statement near the end of the meeting, Representative Delco challenged the participants to be much clearer about what they wanted to accomplish.

"I have to tell you my constituents will not understand all of this talk about collaboration and cooperation. And when you speak about integration, they're likely to think we were here to talk about school bussing. I am willing to commit my time and resurces and whatever talent I have to this issue.

"Nothing is more important to our future. But I want us to crystallize this issue into a vision of what we are trying to accomplish, a vision that ordinary people can understand. How much time will this take? How much money are we talking about? How many warm bodies do we need to get it done? Let's move from generalities to specifics."

Recounting his state's experience in coordinating education and human services, Vermont's Commissioner of Human Services Con Hogan said the critical first step was developing a solid vision statement of what the state was trying to accomplish. Vermont's ommissioner of Education Rick Mills agreed: "We started looking for people who wanted to take risks with us to realize a vision of reinventing state government. We did not know what the result would look like, except that we would focus on results, not turf."

"We left the Policymakers' Program with a vision of statewide coordination, starting with a Children's Congress convened by the governor," said Pennsylvania's Ron Cowell, chair of the House Education Committee. "Our

aim is to create a new environment and the expectation that people will collaborate."

"The vision is becoming real," said Hogan. "Team meetings, community by community, have educated the Vermont public about what the state is trying to do. The team has pushed local evaluations for local needs. The governor is pushing new relationships built around new education and human services partnerships. The media in Vermont is backing cooperation and the public has started demanding it."

"Understand that you have to work at it," said Jane Krentz, vice chair of Minnesota's Senate Education Committee, describing a statewide reform coalition she established by law. "Risk-taking behavior is not rewarded either in state legislatures or in scools. But if a freshman legislator such as myself can pull this off, just imagine what a powerful, entrenched incumbent can accomplish."

But, Krentz warned, "Dinosaurs are not extinct. They are not confined to Jurassic Park. They are alive and well and walking the halls of legislatures and schools every day of the year."

Ground Rule Three:
Crystallize a vision and then work at it.

Ground Rule Four — Create a Critical Mass of People Who Care

"As the Senate education chairman," said Vermont's Jeb Spaulding, "I had always thought that I needed human services to meet educational needs. What we have learned is that we need to create common partnerships to meet human needs. If you are going to get into this," said Spaulding, "you need to understand that the most important thing for us was to create a critical mass of people who understood what we were trying to do. The composition of the state team was critical. We were lucky and came up with a great mix of chairs of legislative committees, the commissioner of education, the commissioner of human services, and a variety of policy implementers.

"Because we had these people and went around the state talking about what we were trying to accomplish, the public understood what we were trying to do. When opponents accused us of trying to take over local functions, the general public understood that was not so. We respected local ownership, but we wanted local ownership of coherent services."

Ohio's Superintendent of Instruction Ted Sanders agreed. Ohio created the Governor's Education Management Council including major corporate leaders, educators, and leaders of the General Assembly. Sanders' efforts were complemented by the Ohio Education Improvement Steering Committee, which Proctor and Gamble's Wehling described as a "marketing group" cochaired by Sanders and himself organized to mount a public awareness campaign about the need for education reform. Made up of disparate grass-

roots organizations such as the AARP, the Farm Bureau, churches, the Business Roundtable, the NAACP, and others, the steering committee worked with the membership of these organizations to help legislators "get the job done for young people."

"Let's look at this issue of involvement," said Texas' Delco. "To what extent are we willing to involve clients in designing services? Are we as legislators willing to give up some of our authority to make this happen? We have to look hard at these questions. You know we get a lot of opposition because people outside the power structure don't really understand what we're talking about and trying to accomplish. Involvement is a critical issue."

In Minnesota, according to Krentz, the Coalition for Education Reform she created is a 24-member coalition made up of legislators, school officials, teachers, and representatives of business, human services, county government, and higher education. Without a budget or staff, "right now we're powered by passion," says Krentz, but the group is already receiving significant press attention and editorial approval.

"You need to give a lot of thought to bringing as many of the right people as you can to the table as soon as possible," said Pennsylvania's Cowell. "The 12 people on our Danforth Team were not enough. You have to expand that group quickly."

"In a week at the Policymakers' Institute," said Vermont's Hogan, "you can build a hell of a team. You are going to need that team and then you will have to expand it when you get home. But with the right team you can get the job done."

Yet another ground rule:
Create a hell of a team, then expand it into a critical mass of people who care.

GROUND RULE FIVE — CHANGE EXPECTATIONS

Throughout the meeting, voiced in many different ways, was the sense that the biggest impediment to improving the life chances of children was the barrier of bureaucratic turf protection.

As Pennsylvania's Cowell put it: "Create the expectation that people will collaborate." That applies not only to state agencies but also to the executive branch, the legislature, and units of state and local government.

"But if you look in the dictionary," said Gary Stangler, director of Missouri's Department of Social Services, "you find that people who collaborate should be shot. They are people who cooperate with an enemy invader of their country. By and large that's how our bureaucracies think of coordination."

Martin Gerry defined three styles of collaboration. The first starts with the question: "What can you do for me?" Stangler redefined that style with

the following aphorism: "The road to collaboration is paved with other people's money."

Style Two asks, "What can I do for you?" Neither of these styles does the trick, said Gerry. We need to aim at Style Three: "What can we do for the child?" Bureaucracies, he said, have to get past turf protection and way beyond cooperation. They have to worry about the comprehensive needs of the child and that means mounting joint enterprises.

"What we came up with," said Vermont's Education Commissioner Mills, "was the realization that both my department and the Education Department were looking at the same room, we just happened to be in different corners of it.

"All of us always preach cooperation and coordination. We're expected to. But until our state team began working on this issue with the Policymakers' Program, cooperation was somewhere between fifth and tenth on our list of priorities.

"What Con Hogan and I realized was that we had to make cooperation our top priority if either of us hoped to succeed."

Worrying that "a real skepticism exists about whether or not the system is capable of reforming itself," Proctor and Gamble's Wehling stressed a lesson from corporate America: Every organization is perfectly designed to obtain the results it gets. "We don't have a lot of bad teachers and ineffective social workers. What we have is a bad system that keeps teachers and social workers from cooperating to solve the problems of the same clients."

Jeanne Jehl, cochair of San Diego's New Beginnings Council, came to the same conclusion but reached it from the client's perspective. "Families know there is no system. They know that nobody cares what happens to them in toto, that the bits and pieces of the system worry about the family in bits and pieces. "Schools, for example, worry about attendance but they often intervene inappropriately, because they have no knowledge of parental addiction or capacity to deal with child abuse. Yet the Department of Social Services spends $5.5 million annually on children enrolled at the Hamilton School. We decided that New Beginnings should be a program that dealt comprehensively with families and their needs, not simply with children as students."

Ground Rule Five:
Collaboration cannot be skin deep. Expectations need to be changed so that collaboration is at the top of agency priorities.

Ground Rule Six—Build Boats Not Houses

"When most of us start thinking of building new institutional structures," said Martin Gerry, "we unconsciously think the way a home builder thinks, with separate functional structures for separate needs.

"But when you think about collaboration in human services," he continued, "you need to think about building boats, not houses. If you are building a house and leave a plank out, the house is basically all right. But if you leave a plank out of a boat, it sinks."

Picking up on a comment by Vermont's Jan Backus that "distinct, vertically integrated services" are not working, Ohio school superintendent Ted Sanders noted that his Governor's Education Management Council had recommended abolishing state and local school boards in favor of a single state body and a single local body responsible for all education and human services.

Although that proposal died, the state did create a cabinet council for human services. Serving on the council are the heads of all state units affecting children and families, with the understanding that principals only attend. Substitutes or representatives are not allowed to participate.

Advocating a systematic education reform strategy, consultant David Hornbeck, former Maryland commissioner of education, said, "The real mistake we have consistently made is adopting a piecemeal, uncoordinated approach. Instead of a solid diet of reform, we have ended up with a menu of mush."

Missouri's Stangler also opted for coordinating efforts to try to make sure that no child or family slips through the cracks, that the boat does not sink.

"There are about 18,000 government entities in the U.S.," he observed. "We have added one to that total, the Family Investment Trust. It cuts across all units of state government and is designed to create similar entities at the local level and help fund them."

"All of us have a tendency," said Harold Hodgkinson, "to think that we need to do something: hit the target with dollars, enter the food chain somewhere, award a planning grant, fund start-up costs, broker services. And all of these things are valuable. But it is at least as important to think consciously about what you are doing. Right now we have a vertical system in which separate units (for health, housing, education, corrections, and transportation) report to the boss who presides over it all. That's the wrong model.

"What we need is a model that looks more like a wheel with the family-at-risk at the hub and all of these agencies revolving around families needs, interacting with each other as needed. Make the family the single customer and then watch the results."

New Beginnings' Jeanne Jehl agreed: "Let's quit funding the problem of the month. Let's agree to enact no more categorical programs. Seek bipartisan consensus on the importance of these problems and shift resources to prevention instead of fixing the problem after its grown big enough for us to notice it."

Ground Rule Six:
When thinking collaboration, think of boats, not houses, and focus on the horizontal integration of services at every level of government services designed to meet the comprehensive needs of children and families in trouble.

GROUND RULE SEVEN — UNDERSTAND THAT EDUCATION REFORM AND WELFARE REFORM ARE THE SAME THING

Surprising things happen when people begin to think in unconventional ways about conventional topics. Perhaps the most surprising development in San Diego was the number of people who independently arrived at the same insight: Education reform and welfare reform are the same thing.

The first hint came from Harold Hodgkinson and his observation that Head Start graduates do much better in life than their counterparts without the benefit of Head Start and that nearly twice as many Head Start graduates are employed as those without Head Start. The second was offered up by Wilhelmina Delco when she worried that unless something was done to lower the incidence of out-of-wedlock births, the nation's future looked like one in which large numbers of young and old people depended on a diminishing number of working people to support them.

But hints pretty shortly gave way to outright assertions. "Two out of three kids in trouble in our communities are on welfare," said Missouri's Gary Stangler. "We know who the welfare kids are. We know where they live. We know where they go to school. I have convinced our governor that he cannot speak about education reform without talking about welfare reform, and vice versa."

"When you have a healthy system," said Maryland's Hornbeck, "you will have healthy children and youth. You will have fewer youngsters who become parents while in school, who abuse drugs and alcohol, become involved with the criminal justice system, and drop out of school for a life of dependence and unemployment."

San Diego's Jeanne Jehl demanded that legislators "connect school reform to human services reform. Quit pretending these are separate issues. They are the same thing."

"Let's not kid ourselves," said Ruth Massinga of the Casey Family Fund. "Neither top-down nor bottom-up solutions, by themselves, will guarantee results. We need both. But we have a choice. We can pay now in the form of comprehensive services to young people, or we can pay later in the form of public assistance payments."

Whether in education or human services, said Martin Gerry, service reform should aim at nurturing five things in children:

- physical and emotional security and health
- autonomy, creativity, and spirituality
- the ability to choose when to be independent, interdependent, and participate socially
- the capacity to form and maintain caring relationships with others
- the ability to live a productive, economically self-sufficient life

Ground Rule Seven:
Boiled down, these five goals restate what the other speakers were saying: Education reform and welfare reform amount to the same thing.

GROUND RULE EIGHT—FOLLOW THE MONEY

Gary Stangler's third rule of effective collaboration: Remember the advice Deep Throat gave Bob Woodward during Watergate: "Follow the Money."

Promoting change, said Stangler, requires changing how systems are financed. "Turf is money. Money is power. Therefore, turf is power. In government, nobody gives up power readily, and nobody gives up money easily, either."

In Ohio, reported Ted Sanders, "We have established a venture capital fund of $80 million to encourage systemic school reform but only if local boards yield governance authority to local schools. Under those circumstances, we are willing to provide up to $25,000 a year to be used as the school sees fit.

"I also now have authority from the General Assembly to waive not only state regulations, but also state law. What all of this means is that we now have new resources for schools in low-income areas. For example, we can create family support centers, all-day, every day kindergarten programs and programs for parents-as-teachers."

"Is more money necessary?" asked Ruth Massinga of the Casey Family Fund. More money is absolutely needed in health and pre-school programs including visiting nurses and home visits, she reported. It is needed especially to integrate human services as the New Beginnings program is doing.

But be prepared, she warned, for "a long gestational period before robust results appear. Don't deal with simplistic solutions in the hope that this will be easy and short."

"I cannot go back to my constituents and tell them things will be better in 10 years," retorted Delco. "Money is important and legislators, in the current environment, can't spend it in the hope that things will improve sometime in the future.

"Most people are good people. But increasingly we have to worry about competing constituencies. Not everyone worries about poor kids. Not every-

one lies awake at night thinking about service coordination. Many people believe in the old prayer: Dear Lord: God bless me and my wife, my son John and his wife. Us four and no more.'

"It is hard to persuade people to worry about anything except us four and no more.' So if we want to follow the money and need more money, we have to be able to promise some long-term relief and guarantee some short-term success. We need some models that can work now."

Perhaps Gary Stangler had the best solution to this dilemma: "Don't try to solve these problems with more advisory boards," he said. "We don't need more advisory boards. If you need to create boards, establish them with some real authority over funds. Follow the money."

Ground Rule Eight, follow the money, is hard.
But compared to number nine, burrow into the bureaucracy,
it is likely to be a piece of cake.

GROUND RULE NINE—BURROW INTO THE BUREAUCRACY

Quoting Machiavelli, Ohio's Sanders noted that nothing is more uncertain of success, drawing hostility from entrenched interests and only lukewarm support from friends, than the effort to reform existing institutions. New systems, said Sanders, probably have to improve services by a factor of 10 before people will accept them. "One of the first questions you need to ask," said Gary Stangler, is 'What is going on at the midmanagement level?' In particular (back to ground rule eight), what is going on at the midmanagement level with the money?'"

Money is just one of the issues, according to Bud Hodgkinson, reporting on an interview he had with a Philadelphia woman. She told him of 55 different interviews with social workers representing 30 different agencies, all demanding a separate case history which they refused to share with others because of concerns about confidentiality. "You know," the woman said, "in Philadelphia, you have to be smart to be poor."

The Philadelphia story was repeated on the West coast. San Diego's New Beginnings program had a "painful" time working out agreements on confidentiality, according to Jeanne Jehl. "We also had a very difficult time getting people to agree on common eligibility standards. We encountered huge resistance at the middle level of the bureaucracy. Originally, a consultant thought we could leave all of this stuff—confidentiality, applications, eligibility standards—to the state, because we wanted to get on with the business of serving kids and families. But we found we could not do that because this stuff is the daily meat and potatoes of midlevel bureaucrats."

Sanders reported that Ohio's pilot program to coordinate services for children and families had adopted a training mechanism of quarterly meetings so that everyone, at every level of state and local government, understood what the Governor's Cabinet Council was trying to accomplish. And new legisla-

tion was in the offing to authorize "regulation free zones" for these pilot projects.

"We have some early results that indicate we may be on our way. First, we have developed a common set of regulations to govern most programs. Second, we have eliminated one 26-page application and replaced it with a one-page form."

As difficult as these efforts are, they are well worth the trouble, according to Jeanne Jehl. New Beginnings, she said, began five years ago when Jake Jacobson of the social services department and school superintendent Tom Paysant got together and said, "We are serving the same youngsters. Why don't we do it together?"

"Those two leaders could make the system respond. But both have since moved on. How did we keep it going? We survived because we had built relationships with people below the executive level, people in the middle. The result: When the leadership changed, there was no real thought to abandoning New Beginnings, because the bureaucracy itself had a stake in our success."

The penultimate ground rule:
If you want reform to work and last, burrow into the bureaucracy.

GROUND RULE 10 — END WITH THE NUMBERS: INSIST ON RESULTS

"Our state team left the Policymakers' Institute in St. Louis last year committed to several things," said Pennsylvania's Cowell during a panel discussion. "One of the most important was an agreement that we had to create some indicators of progress so that we could measure what we were doing and report on our achievements to the public."

Cowell's comment identified one of the foundation themes of the meeting: the need to insist on results, assess progress, and be accountable to the public.

The framework developed to define the problem (ground rule one) may, in fact, serve as the framework for reporting on results. "You need to worry about accountability and rewards and sanctions," said David Hornbeck, describing a comprehensive approach to school and service reform he has helped implement in Kentucky, Washington, Missouri, and Ohio. In these states and a dozen others, he got the process started with a "gap analysis" to measure the breach between needs and services. Tracking the "gap" is one way to measure results.

Julie Koppich, deputy director of PACE (Policy Analysis for California Education) on the Berkeley campus of the University of California, had a similar tale to tell. She described a major analysis of the needs of the state's children, *Conditions of Children in California*. Begun in 1984 as an annual report on education, it has recently expanded to cover an array of children's

issues, ranging from family life, finances, and child care to physical and mental health, child abuse, and the juvenile justice system.

The most recent edition of the report generated major attention in the state around three issues: underservice of children, service fragmentation, and a de facto state policy of providing social services on a "triage" approach. Like doctors on a battlefield, social workers divide clients into three categories: those who are likely to get better by themselves, those for whom nothing can be done, and those who will receive attention.

Martin Gerry almost had the final word on the topic. "If collaboration is to work, you must have outcome measures," he said describing a comprehensive assessment strategy for Austin's ASCEND, a program designed to foster healthy child development. "Gather data on such things as fetal alcohol and drug addiction, infant and youth mortality, low-birth-weight babies, immunizations of 2-year-olds, access to appropriate child care, school readiness, educational achievement by age, and graduation rates of seventh and eighth graders.

"If you get into this," he warned, "realize that you need some principles for the government entities involved." Gerry cited five:

- outcome measures on status of children
- self-evaluating delivery systems and ongoing assessment
- systematic and timely performance assessment
- a reliable information system
- public information about children's welfare and system performance.

But Wilhelmina Delco put it all into perspective: "Information is critical. There is nothing worse than getting people all worked up about your issue and then finding that you got your facts wrong."

Ground Rule 10:
End with the numbers and insist on results.

APPENDIX C

Improving Results for Children: Designing System Change

1995 Highlights

From the
Winter Meeting of the Policymakers' Program

THE DANFORTH FOUNDATION

Cosponsored by

Education Commission of the States
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Governors' Association

Clearwater, Florida
January 19–22, 1995

PREFACE

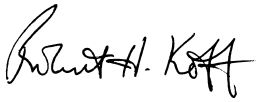
In January of this year, 60 state legislators, governors' aides, analysts, researchers, school superintendents, and other officials from 15 states arrived in Clearwater, Florida, at the invitation of the Danforth Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association.

They came prepared to examine the possibilities of designing comprehensive and systematic change in state government to improve results for children. They left having heard a dramatic description of the revolution in political expectations facing public officials in the United States.

From nationally respected experts on public opinion, participants heard about the profound anxiety with which many Americans face the future. Attendees listened as a landmark new study of public support for school reform was discussed. They heard about reformers who prescribe authentic assessment to parents worried about school violence. They talked about redefining community in contemporary America. And they met impressive parents who have made a difference in their own neighborhoods.

From these participants, the Danforth Foundation's Policymakers' Program intends to invite three states to a Policymakers' Institute in August, at which state teams will formulate problem statements and state team-building strategies to improve the delivery of education and human services.

To those who were able to be with us, our thanks. To those who will join us in the future, we hope these highlights are a useful summary of the conversation so far.



Robert Koff
Program Director
The Danforth Foundation

IMPROVING RESULTS FOR CHILDREN: DESIGNING SYSTEM CHANGE

"Welcome to the Policymakers' Program," said Senator Jeb Spaulding of Vermont opening the first full day of the meeting. "This program helped us, and can help you, rethink how systems are organized, financed, and held accountable. We have to rethink these things if we are to achieve the objectives in GOALS 2000. Here we are, half way there since the National Education Goals were defined in 1989, and most of us have barely got started."

Not Just Another Meeting

"I want to say that this is not just another conference," stressed Representative Ron Cowell of Pennsylvania at the same session. "It might, of course, turn out that way; but if so, you will have missed a great opportunity."

In education and human services, said Cowell, state leaders need to do three things: "We need to change the way we do our business. We need to institutionalize the change and make it permanent. And, we need to reshape attitudes across the country." Participation in the Policymakers' Program during its inaugural year, 1993, helped Pennsylvania make a start on this agenda by encouraging family centers, "SPOCs," agencies providing a single point of contact for clients, fostering greater attention to training in economic development, and consideration of a statewide "Children's Congress" to examine children's issues.

Spaulding also listed the benefits Vermont has reaped from his team's participation in 1993: a nucleus of support from people who understand the importance of collaborative service design and delivery; a statewide, consolidated report on the condition of children; state involvement with the designs of the New American Schools Development Corporation and their emphasis on social services, and legislation requiring the Department of Education and the Department of Human Services to submit a joint, consolidated budget.

With that description, and very little else in the way of introduction, the 60 state officials began their four-day immersion in the challenges of service cooperation and collaboration. The main features of the conversation turned around seven themes:

1) The Best and the Worst of Times
2) Political Context for Reform
3) Community Governance and Community Control
4) First Things First: The Cautionary Tale of School Reform
5) The Human Face of Reform
6) Financing Reform
7) Moving Ahead

The Best and the Worst of Times

For those of us in education, this is both "the best of times and the very worst of times," declared Gerry House, superintendent of Memphis schools. "It is the best of times, because we have finally reached the point where most educators agree that all children can learn. We can no longer afford to under-educate, mis-educate, or un-educate anyone."

At the same time, she continued, expectations of our schools are rising, standards are improving, and everyone understands that the new basics include high levels of literacy, including technological literacy, as the United States prepares to enter a new century.

But it is also the worst of times. "Our communities are crumbling. Poverty is on the increase. We find weapons in the schools. In Memphis, more than 60 percent of children in fourth grade know of a friend or a neighbor who had died violently. Teenage parenthood is up. Parents are, themselves, children."

So in Memphis, said House, another Danforth program called The Forum for the American School Superintendent is helping support a comprehensive, collaborative effort to address the needs of young children, from birth to age 9 — The Success for All Children Program. This program is built on three foundation beliefs that existed in Memphis long before SACP arrived: "We need to guarantee that 108,000 Memphis children graduate with the skills and competence they need. Families are a child's first line of support. The family and school, together, are part of the community."

Concluded House: "Times have changed. Communities have changed. Families have changed. Schools must change with them. As it is now, as a friend of mine says, we are trying to teach Monopoly to the Nintendo generation."

Political Context for Reform

This Nintendo generation is coming of age in the midst of complex political cross-currents.

"People are increasingly skeptical about the competence of government and the public sector," according to Ralph Smith of the Annie E. Casey Foundation. "The notion that government has a function, that it has value, that it represents a sort of marshaling of the community's wealth to address the common good — that whole notion has died in the rush to cut taxes.

"So we find this mismatch between the structures we have and the problems we need to solve," Smith said. "Our problems don't fit into these neat organizational boxes. And of course we find the whole scorched earth politics of the 1990s."

"Let's not kid ourselves," said well-known Democratic pollster Celinda Lake of Mellman, Lazarus, and Lake. "People are suspicious of government. In 1992 about, 44 percent of Americans said they thought government inter-

feres too much in people's lives. By 1994, that figure had grown to 78 percent."

Lake's figures were confirmed by an equally prominent Republican pollster, Vincent Breglia of R/S/M and Company. "Sometimes it is better to be lucky and in the right place than to be good at what you do!" quipped Breglia, pointing to the transformation wrought on the U.S. Congress by the 1994 election.

"That election was a long time coming," said Breglia, "and it was built on voter frustration and resentment. By now, more than seven out of 10 people think the government is too intrusive and more than six out of 10 think it is trying to do too much."

Breglia reported that among all voters, the top four concerns are crime, health care, welfare reform, and education. Republican voters put crime at the head of the list, and Democrats named health care number one.

"But we have to learn how to listen if we are to be successful in changing any of these systems," according to Breglia. "It is not simply that people lack confidence in government, people are nervous about the future. About two-thirds of all Americans support a balanced budget amendment, because they think it will force government to make the hard decisions it is now unable to make."

About 30 percent of Americans worry about employment security, said Breglia, but it is not the 30 percent most people would expect. "It used to be the lunch bucket laborer. Now it affects white collar workers. It affects the boomerang kids'—the kids who just got their college degrees and now cannot find jobs. It affects the elderly, who are very anxious about taxes, prices, and the cost-of-living, since they live on fixed incomes."

Lake pointed to a different fear: blue-collar parents, she said, are "afraid of the global economy." Moreover, she reported, blue-collar voters are worried about their own kids, not other people's kids. "Two-thirds of Americans believe that when politicians talk about children, they do not really mean all children, they mean poor children," said Lake.

"If we want to help poor children, we have to find some things that blue-collar and middle-class parents want too," she pointed out, arguing that advocates often overstate their cases when children's programs are threatened. "When we claim that 6 million children will lose benefits or 6 million children will die, nobody really believes that."

Breglia and Lake found themselves in agreement on public support for welfare reform, as well. According to Breglia, people are convinced that welfare recipients are not being held responsible and accountable for their lives. "People aren't thinking about children and welfare," added Lake, "they are worried about adults and welfare. People believe that welfare rewards what life punishes and punishes what life rewards. Life punishes out-of-wedlock, early births; people think welfare rewards it. Life rewards work; people think welfare punishes it. The dirty little secret is that the rewards are all backwards."

On other issues Lake and Breglia claimed:

- The general public does not even know that GOALS 2000 exists.
- GOALS 2000 is, as Lake put it, a "make-believe program the public does not understand."
- Rather than defending GOALS 2000, federal officials should be defining the federal role.
- The immigration issue is the "sleeper issue of the 1990s—hot, dangerous stuff," according to Lake.

Concluded Lake, "This immigration issue is a very frightening thing, because underneath it all, it arouses racism. We are not going to get these feelings under control or get similar hostility to affirmative action under control until we have a growth economy that promises a bigger pie for us all. Such an economy might be 20 years away according to some experts."

Community Governance and Community Control

"Most of us are pretty comfortable with top-down paradigms of reform," said keynote speaker Sharon Lynn Kagan of Yale University's Bush Center for Child Development. "We were all raised with them. But what we really need today are some side-to-side analogies! We need vertical highways from the states to the communities, but we also need some horizontal side-roads from community to community."

Communities. Local control. Bringing government into local neighborhoods. These became recurring themes during the four-day meeting.

State leaders genuinely interested in results, according to Kagan, should "understand the school within the context of the community. Crime is not the school's problem, and the school cannot solve the community's crime problem."

Government and governance are, in the final analysis, all about decision making, according to the Casey Foundation's Smith. "Our challenge is to figure out the appropriate site for making decisions, and to me, the appropriate site is the place where we find authority and capacity and responsibility aligned.

"I am sure we can identify a class of decisions that cannot be delegated because of their nature," he said. "But everything else can be delegated, and the only real question is delegated to where? In fact, virtually every decision is now so dynamic and complex that we are forced into collaborative and cooperative decision making. The guiding principle should be to encourage devolution of authority, not its abrogation."

That guiding principle may be easier to state than to achieve, according to Harold Richman of the University of Chicago.

"When most of us think about the child, or the family, or the school and school government," said Richman, "we put them on one side of the ledger

and the state and its agencies on another. For some reason, we assume there is this huge empty gap between the family and the state.

"But of course that is nonsense. An incredible number of intermediary organizations fill the gap churches, Little League, boys' clubs, girls' clubs, community theater, and so on. Yet these services, normally ignored, are the very ones that have the best potential for early identification of problems.

"Collaboration defined as a treaty between, for example, the department of mental health and four other agencies does not get us what we need," according to Richman. "Real collaboration and coordination would include the Little League coach, the local pastor, the librarian, and all of the other people that touch the family. We need to talk about the whole spectrum."

The real issue, said Richman, is very much the issue defined by Smith: How to move power and authority out of the hands of central agencies to local agencies of governance. Addressing that issue requires responding to several considerations:

- Community capacity — Can the community organize, plan, and deliver services?
- Empowerment and governance — How are these managed, since they are not coterminous with a political jurisdiction?
- Sustainability — How do we keep it going?
- Relationship to government — How do communities with a noncategorical frame of mind relate to the categorical approach of states?
- Financial responsibility — How to encourage communities to make tough financial decisions?

Everyone nods in agreement when devolution of authority to local communities is mentioned, said Ralph Smith, but it is a very tough thing to bring off.

"It is a lot easier to collaborate over how to spend the new money than it is to collaborate over how to cut programs," said Smith. "The virtue of a bureaucracy is its specialization and efficiency. You may lose that in community governance structures."

Moreover, community governance creates the need for local elections of some kind which may threaten the established leadership structure. Finally, we need to understand that not every local community sees devolution as a good thing. There are not a lot of people out there who want to make decisions about which of their neighbor's kids should be put into foster care and which should not.

"We need to think about why we are decentralizing," concluded Smith. "In education, decentralization should always be related to students and their achievement, not to budgets and finance. The issue is really accountability for results."

First Things First: The Cautionary Tale of School Reform

This entire discussion about community governance, local control, and public anger about government intrusion can easily be discerned in the public's reactions to school reform, according to Deborah Wadsworth of the Public Agenda Foundation and Bob Sexton of Kentucky's Pritchard Committee for Academic Excellence.

As Sexton noted, the Public Agenda studies put the loudest and most extreme voices in the education reform discussion in perspective. "The great mass of the American people," said Sexton, "are in the middle, grouped comfortably around certain common values. We must not forget that. Nine out 10 people are really saying to us in education reform: Explain it so we can get it. Don't go to extremes.' "

Wadsworth described two studies completed by the Public Agenda Foundation—one, a national survey of citizens supplemented by focus groups. This survey produced the report First Things First. A similar study, completed in Connecticut for the Graustein Foundation, produced The Broken Contract on public attitudes toward school reform.

"People believe that if you ask for more, you will receive more," said Wadsworth. According to the research:

- Eighty-eight percent of Americans support strong programs in language, writing, and reading.
- Seven out of 10 believe standards for promotion from elementary to middle school, and from middle school to high school, should be created.
- Focus group participants soundly reject social promotion.
- African-American and fundamentalist Christian parents take basically the same view on these matters.
- African-American parents are even more upset than most about the quality of education provided to their children.

However, said Wadsworth, "The public lacks confidence in the reform agenda." In Connecticut, Public Agenda described one part of the public opposition as the "broken contract." "Educators often argue for more money for reform and then claim the public has broken its contract with the schools when it refuses.

"But the general public," reported Wadsworth, "is equally reluctant to commit additional money to the schools, not because funds are unimportant, but because money is wasted."

The general public, said Wadsworth, believes educators ignore the basics. "The public wants first things first. It wants safety. It wants order. It wants drugs and violence out of the schools. It wants unprofessional teachers out of the classroom. How, people ask themselves, can learning take place in this disaster zone? Shouldn't all of this be fixed before any academic reform agenda is tackled?' "

"Our research provides no evidence that reform is being seriously held up by values arguments," concluded Wadsworth. "People generally want schools to teach values such as tolerance and respect for others—honesty, respect for diversity, including diverse lifestyles. But drug abuse, violence, disrespect for society—these things upset the public. And they are equally upset by black separatism, holocaust denial, or the argument that Columbus was a murderer."

The Human Face of Reform

Public Agenda's research indicates that thinking of the reform of education and social service systems as an exercise for elites—an activity for policy analysts and elected officials acting in isolation—is a mistake.

These issues are important to people. Reform has an intensely human face."When we say we are committed to children," said Wilhelmina Delco, former Majority Leader Pro Tem of the Texas Legislature and a member of the Policymakers' Program advisory board, "why is that we so seldom acknowledge that these children have parents? If we want to do the right thing for children, the challenge for us is how do we involve their parents in these programs?"

"People want local control of these programs. They want their neighborhoods back," stressed Vince Breglia. These "people," he emphasized, are not strangers. "We have met the enemy and he is us," said Breglia. "A few years ago, I watched a group in Kentucky demonstrating against the Kentucky education reform bill. For the most part, the opponents were professional, white collar, well-educated people, just like the people in this room. So it is not just some group of crazy left- or right-wingers we have to worry about."

Avoid the temptation to believe that elected and bureaucratic bodies know what is best for people, was Wadsworth's advice. She recalled that when New York City's schools were in turmoil over controversial sex education programs several years ago, parents went to school board meetings to tell the board and the superintendent: "You people don't get it. These are our kids, not your kids."

Many of these issues can be intensely painful, very personal, and extremely emotional for people, according to public opinion analyst Celinda Lake. She described the bitterness and pain she senses in focus groups around the country as economic issues are discussed.

"There is a lot of bitterness out there among women—majority and minority—who have graduated from high school, dropped out of school, been forced into unskilled jobs as waitresses, and so on," according to Lake. "They are upset about welfare. They feel that if they have to work at minimum-wage jobs, welfare people should, too.

"In Flint, Michigan, a blue-collar worker broke down into tears talking to us. He said, I can barely go home and talk to my 9-year-old boy, because I know there is nothing I can do to give him a better future.' "

But the same human faces that reveal the bitterness and pain can also display the joy and pleasure that accompany well-conceived programs in which clients are invited into the discussion.

Miami resident Teresa Martiato, born in Mexico, and Maria Martinez, from Puerto Rico, described the satisfaction they get out of leading the RAINMAKERS Program at Feinberg-Fisher Elementary School in South Miami. This Referral and Information Network (RAIN) is a central component of the Healthy Learners program supported by Danforth. Parents who become part of the network receive 40 hours of training split between learning how to work with various service agencies and visiting families to provide assistance and a small weekly stipend of about $40 for eight hours of work.

South Miami is a small community, according to Tania Alameda of Florida International University. (She helped start the RAINMAKERS.) The community is the site for much of the filming for Miami Vice and is hidden behind a major thoroughfare. Before 1980, South Miami, was largely white, Jewish, and elderly, with a lot of "snowbirds"—older people spending the winter. After the 1980 Marial boat lift, South Miami became more Latino, more immigrant. Recently, it has become a trendy place to live, and low-income people are routinely displaced and evicted from their apartments.

Working with schools and community leaders, Alameda reported, she noticed that schools complained that they held meetings but nobody came. Parents were not engaged, and the schools were too busy to go looking for parents.

"We went into the community and asked what it needed. Parents told us they needed a community information center in the schools for newcomers. They wanted a quiet place in the school for children to do their homework. They wanted social service information in the schools.

"So we started the RAINMAKERS Program. The parents run it. Believe it or not we began with head lice. Lice are a problem in all schools, rich and poor, but South Miami simply could not get rid of them. The nurse had lectured the parents. The department of health services had been to the school, and the kids still had lice. We said to the parents: You know more about head lice than most people, can you help the school deal with this?' "

"We created LiceBusters,'" said Martiato. "The school had a program of viewing a movie, getting a prescription, and going to a clinic to have it filled. That could take a whole day for someone without a car. Too long and too tiring.

"We go to kids' homes with boxes of shampoo. We tell the parents what to do. We help wash the house. We launder the sheets. We launder blankets and air out mattresses. The next day, the kids are back in school."

"We were upset at how the public clinic treated patients," she continued. "Now the attitude has improved. The staff knows that it is a public clinic dealing with sick people who have no other place to go.

"We have a homework club in the school so kids can get their work done. People were being evicted from their homes with only 15 days notice. We have already got that extended to 30 days, and we are working on 60. We have consortia meetings of social service agencies where we can express community needs," Martiato said.

"Why should schools worry about this?" concluded Martiato. "Because if a child does not have a safe place to sleep and basic human needs are unmet, it is very hard to concentrate on the times tables. "

Maria Martinez may have summed up this side of the human dimension of reform best. "I get nervous and emotional when I try to talk about what being a RAINMAKER has meant to me," Martinez told the room full of state policymakers.

"I like it," she said simply. "In the Rain Room at the school, we help the kids. We go on field trips. We patrol the school. Kids can do their homework. We change their clothes when they have accidents in the class. We can provide emergency food to families. Some of these families have no beds, no soap, unemployed parents, and no papers.

"We feel so good about what we are doing. I have six grandchildren. One of them just moved away to a new school where they have no services like this. He told the principal: 'Just you wait until my grandmom comes to this school.'"

"The challenge for us," said Wilhelmina Delco, "is how to scale up programs like the RAINMAKERS and keep them going. Evaluations show they work; school achievement and attendance are both up. Let's not drop these people after they have become proud of themselves and after their kids have become proud of them for what they have accomplished."

Financing Reform

One way to scale up, said Roland Chevalier, superintendent of St. Martin Parish schools in Louisiana, is to think of building great districts. "We can always find good schools, but it is rare to find an entire district described as exceptional. We are committed to improving education one school at a time, and one district at a time.

"The Danforth Foundation's Success for All Children Program is helping St. Martin and seven other school districts plan for providing comprehensive services to young children. We are 54 out of 66 districts in Louisiana in relative wealth."

Chevalier described a project that focuses on staff development, school-based health programs, and a structured process for bringing the public to the table—the community engagement process. The staff development process has brought kindergarten, first-grade, and Head Start teachers together for the first time in the district's history, according to the superintendent. The Danforth project also has helped the district obtain support from the state under Medicaid.

A different set of financing issues was put on the table by Mark Pitsch, Washington editor of *Education Week*. According to Pitsch, most people in Washington are speculating without a great deal of specific information about what the future holds in terms of the new Congress. "But it looks as though the federal role in education will be called into question. Funding for federal programs is likely to be reduced, certainly for nearly 100 unspecified programs suggested by Republican leaders, and special education programs may be put at risk by unfunded mandates legislation." Finally, block grant legislation could easily transform domestic spending.

What you need to be careful of with block grants," said Mark Friedman of the Center for the Study of Social Policy, "is that they are virtually always accompanied by cutbacks in funding. States should say to the federal government: 'If flexibility is so great, give me the same amount of money!'" smiled Friedman, a former budget official with the state of Maryland.

If you want to reform family and children's services, said Friedman, you have to pay for reform, and that involves reforming financing systems. "No business could operate the way we do with one-year budgets and fragmented systems," claimed Friedman. "Such a business would go under in no time."

As states look to reform, Friedman suggested instituting a planning process for family and children's services that would create a kind of "constitution for the kind of system we want in the form of principles of operation and outcomes we think desirable. Then we should create a vision of the system as it should be with a five to ten-year budget agenda attached to it, to get you there step by step.

Putting it all together, concluded Friedman, involves combining program and fiscal strategies so that funds are obtained by redeploying existing funds and refinancing Medicaid services used for a variety of community, preventive, and home-based services.

Responsible and ethical refinancing, insisted Friedman, is committed to several things. It reinvests in families and children. It creates financing options to support clients. It takes reasonable risks and invests in infrastructure. Finally, it is staged and implemented over time with great care and attention paid to solid accounting practices. It does not simply view money as the object, make decisions without regard to services, load new work onto staff, and reduce agency budgets indiscriminately.

Moving Ahead

With all of this advice ringing in their ears, how are policymakers to proceed? These experts provided a number of general pieces of advice.

Of greatest importance, according to most of them, was the need to think strategically and in terms of outcomes, desired results. "It is a mistake to think of financing as something separate from the reforms you seek," said Friedman. Think of financing broadly and strategically and think hard about what you are doing, why your are doing it, and what you hope to accomplish."

Strategy and results also loomed large in the thinking of Yale's Lynne Kagan. "If you want results," she concluded, "keep four strategies in mind. First, understand schools in the context of the community. Second, understand communities in the context of the state. "Next, adopt a results orientation. Think of four buckets. One holds what you want children to know and be able to do. The second holds indicators of how life in general is improving teenage pregnancy rates and so on. Bucket three lists the services to which children and families have access. And the last bucket is systemic efficiency. How well does the system run? I am not at all sure that we can measure results just by looking only in bucket one.

"The fourth strategy emphasizes quality. There is a danger that in looking at results we will overlook quality. At all costs avoid that."

With respect to the general public, Public Agenda's Wadsworth recommended a three-part strategy to bring the public along, much of it similar to recommendations from the other public opinion experts.

First, change the plan to accommodate the public's agenda. "Too many reformers have a tin ear," charged Wadsworth. "They do not listen very well." What reformers should do is acknowledge safety and discipline as concerns. They should push the basics. They should label cutting-edge ideas such as "authentic assessment" as research and development, not as the heart of the reform effort.

Second, give the public far more choices for their children, particularly in curriculum areas. Choice extends to schools, as well, according to other participants. "Would charters or public school choice help fend off vouchers?" asked Delaware school superintendent Pat Forgione. "Charters," responded Vincent Breglia, "would be a pure plus for educators, politically." Added Celinda Lake, "They would be a clear blow to the voucher movement."

Third, develop a leadership agenda to begin the "slow and painful path of convincing the public that reformers are correct." Kentucky's Sexton applauded this recommendation as one of the most fascinating recommendations of the Public Agenda studies. "I agree with it. Right on," he enthused. "As the Pritchard Committee has shown, this leadership role can be met, and we absolutely have to meet it because the general public shows a serious lack of knowledge about the economic challenges facing the United States."

Finally, don't forget the parents and the community, urged Hedy Chang from California Tomorrow, a nonprofit organization worrying about California's multi-ethnic future.

Educators and local officials can learn several lessons from programs such as RAINMAKERS, said Chang. "First, don't take parents not showing up at meetings as lack of interest. All parents want the best for their kids. Second, involve parents in the design and implementation of programs. Third, take the trouble to get officials who can speak the language of the home. Nothing disenfranchises a parent faster than local officials using children as translators. Fourth, worry about how to sustain programs. And final-

ly, use these programs as a way not simply to serve clients but to build genuine communities."

The Road Ahead: Next Steps

Helping to build genuine communities and improve results for young children by encouraging systematic change is what the Policymakers' Program is all about. As Gerrit Westervelt of the Education Commission of the States told the meeting, "The Policymakers' Program has succeeded in capturing the kinetic energies of the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association in a structured, not haphazard, way."

Westervelt described how the program has grown and evolved over time. Last year it involved two meetings leading up to the Policymakers' Institute in August, with limited technical assistance from the three sponsoring organizations. This year, the program has been restructured to eliminate the second meeting before the August Institute and to replace it with much more technical assistance from, ECS, NCSL, and NGA. This assistance will help states put teams together before the institute so that the August meeting can be used to best advantage.

States interested in participating in the institute were encouraged to submit an application to the Danforth Foundation by the end of February, with a response promised within a matter of days. Danforth is committed to supporting institute expenses for three state teams of approximately 12 members, each representing various education and human service policy-making and service-providing agencies. At a minimum, each team must include two legislative committee chairs (one each from education and human services); a governor's representative; a representative from the state departments of education and human services; and a local service provider such as a teacher, principal, social worker, or school counselor.

The Institute, an intensive five-day work and decision-making process to create an action agenda for change, will be held in St. Louis in August, and each state team must make a commitment to assemble its entire team for at least two team meetings in their respective states prior to the August Institute.

All in all, an ambitious road ahead and, of necessity, it has to be so. The processes of the Policymakers' Program are as ambitious as the purposes for which the program was created. As Pennsylvania's Cowell said at the outset of the meeting, program participants are people interested in changing how states do business, institutionalizing the change, and making it permanent. An ambitious agenda matched by an equally ambitious and demanding program.

APPENDIX D

Creating Programs That Work: Improving Service Delivery to Children and Families

1996 Highlights

From the
Winter Meeting of the Policymakers' Program

THE DANFORTH FOUNDATION

Cosponsored by

Education Commission of the States
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Governors' Association

Phoenix, Arizona
January 18–21, 1996

PREFACE

In January of this year, at the invitation of the Danforth Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association, 86 state legislators, governors' aides, analysts, researchers, school superintendents, and other officials from 18 states converged on Phoenix, Arizona, to discuss prospects for improving services for children and families.

They arrived hoping to examine service coordination and the need for comprehensive and systematic change in state government. They left after receiving sobering descriptions of the challenges facing government at all levels today and the rising tide of public expectations for programs that work.

From nationally respected scholars on government, participants heard about the new political climate. Attendees listened as public opinion experts took the public pulse. They heard about promising new ways of "engaging" the public in the work of policy development. And they met with "graduates" of Danforth's Policymakers' Program, state and local leaders already engaged in the difficult work of systems reform.

From these 18 states, the Policymakers' Program intends to invite about three state teams to a Policymakers' Institute in August, at which the teams will formulate problem statements and develop state team-building strategies to improve the delivery of education and human services.

To those who were able to be with us, our thanks. To those who will join us in the future, we hope these highlights are a useful summary of the conversation so far.

Robert Koff
Program Director
The Danforth Foundation

CREATING PROGRAMS THAT WORK

"Congratulations," beamed Representative Bill Purcell, majority leader of the Tennessee General Assembly and a Danforth Foundation advisory committee member. "Your being here at the Policymakers' Program is the state government equivalent of winning the Publisher's Clearinghouse Sweepstakes. At least, it's as close as any of us in this room are likely to get!"

According to Purcell, "This is the most innovative program available to state officials. Let's face it, the climate has changed radically, and we need to learn how to respond."

"What we are trying to do here," emphasized Jeb Spaulding — chairman of the Vermont Senate's Education Committee and a "graduate" of the program — is "improve results for children and families. The Policymakers' Program is based on the idea that education cannot succeed unless families and communities succeed. Danforth, ECS, NCSL, and NGA will do their best to help you. All we ask is that you be serious about the effort. This is not a junket; and all of the state's stakeholders need to be involved.

"No matter where your state is in terms of systems reform," concluded Spaulding, "this program is designed to move you from where you are."

With that introduction, the 18 teams began an intensive three-day scrutiny of how to create programs that work to improve service delivery for children and families. They examined how the policy climate has changed the economic insecurity of our times, public cynicism, the black magic of balanced budgets through block grants and fiscal retrenchment, the need to weed out fraud, waste, and abuse, and how the Policymakers' Program has worked in the past.

The Climate Has Changed

Many messages emerged from the three-day meeting, but few came through as powerfully as the basic one: Times are changing dramatically, and the very climate in which public business is conducted has been transformed. The liberalism of post-World War II America appears today to be part of an ancient epoch, according to several of the experts in attendance. "My message is that a meteor has hit the earth and the dinosaurs are dying," declared Marc J. Roberts of Harvard's John F. Kennedy School. "I want to argue there are some very big long-run trends, economically and politically, that affect governments fiscally and that affect each of us personally."

Jurassic Park metaphors were popular throughout the meeting. Aware that his daughter was becoming less interested in the children's fantasy dinosaur, Barney, Bill Purcell asked her what had happened to the dinosaurs. "She responded without a second thought: 'The climate changed and the dinosaurs died.' The climate for my daughter and for your kids has indeed changed," said Purcell, "but there are still a lot of dinosaurs wandering around our state legislatures."

In this changing climate, political leaders are becoming increasingly rancorous and partisan, according to Jack Jennings, director of the Washington-based Center on National Education Policy and former long-time counsel to the House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor. Jennings' research indicates that both Congressional houses, after several decades of bipartisan support for education legislation (as reflected in support for the Elementary and Secondary Education Act), are reverting to the sharp partisan divides that characterized legislation in this area a generation ago. See the table below.

"Nothing survives in politics unless it is bipartisan," noted Jennings, "and we appear to be looking at severe problems down the road." In fact, he concluded, after traveling nearly 80,000 miles in the previous 12 months, that public education in the United States is in serious trouble in terms of public support. People are confused about what is going on. They do not have the basic information they need to make decisions. In this sense, partisan wrangling on Capitol Hill mirrors the public's own confusion about what lies ahead.

Rise and Fall of Bipartisan Support for Federal Aid to Education

Legislation	Democratic Support	Republican Support
ESEA, 1965		
House	80%	27%
Senate	95%	56%
ESEA, 1967		
House	82%	77%
Senate	95%	96%
ESEA, 1980		
House	100%	99%
Senate	100%	98%
ESEA, 1994		
House	98%	19%
Senate	100%	53%

Whether couched in terms if dinosaurs dying or meteors striking the earth, the ground has shifted radically beneath us all. In a vastly different and more perplexing world, state policymakers must step lively if they are to avoid becoming a kind of Jurassic Park for policy, interesting to visit, but increasingly behind the times.

Economic Insecurity

The most notable aspect of this new world for the Baby Boom generation is endemic economic insecurity. "The public's perception is that things are pretty dicey," observed John Immerwahr of Villanova University and the Public Agenda Foundation. "People are worried that certain things are more important than they have ever been — job security, health care, and access to higher education — but these things are somehow threatened. People are anxious they will lose them."

It is easy to understand why people are anxious, according to Harvard's Roberts. We are really on the cusp of a brave new world, he reported, perhaps a totally new way of organizing ourselves economically. It can only be compared to the economic, political, and social changes witnessed in the 1870s and the 1950s. "In the 1870s, following the Civil War and the introduction of transcontinental telegraphs and railroads, we created national companies out of local and regional ones. Between 1945 and 1965, while the rest of the world was rebuilding, we experienced a terrific period of economic growth that enabled us to create and support Medicare and Medicaid. Today, technology appears to be producing similar massive effects. But instead of technology helping regional companies become national ones, it is making national companies global."

At the same time, he noted, our "economic curves are cockeyed. Tax revenues grow along with the economy. Debt increases as interest rates rise. Here we find ourselves in trouble; interest rates are higher than rates of economic growth."

Meanwhile changes in demography and family structure create powerful new realities of their own. On one hand, as Roberts noted, the aging of the Baby Boom generation means that soon fewer workers will be supporting more retirees. On the other, as the senior staff attorney from the Center for Law and Social Policy Mark Greenberg pointed out, "Most of the social structure we have inherited, and the government programs supporting it are based on the premise that there will be a spare parent at home. Increasingly that is less and less true. A lot of the political turmoil we are witnessing is a reflection of a changing social view — the belief that working-age adults capable of work should be at work."

These macro-economic changes, so easy to describe through data and the detached eye of the academic observer, fall with devastating effect on some families and children. In a powerful statement midway through the meeting, Khatib Waheeb, Director of the Walbridge Caring Communities Program in North St. Louis, argued that many "children bring a lot of negative baggage to the classroom arising out of family, social, and economic dysfunction." It is bad enough, according to Waheeb, that fathers are often absent in some of these households. But now, he said, "because of crack cocaine, we see mothers absent as well, sometimes for days at a time. Kids know that their friends know their mothers are selling themselves for crack. Is it any wonder these kids don't listen to teachers? They are babies, 8 or 9 years old, and they are worried about where their mother is."

Economic insecurity, demographic change, and families in such crisis that most middle-class Americans cannot begin to conceive of what life is like for their children, these are the conditions to which the Policymakers' Program attempts to respond. But the response has to be framed against the backdrop of increasing public cynicism about government and about the motivations and prescriptions of experts and the solutions they put forth.

A Suspicious Public

Three different experts on public opinion and effective public communications — Public Agenda's John Immerwahr, cofounder of Research/Strategy/Management (R/S/M) Vincent Breglio, and partner in A+ Communications Andy Plattner — defined a stunning level of public distrust of institutions and leaders, of unwillingness to go along with conventional wisdom of experts and their prescriptions.

Educational experts will never learn, lamented Plattner. "They are always talking about heterogeneous classes. But what they don't realize is that parents don't like the idea." Plattner's point was amplified and expanded by Immerwahr and Breglio. The public is not buying the experts' solutions, reported Immerwahr. "We are going through a period of massive distrust of institutions and leaders, with the corruption and efficacy of government increasingly called into question.

"Educational leaders, in particular, don't understand why the public is stuck. They are inclined to believe that citizens don't understand the urgency of the educational challenge before the nation. They don't realize these kids will support their social security, don't understand the dimensions of the crisis. The public, by this definition, is apathetic. And, it is cheap."

But, continued Immerwahr, that definition of the problem misses the mark. "The public believes it supports education handsomely. It is very concerned about education. Schools are consistently reported to be one of the public's top priorities. The public is not apathetic; it is frustrated. It is frustrated, because it just does not buy the solutions of the educational experts."

According to Public Agenda's research, what the public wants is three things: safe schools, discipline, and the basics. Until these concerns start showing up in the reform agenda, the general public will not be inclined to listen, claimed Immerwahr.

Vincent Breglio brought an identical message, based on a survey 2,700 parents completed for the Education Commission of the States. By slight majorities, said Breglio, parents reported that their communities are headed in the right direction (57 percent to 43 percent). But when asked about schools, the views flip-flop. Thirty seven percent report schools are going in the right direction, and 54 percent think they are headed the wrong way.

Asked Breglio: "What does the public want? It wants high standards: 62 percent of the public supports national standards. It wants standards set at the national level, not at the state, local, or federal levels. And it wants the basics,

which it defines as reading, writing, arithmetic, and computers. The public needs to see addition, subtraction, multiplication and division, and spelling and grammar in the curriculum. The public sees these things as a core curriculum, and putting this stuff up-front is the price we will have to pay for problem solving and creative thinking and the other higher-order thinking skills that experts consider essential."

According to Breglio, public attitudes about what is important are easily mapped (see the table below). People on "Main Street" believe that the "basics," work habits, and familiarity with computers are much more important than advanced mathematics, sports, or modern American writers.

What's Important? The View from Main Street

Basics	93%
Work Habits	83%
Computers	80%
American History/Geography	63%
Science (biology/chemistry/physics)	59%
Advanced Math	37%
Sports	23%
Modern American Writers	22%

The lesson from all of this, according to Breglio: Look at the problems from the public's perspective before jumping in with expert solutions. "The lesson is to listen before you start talking," he concluded.

Public Agenda has reached a similar conclusion, reported Immerwahr. It believes it is time to move from a "conventional" model that engages an uninformed public through one-way, single-step transmission of simple information to a new "public engagement" model emphasizing ongoing dialogue about important values that respect the publics' expertise in certain areas.

The public, said Immerwahr, wants more accountability in their own lives and in public institutions. "Public enthusiasm for high academic standards really responds to public concerns about whether the nation is spinning its wheels," he said. "If kids cannot get the basics, how will they support themselves?" he asked rhetorically. "If disruptive kids in the class get more attention than those who work hard, what kind of message does that send? And if leaders push for reform without the basics, does the public really believe leaders get it? Standards respond to each of these issues: Kids are prepared for jobs; they are promoted because they work hard; and standards that include the basics make sense to people."

The Balanced Federal Budget: Economic Black Magic

In this sour atmosphere, with economic growth problematic and public suspicion high, federal and state leaders are inclined to solutions that are little more than "economic black magic," according to Marc Roberts. Short-term government cash-flow problems harnessed to unwillingness to raise taxes have led the Clinton White House to agree to a seven-year balanced budget through fiscal restructuring. "Given the assumptions, there really was no other choice," said Roberts.

But nobody really understands the effects, he claimed. What a balanced budget inevitably means is that "Federal dollars will become increasingly scarce for the rest of our natural lives. The situation is worse than we understand. Forget the argument that the Social Security trust fund is going broke; there is no trust fund. The Medicare crisis? We don't even begin to understand its complexity and seriousness. Health care will soon take up 15 percent of Gross Domestic Product, and defense eats up another 5 percent By the time you add in servicing the debt, we don't have a lot of budget flexibility left.

"There will be tremendous pressure on anything that even looks like an entitlement," said Roberts. And the only way out for the federal government might as well be called "shift and shaft block grants to states, with fewer strings attached and less money." Everyone behaves as though this is going to hurt someone else, according to Roberts, urging the meeting participants to look at the numbers. Two-thirds of Medicaid recipients are indigent mothers and their children, but because most are young and relatively healthy, they consume only one-third of expenditures. The people consuming the lion's share (two-thirds of expenditures) he, said, are those who require expensive care, the elderly and disabled, frequently the parents of the middle class.

But with respect to block grants, the government lacks the courage of its own convictions, according to several presenters. "With President Clinton's veto of the welfare bill," said Mark Greenberg, "nobody has the faintest idea of what is going to happen or how any of this is going to turn out. Two months ago, we thought we did. Now, we know we don't. We may wind up with something like the Senate bill; we may get no bill at all. Whatever we get, it is unlikely that we will get more block grants than were contained in the House bill, and my guess is we will get less."

Greenberg's quick-and-dirty estimate was confirmed by Jack Jennings' detailed analyses of the outlook for five different blockgrant proposals. In Greenberg's estimation, only one of the five will be enacted; the other four are likely to wither on the vine.

The block-grant proposal with the greatest bipartisan support is in the area of vocational and adult education and job training, according to Jennings. With more than 150 programs in these three areas, a broad consensus on the need for greater rationalization exists, he said. On the other hand, block grants for children's food (WIC and school breakfasts), youth development programs, education, and Medicaid face very rough sledding.

Conservatives often think too many restrictions continue in the block grants, said Jennings, and liberals object to reduced funding.

Why, wondered Vermont's Spaulding, do these block grants place state discretion in the hands of the governor instead of, say, the state legislature? The answer, according to Jennings, is that "Governors were organized. They agreed to take less money if they could control it. That was music to the speaker's ears."

But the long and short of it, according to Jennings, is that "block grants are more talk than action."

Junk-Yard Dogs

Regardless of what happens with budget deal or blockgrants, child and family advocates need to be prepared to become "junk-yard dogs" in pursuit of incompetence, turf protection, fraud, waste, and abuse in the very programs they support, according to several participants.

"One of the things we need to do to provide better services to families is eliminate gaps in services and cut down on duplication," said Missouri State Representative Sheila Lumpe who chairs the House Budget Committee. "If we want to maintain these efforts, we bleeding-heart liberals must be the most eager to eliminate waste, fraud, and abuse."

"In the final analysis, you are going to have to have courage," said Howard Fuller. Experienced as a welfare official in Milwaukee and a superintendent of Milwaukee's schools, he is now a distinguished professor at Marquette University and senior fellow with Brown University's Annenberg Institute for School Reform. "The forces of the status quo are formidable, organized, and relentless in their defense of their control of the system. You are going to have to stand up and say 'I am not one of those people who is for change as long as nothing changes.' "

"We have a sort of corrupt reformer's rhetoric," charged Raymond Jackson, president and CEO of ATOP Academy in Phoenix, as he introduced his learner's "tool kit" of schedules, homework assignment books, and other devices. "The system likes to talk about kids reading, but nobody's reading. It likes to talk about kids writing, but nobody's writing. It likes to talk about kids learning, but nobody's learning.

"My kids, with their tool kits, understand that it is their job to come to school to learn. No more excuses. We now have 50 different labels in special education. The latest is ADD — Attention Deficit Disorder. The kids don't have ADD; their teachers have ADD. They don't give the kids the Attention they Deserve to Develop."

Harvard's Roberts put a lot of this anger in perspective: "The conservative critique of liberalism holds many important truths," he noted soberly. "The liberal defense of many of these areas is profoundly paternalistic, if not racist. You cannot argue that disadvantaged youth cannot be expected to take dead-end jobs. Plenty of blue-collar adults go to dead-end work every day. If

the levels of criminality present in black communities ever showed up in the suburbs, nobody would stand still for it, much less invent excuses for it."

To start afresh, Roberts argued that advocates for children "are just going to have to become junk-yard dogs about waste, fraud, and abuse. In Massachusetts, the governor has been trying to close a mental-health facility with 27 patients and 200 staff. The unions have been trying to organize public protests over this. Situations like this one are fatal from a public relations point of view. It is no wonder the public is cynical. How can anyone justify a 10:1 staff-to-patient ratio?"

But fiscal considerations have now reached the point and are likely to get worse in the future that "even your craziest ideas will stand a chance." And the first order of business for advocates for children and families, according to these presenters, is to develop the courage to change and abandon meaningless rhetoric. Then they should root out waste, fraud, and abuse in social programs with the same zeal reserved in the past for $100 Pentagon hammers.

Making all of this work can be a pretty tall order. But three successive "graduating classes" from the Policymakers' Program demonstrate how it can be done. How Service Redesign Can Work A series of presentations from officials from four states indicates that where there is a will, there is a way. Several graduates of the Policymakers' Program described what they set out to do and how well they feel they accomplished their goals.

"We went through the Policymakers' Summer Institute three years ago, and we are still benefitting from it," reported Vermont's Spaulding. "For us, the key was getting the right people and developing a shared commitment to what we felt needed to be done." Vermont has set out to develop linkages between education and social services at the community level, has held several hundred community meetings across the state to advance the effort, and is in the process of enacting legislation to provide for a joint education-human services budget at the state level.

South Dakota, by contrast, finished the 1995 Summer Institute and set its sights on its child care system, according to State Representative Lola Schreiber. In South Dakota, three-quarters of fathers work outside the home, and 81 percent of working mothers have children between the ages of 6 and 16. "We are second in the nation in terms of the proportion of families in which both parents work," reported Schreiber, and the state has noticed an increase in many of the ills of modern life—a 45 percent increase in teen violent crime between 1985 and 1992, a 29 percent increase in teenage pregnancy, and a 39 percent increase in single-parent homes. "These are alarming figures for a conservative, family-oriented state," Schreiber stressed.

According to Bobbi Brown of the South Dakota Governor's Office, a three-pronged approach to the problem of child care was developed. Echoing the message from Immerwahr and Breglio, Brown reported that, "We had earlier planned something much more ambitious, but since it called for too much change, people would not buy into it. Therefore we stressed three things: awareness of the problem, the availability of child care, and the qual-

ity of child care. As much as anything else, we wanted to learn a process of involving people in change, and the Danforth effort permitted us to pull all of the child care activities in the state together. We have succeeded in creating a huge awareness of child care issues across the state and in state government."

"When we left the Summer Institute, we decided we wanted to do away with welfare in Utah," reported Corinne Hill of the Utah Governor's office. "We would train people and find them jobs."

Despite the perception that Utah is Mormon, white, and middle-class, it is a much more diverse state than many people acknowledge, she said, and it has been experiencing major influx of diverse people in recent years.

It also has several strengths when it comes to coordinating human services. The first is a "terrific economy; we don't know how to give it away!" The second is that since 1989 (under the leadership of State Representative Lloyd Frandsen), the state has had pilot legislation, with some limited funding, to encourage greater cooperation between schools, health and human services agencies, and the courts, reported Hill. And, on a separate track, the state has been trying to improve workplace training.

"Following the institute, we followed several simple principles," reported Lloyd Frandsen. "The first was to identify the problem, and that was the hardest part. Our problem was a duplicative, inefficient system in which we were spending about $600 million on children through four or five different legislative committees. The second issue, and it was huge, was to focus on the root cause of the problem. We decided it started at the top and was part of the budgetary process itself. Finally, we wanted to identify solutions, and ours was to have a superagency to deal with children.

"We pushed for two pieces of legislation, one having to do with coordinated services, the other with the budget process," said Frandsen. "If you proceed with something similar, be sure you involve everyone and get their buy-in."

Finally, a prototype for many of these efforts is found, oddly enough, in a state that is not a Policymakers' Program state at all — Missouri — home of the Caring Communities concept. "The key word in our effort is team work," reported Representative Lumpe. She defined the Caring Communities concept as "a way of organizing state resources to provide wrap-around services to children and families with a lot of local citizen involvement."

With gubernatorial support, state agencies have attacked the mentality of "separate silos" in education, social services, health, labor, and mental health to improve services to families and children. What began in the urban (St. Louis) Walbridge community soon spread to rural Schuyler and Knox Counties, and with Governor Carnathan's support, now has an appropriation of more than $20 million for implementation in 60 sites statewide.

Why is all of this important? As the director of the Caring Communities program put it, children with learning disabilities cost the state about $30 billion a year, with many of them winding up in the juvenile justice or health care systems. "If kids arrive from safe and secure backgrounds and don't learn,

that's the teacher's fault," said Waheeb. "But if they are coming from low-income backgrounds or dysfunctional homes, then their inability to learn is not the teacher's fault. We need to support these teachers any way we can."

Despite the difficulties, it is clear that many innovative state leaders are finding a way ahead.

Looking Ahead: The Summer Institute

Not only are innovative states moving, but the window of opportunity for change remains open; people are eager to see improvement at the local level, and the Policymakers' Program stands ready to help.

As the public opinion experts told the participants, education and children's issues remain high on the public's agenda. Everybody has a stake in the success of the next generation; and nobody has a stake in its failure. "We are at a unique time politically," suggested Vincent Breglio. "These issues are not highly polarized across the general electorate, they are not causes for partisan division. However, this lack of polarization is not likely to last, now is the time to get things done in a way that will unify people, rather than drive them apart."

John Immerwahr agreed. "For all of their concerns about education, the general public has not abandoned public schools. We have an opportunity to move, but it will not last forever."

In these efforts, stressed Breglio and Immerwahr, understand that "all politics are local." You have to engage your own local public, said Immerwahr, not an imaginary "American people." In R/S/M's polling, said Breglio, as they moved west from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh, the issues reversed themselves 180 degrees. Similarly, although parents in Kentucky and Maryland reported that schools need only relatively minor tinkering, in cities such as Seattle and Philadelphia, citizens are calling for a total overhaul of the system.

What people are eager to see, according to Breglio, are improving test scores, less failure, images of happy students, and less clutter and disruption around schools. They also want schools and services that are more customer-oriented in the vernacular of business. That means, he offered, "defining customers, offering different choices within public schools, surveys of parental satisfaction, and engaging parents and adults in the community in mentoring activities."

Danforth, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association stand ready to help through the Policymakers' Program, Jeb Spaulding assured the conference. Between January and the August institute, the state teams selected can look forward to assistance from several national figures in the areas of demography and policy analysis. Bud Hodgkinson will be available to help map the state's demographic profile. Martin Gerry will provide similar assistance in developing a state-specific policy framework. Program

staff will help in the selection and organization of the state team, including at least one team meeting before the Summer Institute begins.

It may be a different world, with a changing economy, unsettled public attitudes, and a different set of problems besetting state government as a new century dawns. But in the midst of all these differences, the Policymakers' Program remains committed to making a difference for children and families.

APPENDIX E

Improving Results for Children: Building State and Local Capacity for System Change

1997 Highlights

From the
Winter Meeting of the Policymakers' Program

THE DANFORTH FOUNDATION

Cosponsored by

Education Commission of the States
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Governors' Association

San Diego, California
January 23–26, 1997

PREFACE

In January of this year, more than 70 legislators, governors' aides, analysts, researchers, and cabinet officials from 15 states met in San Diego to discuss improving the delivery and coordination of education and other services for children and families. They gathered at the invitation of the Danforth Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association, cosponsors of the Policymakers' Program.

From a nationally respected neuroscientist, the attendees heard about how the human brain develops. They learned we're born with all the brain cells we'll ever have, and that a child's neural wiring is complete at the age of 5. From education researchers, they heard about programs that bring home and school together. These researchers described what schools would look like if we front-loaded them with everything we know that works. Participants also listened intently as six teenage mothers, little more than children themselves, described their struggles to finish high school and hold fast to their dreams. Half of pregnant teens end up on welfare, according to the experts, and nearly 70 percent of incarcerated women were born to teenage mothers. And, attendees explored the challenges of welfare reform and other demands on state budgets.

Amidst these challenges, they gleaned some good news too. On issues involving children, families, and communities the topics that drew participants together the people are ahead of government, according to recent polls. Moreover, a promising environment for state government lies ahead. The economic outlook is good, with many states expected to rack up record surpluses in the immediate future. "It's time to form up the parade," said a former state legislator, "nothing stands in our way. The public expects us to act."

Finally, they were reminded that talk is cheap. Real improvement in services requires aligning policy with sentiment. It demands following the money to make sure it delivers what it promises. Real action requires galvanizing budget resources. Participants heard from officials in one state who have made it work, who have backed up visions and promises with resources and money.

From these 15 states, the Policymakers' Program intends to invite about three state teams to a Policymakers' Institute in August, at which the teams will formulate state-specific problem statements and develop team-building strategies to improve the coordination and delivery of education and other services.

These highlights offer a glimmer of the intensity of the conversations involved and the depth of commitment required.

Robert Koff
Vice President
The Danforth Foundation

IMPROVING RESULTS FOR CHILDREN

"I didn't know I could be somebody before I went to Esperanza," said Racquel to the assembled lawmakers, describing the benefits of an educational program for pregnant minors. David Hawkins, a University of Washington researcher, offered a different observation: "In 1920, we jailed about 75 people per 100,000 population. Today it's almost 450 per 100,000. How many of you feel safer? We're incarcerating ourselves into the poor house." These two statements, one poignant, another pointed, captured much of what this assembly was all about.

The meeting was not about teenage pregnancy or corrections. Its topic was much broader: How best to coordinate the array of services needed by children and families in crisis-education, child care, job training, transportation, public assistance, health care, and so on so that young people can surmount their challenges and enter adulthood prepared to stand on their own two feet, prepared to become contributing members of society.

Racquel, who gave birth when she was 17, will graduate on time from the Riverside County (California) schools, accompanied by her 1-year-old child. Racquel will enroll this fall in Riverside Community College. Her goal—a career as a legal assistant—is planted firmly in her mind. She was one of six young, single mothers, ranging in age from 14 to 19, who served as Exhibit A in support of the proposition that coordinating services to support families and help young people complete school is a sound investment.

The Policymakers' Program

"As a legislator for 23 years, I can't think of anything more helpful to me than this Policymakers' Program," said Pennsylvania Representative Ron Cowell in welcoming participants to the meeting. This is not a program about passing laws, he cautioned. It's not a program for prescribing solutions, because what works in one state may not work in another. "It's a program designed to change how we think about things and how we do our business. It's all about improving learning for children. That requires us to help improve their communities. It requires us to think about how to help strengthen families. Ultimately, it requires flexibility and collaboration among agencies."

As helpful as the Policymakers' Program is, warned Cowell, it's not a panacea. It doesn't parachute in solutions to solve difficult problems. It requires difficult, tedious work, requiring unrelenting attention to detail. But its importance is revealed by a fact of life for public officials, he pointed out, constant turnover. Of the 12 people on the Pennsylvania team who started out with Cowell in 1993, he reported, only two are in the same position today. In Pennsylvania, he quipped, "every time we get a new governor, we get a new slogan. But we should not shift policy every time we change personalities."

What we've learned, he emphasized, is that it's important to spread ownership and sow lots of seeds. Since change among public officials is endemic, particularly in an era of term limits, it's important to "let a lot of folks get

their fingerprints on these programs and policies." Moreover, he argued, it is essential to find ways to institutionalize these changes so that "they're not tossed out with last year's slogans." Pennsylvania has had a tremendous opportunity to follow up with Danforth resources, he noted. "I can't point to a single law that's resulted from this. But I know it has touched everyone in my state."

Weak Patent-Infringement Laws

Unlike Pennsylvania, Maine has been involved with the Policymakers' Program for just 12 months, reported Kevin Concannon of the state's Department of Human Resources. It has been a wonderful catalyst for Maine, said Concannon. In an era of terms limits, he asked, "How do we get things done?" The hard issues, he noted, include welfare reform, linking schools to child care, reducing teenage pregnancy, and doing something about these things amidst government turnover. Fortunately, observed Concannon, "There are very weak patent-infringement laws prohibiting governments from stealing ideas from each other. We shamelessly stole Gary Stangler's cooperative governance model from Missouri."

Maine also liked an idea put forward by University of Washington sociologist David Hawkins: each child should be able to depend on one reliable person (see below). "We set out," concluded Concannon, "to see what we could do to create one reliable person who cares about each child. It's not a new grant mechanism. Our idea is that we should try to get all of our various programs in alignment with this concept."

There are three lessons to be taken out of the Policymakers' Program experience so far, suggested Danforth official Bob Koff early in the meeting. "First, leadership is critical. How do we identify potential new leaders in a time of government turnover and term limits? Second, don't underestimate the difficulty of penetrating individual classrooms." We can identify some broad-scale improvements in governance and process, but it is hard to identify changes in student achievement, he said. "Third, we don't have enough public conversations about these issues, particularly as they relate to race and class." The Policymakers' Program, he suggested, provided a vehicle for these discussions.

With that introduction, the 15 teams began an intensive three-day scrutiny of how to create programs that work to improve services for children and families. The teams examined the political environment and the public mood. They discussed the importance of early childhood learning and heard about pathbreaking, new research on human brain development. They heard about programs that work, from infancy through graduation. Finally, they considered the Iowa experience, the story of how one state has tried to put it all together.

The Political Environment and the Public Mood

This is a strange time in the political life of the nation, according to the experts at the meeting. In many different ways, throughout the three days of meetings, the odd ambivalence of the political environment came through clearly. People are antigovernment, said analysts who had pored over the tea leaves of the 1996 election, making for ugly, partisan politics in which divided government wins. Along the same vein, for a variety of reasons, the general public is angry about the state of American education. At the same time, polls reveal the public believes that a whole slew of issues revolving around children and families, including child care, education, and health care, need public attention and they expect government to do something about these problems. Antigovernment, but expecting government to solve problems. Go figure.

Entering the 1996 elections, reported William T. Pound, executive director of the National Conference of State Legislatures, a switch of only five legislative seats meant changing partisan control in 43 of 99 houses. A Democratic surge in legislative control that began in the 1970s has about run its course, he reported.

"We are the closest to parity in terms of control of legislatures since the Civil War," Pound noted, and the real significance of what is developing is the growth of Republican strength in the South. Republicans, for example, took over the Florida Senate in 1994, something that might have appeared inconceivable a decade or two before. And, they added the Florida House to their tally in 1996.

Among his major points, Pound noted that:

- Despite the public's love affair with term limits, 90 percent of incumbents were reelected.
- The center controls extremists in both parties did not fare well.
- Divided government exists in 31 states, i.e., a governor from one party and at least one House controlled by the other.
- Antigovernment sentiment dominates initiatives proposals for term limits, tax limitations, and limits on government authority almost always succeeded in 1996.

At the same time, Pound reported, most legislatures face fairly appealing news. Due to economic growth, high levels of employment, and low inflation, many legislatures are faced with the prospect of record state surpluses. Meanwhile, education tops crime, welfare reform, and taxes as the issue of greatest importance to the general public.

In store, according to Pound: modest, small tax cuts or rebates; program expansion in K-12 education, health care, and services to children; and a "real opportunity to think creatively about how to integrate, innovate, and reduce programmatic complexity."

The Public and Public Education

Nowhere is this capacity for thinking creatively and innovating more urgently needed than in urban public schools, according to Jack Jennings, former long-time general counsel to the U.S. House of Representatives' Committee on Education and Labor and currently director of the National Center on Education Policy in Washington, DC. Following two years of traveling around the country, "speaking with just about anyone who would listen to me," Jennings is convinced the public is angry about the state of education and particularly concerned about the quality of schools in the nation's big cities.

"I see six reasons for this anger," said Jennings ticking them off. "First, the major news media are extraordinarily negative when they discuss the public schools. Although the articles are often balanced, the headlines are skewed." The public doesn't seem to have the basic data, and since three-quarters of American households don't have a kid in school, the media's ability to shape the debate is heightened, he reported.

Second, he said, teachers and administrators have heard so much criticism they have given up trying to respond to it. They believe, he said, that people don't understand what they have to contend with, so they have turned inward.

Third, "the Far Right across the country is pounding away at the schools." Arguing that programs such as GOALS 2000 represent federal control of schools, that schools are displacing parental authority, and that they are "failed socialistic institutions," the "Far Right is doing a lot of damage to public education," Jennings reported.

Next, he pointed to the disconnection between American leaders and the general public about what is important in public schools. American political and business leaders focus on higher achievement and test scores. Parents worry about safety and athletic programs. "We're going nowhere with reform unless we change these public attitudes," said Jennings.

Fifth, there is a lot of confusion between parents and teachers about appropriate roles. In a study involving exchange students, it was discovered that when American kids get into trouble in school, American parents are likely to support the child and blame the school. In Europe, on the other hand, parents almost inevitably support the school.

Finally, the state of urban education is "a cancer eating away at basic support for public education." We're dealing with two public school systems, not one, according to Jennings. The closer citizens and parents are to urban schools, the more likely they are to support radical alternatives, he said. "Society is changing," he noted at one point. "People have six options for long-distance telephone service. They don't want to hear they can't have options in schools."

Quoting Einstein's definition of insanity ("doing the same thing over and over again and expecting things to change"), Jennings concluded that unless something different is done to improve urban schools, support for public education will disappear. Specifically, he called for "much more flexibility. It's true

that parents need to take more responsibility for their kids, but people also want more choices. Legislators — whether from urban, rural, or suburban areas — must do something about the big cities. We just can't keep miseducating one-quarter of our kids and expect to keep going as the nation we have been."

Time to Form Up the Parade

William Pound's analysis is correct, according to Vanderbilt University's Bill Purcell, former Majority Leader of the Tennessee House of Representatives. The two parties are now basically competitive across the country, meaning that "races are tougher, costs are higher, personal attacks are harsher, and roughness is the bipartisan order of the day."

But the good news, he stressed, is that on family issues: "The people are with us. In fact they're way ahead of us." Citing a national poll released just that week in the San Diego Tribune, Purcell noted that the public ranks children's issues ahead of Social Security and Medicare. More than 80 present of respondents believe the nation's leaders are not doing enough for children, he reported, with two-thirds agreeing the government should play a larger role in helping children.

"Nothing stands in your way," stressed Purcell. "Congress is not in your way. Local government is looking to you for leadership. The unions are not in your way. Business is not in your way. Neither national political party, even at its most partisan, stands in the way of your addressing the needs of children in your district."

"It's time," he concluded, "to form up the parade on behalf of children and their families. The public expects us to act."

The Brain as a Heath Kit: Early Childhood Learning and Neuroscience

It doesn't require a brain surgeon to figure out that learning and development in the child's earliest years are important. As Shirley Malcom — head of the Directorate for Education and Human Resources Programs of the American Association for the Advancement of Science and cochair of a Carnegie Corporation report on young children, "Starting Points" — likes to point out, the early years offer the opportunity to "get things right before they get messed up." It's an incredible, "sponge-like" age for children, she noted, a period when "children are natural scientists, curious about everything. Everything in their lives is still possible."

Her Carnegie report called for promoting learning in families and communities by giving parents better information about their children's developmental needs; providing universal access to high-quality, early care for 3- and 4-year-olds, because "the majority of kids in families with incomes of $50,000 or more a year have better information, and that ought to be a clue;" improving children's television programming, because we're wasting a

powerful medium; and linking the "educating institutions" in the community — home, school, libraries, churches, and libraries into a coordinated education system.

Like Malcom, Robert Slavin, codirector of a center for at-risk students at Johns Hopkins University, commented on children's lost potential. "How is it," he asked, "that we often see alert, curious kids arriving at school and, within a few years, they have become learning problems, assigned to remedial classes and special education?"

That's not inevitable, said Slavin, arguing that early school failure often served to predict later problems in school and community. "Statistically, kids' success in school by third grade predicts whether they'll graduate on time better than socio-economic status or race. We need to intervene early. And we need to intervene successfully."

For most people, problems with early learning are an invisible crisis, reported Slavin. It doesn't look like a crisis, but it is. "We can look at third graders," he said, "and say with complete confidence: 'Every third one of you will be in trouble in a few years. We can't say which of you, but we know that it's one out of three of you.' To accept that as normal is shameful," he concluded.

During the opening session, Dr. Katherine Bick, an internationally known neurobiologist and consultant to the Charles A. Dana Foundation, pointed to emerging neuroscience as having answers to some of the questions troubling Slavin and Malcom. She urged attendees old enough to remember to think of brain development as akin to building Heath Kits. (Heath Kits were mail-order radio sets that buyers put together themselves.) "You follow these vague directions and don't know if it'll work till you turn it on," said Bick.

When a child's brain is turned on at home or in school, it should work. "I want to argue that a healthy child's brain is primed to learn," she said, echoing Malcom and Slavin. "Our job is to see that nothing gets in the way. That's why early childhood programs are so important, and why you should be focusing money on these years." The directions have been vague, but they're getting clearer. Citing "spectacular" advances in understanding of the brain in the last decade, Bick offered the following insights:

- We are born with all the brain cells we'll ever have. The first great wave of cell creation takes place about six weeks after conception, the second, about 10 weeks later.
- Many more cells are created than survive. In a critical process known as "pruning" (which we might also think of as cell-learning), each of 3 billion brain cells makes an average of 15,000 connections with other brain cells, nerve endings, or muscles. Nature expects brain cells which don't make connections to die, and these brain cells do.
- Remarkably, half of this pruning is already complete by birth. It proceeds rapidly through age three, reaches maturity around adolescence, and continues — to some extent — throughout life.

- In the last 15 years, we have identified, through PET scans (positron emissions topography involving radio-active material), the centers of the brain governing hearing, seeing, speaking, language generation, and intentional behavior.
- Likewise, MRIs (magnetic resonance imaging) have helped us understand the brain changes involved with learning mathematics and reading in 4-, 6-, and 10-year-olds, as well as the brain centers governing language, space and object memory, and control of impulsiveness in children ages 6 to 10.

Studies indicate, reported Bick, that in solving maze problems over four trials, many parts of the brain are used in the first trial, indicating that the brain is trying to use a lot of different problem-solving strategies. But, by the fourth trial, much less of the brain is involved since "improvements in learning efficiency let us become more efficient in using our brains."

What does all of this have to do with educational policy? According to Bick, we need to pay attention to the "ready phases" for learning, the periods of greatest learning efficiency, by subject, in babies and children. Babies and children are learning machines, she reported. "They learn effortlessly when they're ready," reported Bick. Among the ready phases:

- Babies can recognize new and old scenes at 4 months old; they can understand something about numeracy at 10 months; and, everywhere in the world, they appear to start picking up language by 18 months.
- Children are primed for effortless second-language development between the ages of 3 and 5.
- Although neural wiring is pretty complete by age 5, wiring of the prefrontal lobe (the "executive function" which governs intention, planning, and understanding consequences) is not complete until pre-adolescence. "If you've ever wondered why your teenager doesn't worry about tomorrow, that's why," grinned Bick.
- About 80 percent of kids are "phoneme-nologically" aware; they can recognize phonemes (letters and sounds). About 20 percent can't recognize them and will experience difficulty learning to read, and some of them may never read.
- Look-Say systems of teaching reading rely on brute-force memory and are probably a pretty inefficient and tiring way for most children to learn. The phoneme approach, on the other hand, is probably pretty efficient. Different interventions are required for different students.
- Pre-school children who have difficulty with rhyming games are likely to have trouble with phonemes later in school and may experience reading difficulty.
- Having trouble with music as a child? You may also experience problems with mathematics later on.

The solutions, stressed Bick, don't lie in Washington, they lie in local communities and day care centers and schools. And the solutions aren't high-tech. They're much simpler than that. They start with good prenatal care. They continue through high-quality child care. And they require paying attention to individual differences in the early school years. Above all, they involve being "loved, cuddled, played with, and read to."

Programs That Work

What would schools and community institutions be like if we loaded them with programs that work? Would they really make a difference in the lives of students and families? Or would things be pretty much the same? Several presentations — on success for all students in the first years of school, on different kinds of community strategies that work at different stages of the lives of children and families, on teenage mothers, and on welfare reform —provided compelling evidence that well-conceived education and social service programs can save the lives of young people, figuratively, and sometimes literally.

Success for All

Johns Hopkins, said Robert Slavin, set out to develop a program for the very earliest years of schooling, a program that would guarantee success for all students. "We wanted to change what every teacher does in his or her classroom, every day. How do you do that?" Because of the goal, Slavin dubbed the program "Success for All Children."

"We started," said Slavin, "by asking ourselves what elementary schools would look like if we implemented everything we know so that kids never fall behind. Our assignment: Put everything you know that works into a school with high-poverty levels and make sure that all children succeed." Begun in one Baltimore elementary school in 1987, the "success" program can now be found in 450 schools in 31 states, in urban, rural, and suburban locations.

Currently restricted to prekindergarten through grade one levels, the "Success" team will not enter a school unless 80 percent or more of the faculty agree to try it. The program asks teachers the following: "Imagine that your job is to make sure that kids coming into kindergarten in your school will succeed forever. What do you do?" The "success" answer includes intensive professional development, early intervention in preschool, monitoring progress continuously, providing the best instruction, developing back-up strategies such as tutoring for students who need it, developing positive relationships within the home, and making sure that nonschool services for issues such as health screening, absenteeism, and attendance are in place.

"Sometimes that's not enough," conceded Slavin. "So we give one-on-one tutoring, particularly for first graders experiencing difficulty."

"What have we learned from this?" he asked, and ran through a laundry list of transferable information:

1) A whole-school approach is critical. "Training one teacher doesn't work. You have to train all of them."
2) Teachers must buy into the new model. "If a supermajority of 80 percent won't go along, neither will we. The dirty little secret of school reform is that principals can kill it or punish innovative teachers. They can't do that with an 80 percent majority against them."
3) We need to make policy and funding streams consistent. "We need to be able to draw on different sources of support to make this work on a schoolwide basis."
4) Evaluate your success. "We need rigorous, but not complicated, evaluations. Compare your kids with a control group. Involve an external evaluator. And evaluate it more than once. That's all you need."
5) Scale-up requires affiliating with an educational "religion." "Experimenting schools need external networks of professional colleagues who are taking the same risks if they are to succeed. These networks are very powerful. Whether it's our group, or Comer's, or the New American Schools, participating schools are proud of the association, they benefit from newsletters and the like, and these networks help sustain the program when initial funding dries up."

Community Capacity Building

David Hawkins approached a similar set of issues from a different perspective and population. His perspective was that of the family and the community, and his clients range from preschool through adult. Early in his career as a probation officer dealing with 15-year-old students, he said, "I felt I was running an ambulance service at the bottom of a cliff. I would patch up a handful of kids and the judge would send more over."

Hawkins was also distressed at the seeming impossibility of the task he had been asked to take on. He began thinking there had to be a better way. "I was working with kids who were at war with their parents; and I was told my job was to get them back home. These kids hated school, but my assignment was to patch them up and get them back there."

As a sociologist, Hawkins understood that male violence peaks at about the age of 17. A lot of studies indicated that the worst-of-the-worst juvenile offenders commit their first crimes by the age of 14, and that most kids turn their backs on violence by the time they turn 18. "I began thinking the secret is to prevent that first act of violence and get them through school."

Moreover, Hawkins was convinced jailing kids didn't work. It made them better criminals. "We can't incarcerate our way out these problems. In 1920, we jailed about 75 people per 100,000 population," he noted. "By 1990, the number has zoomed up to almost 450 people per 100,000. How many of you feel safer? We're incarcerating ourselves into the poor house and bankrupting states."

Year	Incarcerated per 100,000 Population
1920	75
1970	140
1990	450

Hawkins began thinking about medical models. It's obviously much cheaper to prevent cardiovascular disease than it is to pay for bypass surgery. "So medical people worried about predictors of heart disease. They identified risk factors like smoking, poor diet, lack of exercise, family history, and high levels of stress. And over the long haul, in the last 25 years or so, there has been a major change in peoples lifestyles because of our understanding of these predictors and a 40 percent reduction in cardiovascular disease."

What are the analogs for school failure? How can we predict that students will drop out or get into trouble long before the educational equivalent of bypass surgery is required? Hawkins' research over 30 years has identified an entire constellation of risk factors (see the following page).

Obviously some children can be exposed to all these risk factors and still develop into mature and productive adults. Everyone gets upset, says Hawkins, because 25 percent of the children of alcoholics develop alcoholism themselves. "But that also means that three-quarters of them don't," he pointed out. Nonetheless, according to Hawkins, we can safely make several generalizations about these risk factors:

- The more risk factors present, the greater the risk to the child. In a study involving 87,000 young people in six states, Hawkins found that the incidence of drug and alcohol usage among young people rises dramatically as the number of risks increases.
- The same risk factor may predict multiple behavior problems meaning that reducing a particular risk may prevent several different problems later on.
- Risk factors are pretty consistent across different races, cultures, and classes. For example, 45 percent of black children are raised in poverty, but only 15 percent of white children are raised in poverty. It's poverty, not race, that's the risk factor.

Hawkins stressed that a number of programs work to reduce, minimize, and eliminate the effects of even multiple-risk factors. The essential thing appears to be convincing young people that adults in the community care about them and are willing to devote time, attention, and resources to meeting their needs. Every child needs an adult who cares about them, cautioned Hawkins.

He described the remarkable success of a Seattle intervention involving several features emphasizing parental education and teacher education. A total of 543 children were involved, including 200 children who served as a control group and did not receive services. The children were followed for six years. The intervention consisted of the following programs:

Risk-Focused Prevention

These are some of the risk factors and problems associated with them according to 30 years of research conducted by the University of Washington's J. David Hawkins and his colleagues:

Community Risk Factors

- Availability of drugs (substance abuse)
- Availability of firearms (delinquency and violence)
- Community disorganization and low neighborhood attachment (substance abuse, delinquency, and violence)
- Extreme economic deprivation (substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)

Family Risk Factors

- Family history of problem behavior (substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, dropping out)
- Family management problems (substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)
- Family conflict (substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, dropping out) Parental involvement in behavior (substance abuse, delinquency, and violence)

School Risk Factors

- Early and persistent antisocial behavior (substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)
- Academic failure in elementary school (substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)
- Lack of commitment to school (substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)

Individual/Peer Factors

- Alienation, rebelliousness, lack of bonding (substance abuse, delinquency, and dropping out)
- Friends engaged in problem behavior (substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)
- Early initiation in problem behavior (substance abuse, delinquency, violence, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)
- Favorable attitudes toward the problem behavior (substance abuse, delinquency, teen pregnancy, and dropping out)
- Constitutional factors that may have a biological or physiological basis (substance abuse, delinquency, and violence

- Parental Education — Catch 'Em Being Good (for parents of children in kindergarten and Grade 1), How to Help Your Child Succeed in School (grades 2 and 3), and Preparing for Drug-Free Years (children in grades 5 and 6)
- Teacher Education — Interpersonal Skills Training (first grade teachers), Proactive Classroom Management (Grades 1 through 6), Effective Instructional Practice (grades 2 through 6), Cooperative Learning (Grades 2 through 6), and Referral Skills (Grade 6)

Six years later when the data on these students were examined, students exposed to the full treatment consistently outperformed the control group, according to Hawkins.

Issue	Control Group (No Treatment)	Full Treatment
Problems in school	58%	46%
Violent incidents	60%	48%
Drinking and driving	25%	14%
Repeated grade	23%	14%
GPA	2.18	2.42

The lesson, said Hawkins, is pretty clear. Programs can be created to create caring communities that alleviate the need for young people to turn to gangs and other destructive behavior for reinforcement. "Good teaching and case management in the early school years combined with parenting education and community-based programs, all of these things work. They are effective in preventing a lot of problems later on and the best part is that low-income kids receive the greatest benefit from these efforts," he concluded.

Esperanza — Hope

"The more I look at teenage pregnancy, the more I'm convinced of the importance of education and of keeping teens in school," said Tamara Kreinin, director of state and local affairs for the National Campaign to Prevent Teen Pregnancy. Social services and health care needs of pregnant teens get most of the policy attention, according to Kreinin, but education doesn't get enough. She stressed that half of the young women who become pregnant as teenagers wind up on public assistance roles, that 50 percent of the teenagers who become pregnant in school drop out, that teenagers who marry are maybe three to four times more likely to end up in divorce courts, and that up to 70 percent of incarcerated women were, themselves, born to teenage mothers. There is no evidence at all that these young women become pregnant to collect welfare benefits, Kreinin noted: "Financial planning is not their top priority."

Most teenage mothers were sexually abused, often at home, said Kreinin. Messages of abstinence and staying at home often send conflicting signals to

such young people, she said. Successful programs for them need to be long term, culturally appropriate, and meld education, social services, and health care.

"Who are these teenage mothers?" asked Robert Granger, senior vice president of MDRC, a nonprofit research firm specializing in job training and welfare-prevention strategies. The data always represent averages, he noted, and these averages mask a lot. The typical teenage mother, he said, is about 18.5 years old, has one child, and reads at about the eighth-grade level. She may be black, white, or brown, and is twice as likely not to come from an AFDC family as to come from one. What these figures disguise, however, is how close to success many of these young people are: Nearly one-third read at the eleventh- or twelfth-grade level; 46 percent had worked for a considerable amount of time — some of them at three or more jobs.

MDRC's analyses of several ongoing and demonstration programs offering a variety of education, training, and social services for adolescent parents indicate that these programs can be well-implemented, increase high school graduation rates, improve earnings, and achieve some welfare savings. For the most part, he said, these programs have had little effect on pregnancies and births. The most successful programs, overall, he noted, were those for young women still enrolled in school, not for dropouts.

Participants got a first-hand look at a very successful local program for teenage mothers, Esperanza, operated by the Riverside County Board of Education. It's a program providing academic services, counseling, preparation for childbirth, parenting education, career information, referrals for health and social services, child care, special transportation arrangements, and individualized learning programs (including independent study if appropriate).

Janice Becker gave up a budding career as a college political science teacher to work with the Esperanza program at the Nueva Vista Continuation High School Campus. "I fell in love with these girls and I fell in love with their babies," she said simply. Becker urged the state policymakers to understand that staff bonding with students was essential to its success. "One of our girls dropped out and returned because, she said, 'somebody here cares about me.' These are very needy kids," she said, evoking Hawkins and Concannon. "They need to know that at least someone cares about them. You need to give kids as many chances as they need to succeed. They won't always get it right the first time."

The success of the six students who accompanied Becker—Tiffany (14 years old with a 2-month-old daughter), Rosalyn (16 and expecting a child in three months), Melissa (16 with a 3-year-old son), Racquel (18 with a 1-year-old), Heather (16 and mother of a 6-month-old daughter), and Rosa (19 with a 3-year-old daughter)—spoke volumes about the value of Esperanza. Each testified that they might not have made it without the support of the program and its flexibility in meeting their needs. Some, such as Rosalie, are already high school graduates enrolled in community college. Most are completing secondary school.

Each also spoke of the moment when they might have been saved in a regular high school setting. Most were pretty fair students. Rosa, was outstanding in school, with an A+ average. But as they described their academic careers, a point arrived in secondary school when it all began going downhill. They relived the moment in different ways: "I lost interest," or "I started drinking and drugging." Or, "I began hanging out with the 'wrong crowd'" was a common theme.

But the universal refrain was that they started "ditching" high school and nobody cared. Ditching always meant the same thing they stopped going to class and stopped going to school for weeks, months, even semesters at a time. And nobody noticed. Melissa: "I didn't go to school at all in ninth grade. The school never called. It didn't care." Heather: "I ditched ninth grade and most of tenth. Nobody cared." Racquel: "I ditched sophomore year. High school is just not there for you."

As Janice Becker summed it up: "There's a year or semester when kids fail every class and ditch school. How active the teachers and counselors and parents are at that point defines whether or not the kid can be helped. We need more adult contact so that when kids start ditching, adults stay with them."

Available at some 15 secondary school sites throughout the county, the Esperanza program anticipates average daily attendance of 369 young women in the 1996-97 school year, enough to cover the needs of about one-quarter of the infants in the county born to women under the age of 18.

"I'm convinced from what I've read," said Senator Allison Schwartz of Pennsylvania after listening to these presentations, "that teenage pregnancy has not increased in last 20 years. What has increased is out-of-wedlock births. These men, or boys, but it's mostly men, aren't marrying these girls. We need to involve these fathers."

"We also need to listen to our teenagers," Schwartz continued. "We adults make up 'stuff' and convince ourselves that this 'stuff' works. Teenagers just laugh at us. Listen to your own teenagers."

The Iowa Story: Putting it All Together

"No matter how good our ideas, if we don't do something about budgeting, then our budgeting processes usually get in the way of implementation," noted Ron Cowell, opening the final session for weary participants. The Iowa story offered some lessons about how to improve state budgeting and policy planning.

"Talk is cheap," declared Sally Cunningham, deputy director for services of the Iowa Department of Human Services. "The real action occurs when you galvanize budget resources."

Decategorization became the Iowa touchstone for human services in the late 1980s. Between 1982 and 1987, state officials noted that out-of-home placements for children in trouble increased 40 percent. "The entire human services, health, and education systems were designed to protect kids by tak-

ing them out of their homes. Obviously some kids needed out-of-home placements," acknowledged Cunningham, "but when you find increases of this magnitude, you have to ask 'Where are our heads?'"

Beginning in 1987 with a pilot program of decategorization restricted to communities in two counties, decategorization is now found in communities in 92 of 99 Iowa counties. The basic concepts are simple: the best place to raise a child is in the home; communities are better than state bureaucracies; the number of categorical programs—family services, family foster care, and group foster care — should be reduced; local communities should be empowered to make the best use of the funds. The primary benefits for state agencies, said Cunningham, are that any monies saved can be "carried forward," as the jargon has it, a situation likely to improve and give real meaning to planning.

Most management information systems have to do with process and budgets, noted Cunningham. They don't worry about impact. "We have to stop shoveling a lot of money all over the place and concentrate our efforts on what we want to accomplish. The most important lesson I have for you is this: When you begin to look at what results you want to accomplish, your mindset changes dramatically."

Cunningham continued: "If we can't figure out what to do about dysfunctional families, all the education assessments in the world will make no difference because kids can't learn." Iowa has also, she noted, "given up on the idea that people have to come to the service and decided to bring the service to the people who need it." This means that sometimes services are colocated in churches or local malls. The state doesn't tell localities what to do: "One rural county, unknown to us, designed the services it wanted and how it would achieve them by asking the community what it wanted and how it wanted to be involved."

Marv Weidner, director of policy and strategic planning in the state's Department of Management, remembered describing this "decat" strategy to a group of assistant secretaries at the federal Department of Health and Human Services. "Too bad Iowa's not a real state," said one of the feds dismissively.

Weidner described a learning process in which Iowa began by focusing on results. At first it focused on a reasonable-enough goal: helping people get off public assistance. Gradually it dawned on the Iowa policymakers that "leaving public assistance" was the wrong goal. "The real result we wanted was helping people leave poverty behind and connect again with their communities."

"As Sally mentioned, when you focus on the right result, your whole mindset changes. We began worrying about economic development. We focused on job creation. By 1993 we had new legislation creating a system of performance management for the state. Basically the benchmarks we set ourselves were: What do Iowans want? What are their priorities?"

He described a system of focusing government on results and tying per-

formance measures to the budget, as a way of "getting more bang for the buck."

Throughout state government 17 agencies and 56 different programs are now using this "Budgeting for Results" system. Benchmarks were developed by scouring existing strategic plans for results-oriented measures, convening focus groups and conducting public opinion polls to identify key issues; and developing baseline data to establish numerical targets for benchmarks. Then the state agencies established results-oriented performance measures that helped them describe to Iowa citizens what they were getting for their tax dollars.

Stressed Weidner: Legislators don't need most of the information they get in budgets. "Budgets give you wonderful data on supplies, and travel costs, and full-time-equivalent employees—the kinds of information agency managers have to have. But unless legislators are interested in managing the agency, that's not useful information to them. Legislators need to know how things work and how to make them work better. That's where budgeting for results comes in. It's not an end in itself, but a means to an end of improving services for kids and improving accountability."

The result? The state appears to be getting the results it and its citizens want. With a state population of 2.3 million, about 400,000 families are receiving services. In 1987, the state counted 4,000 out-of-home placements of children. Today, that number is down to 1,100.

In terms of services, Weidner and Cunningham reported, budgeting for results has been hardest to apply in the area of education. State standards do not exist; standards are set at the local level. Weidner's office is trying to encourage the state department of education to measure the effectiveness of what it does against what local education agencies are trying to accomplish.

Next Steps

The agenda placed before these state policymakers was ambitious. It covered a lot of ground:

- "pruning" brain cells
- the danger of shedding state policies along with personalities
- finding one reliable person for each child
- front-loading schools with programs that work
- identifying risks early and heading them off so that the educational equivalent of bypass surgery is not required
- addressing public anger and the challenge of two separate public school systems
- developing well-conceived, comprehensive, and coordinated education and social service
- programs to help save young people
- putting money and resources behind state promises.

But if the meeting agenda was ambitious, so too is the agenda of the Policymakers' Program — nothing less than reconceiving and redesigning how states relate to their citizens and provide services to children and families in need.

The Danforth Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association stand ready to help in advancing this agenda. Between the January meeting and the August Institute, selected state teams can look forward to assistance from these organizations and their staff in developing a state-specific policy framework, selecting and organizing a state team, and convening at least one team meeting before the Summer Institute begins.

The agenda may be challenging, but the end result is clear. The Policymakers' Program will know it is succeeding when more state policymakers begin to agree with Ron Cowell, who said the significance of the program is that it helped change how policymakers think about things and how they go about the public's business.

APPENDIX F

Accelerating System Change: Improving Results for Children

1998 Highlights

From the
Winter Meeting of the Policymakers' Program

THE DANFORTH FOUNDATION

Cosponsored by

Education Commission of the States
National Conference of State Legislatures
National Governors' Association

Orlando, Florida
January 22–25, 1998

PREFACE

In January of this year, about 75 legislators, governors' aides, analysts, researchers, and cabinet officials from 19 states gathered in Orlando to discuss how to get better results for their children. They were intent on improving outcomes for children by building state and local capacity to identify and obtain the results they need. They met at the invitation of the Danforth Foundation, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association, co-sponsors of the Policymakers' Program since its inception in 1992.

The discussion covered a lot of ground. Sometimes it hovered at 10,000 feet as analysts and policymakers painstakingly mapped the conceptual terrain of the systems for which they are responsible. But much of the time, the discussion was at ground-level and in-your-face as the discussion of policy problems took on a human dimension.

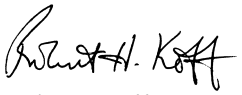
The conversation ranged from the fascination of findings in neuroscience and the implications of emerging research on brain development to the details of what is involved in implementing welfare reform and building better schools. It covered "the good, the bad, and the ugly" of the new world of electronic commerce as the group examined the effects on public revenues of electronic commerce. The participants worried about collaboration in big ways—how to encourage state units of government to cooperate with each other and how to reward greater collaboration between states and communities. Then they worried about cooperation in even more important contexts: When it comes to raising children, "Marriage is the ultimate collaboration," pointed out a university researcher.

And they fretted about "the system." Despite difficulty in agreeing on solutions, participants—whether from Arizona, Wyoming, or Idaho in the West, or Florida, Pennsylvania, or Vermont in the East—had little trouble agreeing that the system isn't working. What we have isn't good enough. Successful models abound, but we haven't found ways to bring reform to scale.

The meeting also pointed in some promising directions. A nationally known analyst developed some lessons on how to strengthen families and neighborhoods. Experts and scholars, community program directors, and state legislators and budget analysts described how to design, implement, and finance reform back home. And the group spent an afternoon visiting the Celebration School in Orlando, a pioneering school in an innovative community launched and developed by the Celebration Company, a subsidiary of the Walt Disney enterprise.

From the states participating in this meeting, the Policymakers' Program intends to invite two state-community teams to a Policymakers' Institute during the Summer. During the institute, the teams will formulate community-specific problem statements and allied strategies to improve results for children through better coordination and delivery of education and other services.

This document highlights major elements of the meeting. Although it faithfully summarizes the discussion, it does not do justice to the energy and dedication of the participants. What these highlights do, however, is offer an insight into the intensity of the conversation and the depth of commitment required to make a difference.



Robert Koff
Vice President
The Danforth Foundation

ACCELERATING SYSTEM CHANGE

Changing government systems is hard work. "When you get right down to it," quipped State Senator Pat Piper of Minnesota at one point, "the only people who really like change are babies in wet diapers." The rest of us are usually more comfortable struggling along with the systems we have. But, she told participants, policymakers must stop thinking of providing services in different silos. "Start thinking 'seamless services' instead," she urged. "Parents are busy people. Single mothers are the busiest. They need to work. They have to get to the job. They need access to health care for their families. They often need childcare. How can they find the time to do all that, if they have to run all over the place looking for help from different agencies?"

"If you get a chance to do the Policymakers' Summer Institute, do it!" was the message from Cheryl Mitchell, deputy secretary of the Office of Human Services in Vermont. Mitchell described a joint state and community effort designed to improve learning and attack child abuse in the city of Barre, Vermont. Planned at the 1997 Summer Institute, the effort is designed to involve schools and citizens in developing a learning community, starting with a wide-ranging assault on such problems as alcoholism and spousal abuse. Barre is a blue-collar town famous for its granite and populated by many hard-drinking men who quarry it. Like children everywhere, some of Barre's children have had to live with abuse, according to Mitchell. "Being a child shouldn't hurt," she said simply.

As a young lawyer just starting out in practice in Nashville, it had quickly become apparent to Bill Purcell that the social service system in his community didn't work very well. Services weren't connected and citizens found them hard to access. Youthful offenders and their families, for example, were put on a merry-go-round from school to court, to psychological services, to mental health professionals, to disability diagnosticians, and then back to the school and court again.

When he arrived at the state legislature, it quickly became apparent to Purcell that Nashville wasn't unique. Statewide, the entire system was broken. Purcell, recently retired as majority leader of the Tennessee House of Representatives, now directs the Policymakers' Program as well as The Child and Family Policy Center at Vanderbilt University's Institute of Public Policy Studies. "The Danforth Foundation understands the problems of service disintegration in a way that very few others have," he said.

"This is a unique meeting," Purcell declared. "It's one of the only places where people from state houses and capitols across the country who care about kids can get together and decide to go back and change it all."

Congratulations, was Purcell's message to the assemblage. Deferring their enjoyment of another realtors' dinner on the rubber-chicken circuit, they were doing vital work on behalf of children and families. "You're in the right place, at the right time, with the right people, working on the right problem," he said.

The Policymakers' Program

Pennsylvania served as something of a guinea pig for the Policymakers' Program, reported Representative Ron Cowell of Pennsylvania, a member of the program's Advisory Board. The Keystone State was one of the very first to go through the Summer Institute in 1993. Looking forward to retirement from public life after 24 years in Harrisburg—during which he had spent 10,000 hours driving 500,000 miles on the Pennsylvania Turnpike between the capital and his district in Pittsburgh—Cowell offered his congratulations to everyone in the room.

"This is not a vacation. It's hard to describe, but whatever it is, it's not a junket. You're going to work very hard. But unless you have a mind of stone, you will leave here in some way affected by what you learn." Cowell described the program as made up of the Winter Meeting, the Summer Institute, and an array of technical assistance opportunities supported by Danforth and its partners—all designed to accelerate system change and improve results for children and families.

The Policymakers' Program, he emphasized, is not so much about developing legislation, as it is about rethinking attitudes, rationalizing systems, and sustaining change. "You'll find no prescriptions here. It's an effort to make all of us think about what we're doing and what we're about. And it's also about leadership: Maybe I can't do it all, but what can I do?"

"What we're really trying to do here," according to Missouri's Director of Social Services, Gary Stangler, is, "demonstrate that the phrase 'entrepreneurial government' is not an oxymoron." Stangler described how Missouri had over several years put in place a Caring Communities program involving joint budgeting among five state agencies including labor, health, and mental health services. With help from the Policymakers' Program, the state was able to pilot extending the concept to schools in the community of University City, a suburb bordering St. Louis.

In Utah and elsewhere, concluded State Representative Lloyd Frandsen, "Thousands of kids have been helped by the Policymakers' Program who don't even know that the Danforth Foundation exists."

What the program is ultimately about, said Bob Koff, vice president of the Danforth Foundation, is leadership, collaboration, and results—leadership in the sense of being adaptive to today's problems; collaboration, meaning joint agency funding and accountability; and results in terms of important outcomes for children. "We need to develop critical indicators of the well-being of kids," he urged. "If you go to the doctor's office and they don't take your temperature, weigh you, and check your pulse, you wonder if they know what they're doing. What are the analogs for children's well-being?"

With that introduction, the Winter Meeting was launched. It provided a birds-eye view of the problem, the picture from 10,000 feet. It got its feet on the ground with some real stories about the problems of real people. In the end, it concentrated on six things: (1) strengthening neighborhoods and helping families; (2) organizing state agencies for collaboration; (3) designing

reform; (4) aligning systems; (5) financing change; and (6) thinking about how to incorporate science into policy.

The View from 10,000 Feet

"We make policy at an altitude of 10,000 feet," said Utah's Frandsen at one point. "But caseworkers actually touch the client." His message: We have already solved most of the easy problems, the ones that can be tackled at high altitude.

The problems look very manageable from a distance. Particularly in terms of TANF (America's new welfare reform legislation known as Temporary Assistance for Needy Families), the nation's difficulties appear tractable, if not to painless solutions at least to systems analysis and design.

So far, welfare reform appears to have been a major success. A booming economy, shortages of workers, TANF's insistence that adult recipients enter the workforce or perform public service combined with expanded child-care and welfare-to-work services—all of these have effected a major reduction in caseloads. In Ohio, like most states, reported Jacqueline Romer-Sensky, deputy chief of staff to the Ohio governor, caseloads have decreased about 55%, from 914,000 to 411,000 in the past two years.

In Florida, reported Mike Switzer of Enterprise Florida, work is required and job search and employment entry activities begin at the point of application. The state has imposed a 48-month lifetime limit on benefits, with most families limited to 24 months out of 60. Some long-term recipients are eligible for a 60-month lifetime limit, including 36 months out of any consecutive 72. The results have been impressive: statewide, caseloads have been reduced by 30%, with reductions in different regions ranging from 19 to 48%. Annual cash payments have declined nearly 19%, from $53 to $43 million.

But many of these experts acknowledged that the easy lifting is over. What lies ahead are the difficult and hard cases. Utah's Frandsen estimated that 40% of Utah's public assistance population is made up of high school dropouts. "I urge you to think ahead," said Romer-Sensky. The figures look pretty good in a booming economy. "Predict a bad economy," she said. Then think about what might happen with these caseload data.

In Florida, agreed Switzer, 45% of the remaining public assistance cases have been on welfare continuously since October 1966, even in the midst of an economic boom. People who have been on the rolls 12 months or more, he said, have very limited educational backgrounds and exhibit many other difficult problems. What officials in Florida and elsewhere have to worry about, he concluded, is ""What happens in an economic downturn?"

The View from Ground Level

The macro-concerns of Switzer and Romer-Sensky were reflected in miniature throughout the meeting. Sometimes people on the ground don't always follow the scripts developed at high altitude.

Romer-Sensky announced herself to be "an intensely conflicted person right now about child care." She reported on a "lot of questions and disconnects between financing and public policy issues in Ohio, advocates' claims about the need for child care, and over-the-back-fence conversations."

She reported that the state expected to need 71,000 child-care places; but only about 60,000 children are in programs. Her office anticipated that 30% of TANF recipients would seek subsidized child care, but only about 5-6% do so. Anxieties about lack of capacity to meet the demand for infant and toddler care were unfounded—demand today is about what it was a year ago, before most of the changes went into effect. Anecdotally, she reported, caseworkers and parents complain about the need for school-based extended care rather than pre-school needs.

The problem may be the quality of services, as Anne Mitchell, author of *Financing Child Care in the U.S.*, suggested. Illinois Representative Mary Flowers agreed: "State programs house our kids, they don't educate them," she observed. Romer-Sensky didn't argue. When her own children arrived, she noted, she had not wanted them in a center. Most parents, she concluded, "seem to prefer relatives and friends to organized programs."

But the ground-level issues are much more intractable than simply preferences for types of service, who will provide them, or where. Lloyd Frandsen recalled two families with which he was familiar—out of hundreds of individual cases. The first involved three small children. They were "filthy" when they arrived at school in the morning and often promptly fell asleep in class. These children, all brothers and sisters, each had a different father. It was clear their medical needs were not being met; the mother's teeth were practically all gone and she was unable to read. The school and the county brought a caseworker into the home. They helped the mother develop the skills to get the kids to bed on time; they brought in a dentist to fix her teeth; they provided medical examinations for the children; and they found a senior citizen who volunteered to teach the mother to read so that she could read to her children.

After some months, a teacher called Frandsen. "I can't say this is an evaluation," he reported, "but this is what the teacher said. 'When these kids come to school now, they smile. We've won.' "

The second involved a blind man who was dirty, smelly, unshaven, and invariably late for whatever he was expected to do. "I thought I'd get him working in a week, and I spent over a year on him," said Frandsen. Even in a sheltered work environment at Deseret Industries, his lack of cleanliness or his inability to show up on time became a major impediment to his progress. "The people we can take care of in a week have already been taken care of," concluded Frandsen. "Even with good mentors and solid friends', some single mothers take as much as five years to become truly independent."

No matter how good the services, or how good the schools, "Kids still have to go home," Paul Dupre, mayor of Barre, Vermont pointed out. It can all fall apart there. It's in the home and the neighborhood that society either redeems or reneges on the promises it makes to children. "That's where they learn a lot of things," said Dupre. "That's where they learn it's OK to drink too much. That's where they learn it's OK to knock Mom around." And that's why it's important for these programs to touch not just individuals but families and communities as well. After all, when it comes to improving results for children, the place to start is with an observation made at the meeting by John Medina from the University of Washington's School of Medicine. "Marriage is the ultimate collaboration."

Strengthening Neighborhoods and Helping Families

"I want to talk to you about the successes we have had in improving life for children and families and the successes we could achieve," said Lisbeth Schorr of Harvard University, author of *Within Our Reach* (1988) and *Common Purpose* (1997).

Noting that most of the programs she had hailed in *Within Our Reach* had disappeared within five years of its publication, Schorr commented that "wishful thinking instead of hard analysis" had dominated early implementation efforts. And, she added, the way programs are funded, the way they're regulated, the way they're held accountable are all "exactly opposite of what effective programs should be." The system itself needs to change, she concluded. "It shouldn't take a combination of Mother Teresa and Machiavelli with an MBA from Harvard to get things done."

Arguing that we have to rid policymakers of the "vending machine" and demonstration project approaches to social change (i.e., legislation or a model program for every problem), she called for a six-part agenda for bringing reform to scale:

- new approaches to spreading what works, including the support of outside intermediaries like the New American Schools Design Corporation or Essential Schools in the education arena;
- establishing new partnerships with citizens and community-based organizations, partnerships involving significant departures from traditional policies and practices and new ways of connecting with community-based groups which have entirely different relationships with families and neighborhoods;
- creating a new balance between regulation and accountability with a focus on results instead of compliance with a rabbits' warren of rules and regulations;
- taking a longer view of change—it's "unconscionable for government to decree that mothers leave their babies in day-care without ensuring that high-quality day-care settings are available";
- combining what works and targeting neighborhoods in much the same way that Boston schools, city officials, police department leaders, and

ministers organized to eliminate gun-related youth homicide in the last two-and-one-half years;

- building a knowledge base about what works that starts by abandoning the biomedical model, with its reliance on control and experimental groups, in favor of more complex evaluations and knowledge bases that respect the complexity of social organization, interactions, and change.

Barre, Vermont was one of several examples offered at the meeting that gave a sense of what these new ideas might look like in practice if taken seriously. The city adopted a community-based focus according to Mayor Dupre. "Coming out of last year's Summer Institute, our goal was one of literacy and learning throughout life. We want our community to understand that you learn throughout life and you teach throughout life. And we've started with community forums to get ideas from the grassroots and to get ideas to the grassroots. We need to get to parents, and we intend to get to parents through parents."

The good news, said Schorr, is that it is clear that "high rates of teenage pregnancy, dropouts, truancy, low achievement, and all the rest of it can be turned around. The bad new is that it is very, very hard to do."

Organizing for Collaboration

Arguing that "you have to be what you want to see," Missouri's Gary Stangler noted that Caring Communities called for interagency collaboration at the state level and the local level. He agreed that politically it is very difficult to pull off. To most state agency personnel, he quipped, collaboration is akin to consorting with the enemy. And, for politicians, "there's very little political mileage in backing off and letting local communities solve their own problems."

However, he said, state leaders in Missouri were determined to make "devolution" work. "We didn't just want different people making the same decisions, we wanted community-based decision-making. We started with 'horizontal' collaboration at the state level. We found that to be difficult. Legislative committees didn't understand joint funding. The budget director wanted to allocate all the funds to one agency which would dole them out. Someone else wanted the funds appropriated to 'the Department of Caring Communities.'" Stangler had to persuade people that Caring Communities was a concept, not a government agency.

Even with collaboration in place at the state level, he realized that it was insufficient to make a local difference. Hence, the effort began to encourage "vertical and horizontal" service integration, i.e., services should be integrated vertically between state and local agencies and, at the local level, they should also be integrated horizontally between agencies. After several years of the effort, he was able to point to what he considered to be success. "Child abuse and neglect was down. Juvenile commitments were down. Crime was down. Student attendance was up. That was good enough for me."

But, he noted, because student achievement was unchanged, it wasn't good enough for the Department of Education. So the Caring Communities effort went to University City to try to develop some new approaches to improving student achievement. Under the leadership of superintendent Lynn Beckwith, Jr. and special projects director Betty Walls, University City is encouraging the community surrounding the Barbara Jordan School to take Barbara Jordan's "bold, courageous journey" and "dare to dream, dare to believe, and dare to achieve." Walls concluded, "It's going to take seven Ps—people, politics, patience, pacing, perseverance, pride, and passion—but we're going to get it done."

Lloyd Frandsen of Utah described a similar incremental approach. As chairman of two appropriations committees a decade earlier, one responsible for education, the other for human services, he had "done something symbolic. We provided both agencies $100,000 and asked them to pool it to work together on common problems—at the front-end in a preventive way—and give us an evaluation of results." Over the years, this modest beginning evolved into the FACT program, Families, Agencies, and Communities Together.

By 1995, the Policymakers' Program helped support a Utah team of 27 people who attended the Policymakers' Institute. This team developed the basis for state legislation appropriating $900,000 to fully finance existing FACT initiatives and establish a framework for collaborative service-delivery systems.

Putting all of this in place can be very difficult, cautioned Beckwith. "Sometimes wonderful plans made in July in the beautiful state of Vermont don't seem to mean so much when you get back home and school starts in September. It's difficult to bring the community along. But it's well worth the effort."

Designing Services

Missouri's Caring Communities, Vermont's community-based approach, and Utah's FACT effort represent different ways of designing services to meet distinct community needs. But they're not the only ways. With its emphasis on skills training and access to higher education for TANF recipients, Maine offers quite a different conception. So too does the Celebration School, indeed the entire Celebration community, a vision-come-to-life of the Walt Disney Company. Enterprise Florida, a public/private welfare-to-work partnership provides yet another.

Maine. Like many other policymakers, those in Maine have been busy in recent years cleaning out some legal deadwood. "County sheriffs in our state are still required by statute to whitewash the jail every April," noted Susan Dustin, director of Policy and Programs for the Department of Human Services, with a smile.

Since enactment of federal welfare reform in 1996, Maine has responded with a variety of programs designed to encourage employment and parental

responsibility for the welfare of children. Through a variety of programs, the state encourages public assistance recipients to seek and find employment and stay on the job. These include TANF (cash assistance for a maximum of 60 months allied with required work or service); ASPIRE/TANF/JET (training, retraining, and employment counseling and support); Parents as Scholars (a monthly living allowance and support for child care, transportation, and other services to encourage parents to attend two- or four-year institutions of higher education); and child care.

Dustin described Parents as Scholars as a financial aid program that includes a 20-hour-per-week work requirement (which can include time in class) with the expectation that students will complete the program in about 150% of the normal time requirement. Thus, a student will be supported for three years in pursuit of a two-year degree or certificate and for six year in pursuit of a four-year degree. Limited to 2,000 recipients, the program is now operating at about 25% of capacity.

Celebration School. Celebration, Florida is a sparkling new residential community built by Disney outside Orlando. It includes a health campus; a medical facility emphasizing preventive health care and maintenance; an old-fashioned village square; and an innovative K-12 Celebration School, which encourages individual learning styles, project learning, and student interaction. The school is a joint venture of the Celebration Company (a Disney subsidiary), Osceola County, and Stetson University. The company invested $17.3 million in the school; Osceola County runs the school and ensures it meets state standards; and Stetson, which helped develop the curriculum, also runs the adjunct Teaching Academy.

The school is divided into "neighborhoods," which the Policymakers' participants toured. The neighborhoods include children of different ages and have replaced typical classrooms and desks arranged in rows with plenty of large open spaces, round tables, and computers. Students work together on projects, which they present to the entire neighborhood. The school was developed explicitly to showcase some of the best ideas and practices in public education, according to its principal, Dot Davis. What emerged from discussions with education leaders was a plan to help students develop their most successful learning styles. Techniques such as collaborative teaching, in which four to six teachers work together with classes of between 50-100 "neighborhood" students are typical of Celebration School. Collaborative learning, in which students work together in teams of three or four, is also a school staple.

In part to stave off the envy of other county teachers and administrators who do not enjoy access to all the resources brought to bear on Celebration School, the community also supports the Celebration Teaching Academy. The academy will offer educators throughout the county, the state, and the country the opportunity to take courses, conduct research, and share ideas and techniques. Sponsored by Stetson University, the academy will also offer intensive courses in curriculum and strategic planning for school administrators. Interns from the Teaching Academy will be available as teaching assistants in Celebration School. When fully functional, the Teaching Academy

will be able to accommodate up to 5,000 visiting teachers and offer programs designed by some of the leading educational theorists from campuses around the country.

Enterprise Florida. Enterprise Florida is a public/private partnership established to develop a workforce development system capable of maintaining a highly skilled workforce and responding to rapidly changing technological needs, according to Michael Switzer. It replaces the former State Department of Economic Development and is governed by a board divided evenly between business representatives and public officials.

Noting that Florida annually spends about $1.5 billion on training, most of which had been uncoordinated, Switzer pointed out that Enterprise Florida had consolidated these funds into a jobs-and-education program targeted on four areas: one-stop career centers; school-to-work programs; welfare-to-work efforts; and high-skill/high-wage programs.

The effort apparently has been highly successful. Switzer said that Enterprise Florida has provided quick-response training for 23,000 people in high-demand areas, noting that these efforts involve a match of ten private-sector dollars for every dollar spent from public funds.

The group is also active in forecasting occupational demand and has identified 200 jobs with anticipated annual growth rates of 10% of more. He estimated that most of these jobs require two to three years of postsecondary education. Switzer lamented what he foresaw as a shortage of well-educated people in the state, given his organization's occupational-demand projections. Statewide, he said, although Enterprise Florida forecasts a fairly good match of jobs available for high school graduates and school dropouts, it anticipates a shortage of four-year degree holders and an even more severe shortage of people with one to three years of postsecondary education.

The Common Thread. Despite their distinct emphases, all the programs described at the Winter meeting shared several things in common. It made no difference if the state was Missouri, Vermont, Utah, Maine, or Florida. The story was the same in Barre, Vermont; University City, Missouri; and Celebration, Florida. Each of these communities and states puts into practice the gospel preached by Lisbeth Schorr: Create new approaches to implement what works; design new partnerships between agencies and community organizations; balance regulation with accountability; take the long view; and target the best ideas on defined neighborhoods. Pat Liker put it differently, but said it succinctly: "Think seamless services."

Aligning Systems

Looking just at schools, if we want to improve learning, what is required is a "rigorous improvement strategy," claimed Peggy Siegel of the National Alliance of Business. "Spending all your time planning, coordinating, and cooperating doesn't accomplish anything unless people do things differently," she said.

What is required, she told the group, is moving educational reform to the next level. The 1980s was the era of top-down reform; the early 1990s, the era of school-based decision-making. Today, we are entering the era of state standards, assessment, and accountability. These form the foundation of a rigorous improvement strategy.

As her partner James Shipley, executive director of the Quality Academy for Pinellas County Schools, told the group, we need to replace "random acts of improvement" with "aligned acts of improvement."

No matter who speaks about education, the "big arrow" of the school's goal always points in the same direction: the highest possible achievement for every student. Even in a "system" characterized by smaller "random acts of improvement," the big arrow is always directed at achievement. Unfortunately, many of the smaller arrows point in different directions. Without naming names or taking numbers, Shipley pointed out that many school activities are outside the big arrow. A lot of them have nothing to do with achievement. Even many of those within the arrow point in different directions, sometimes in the opposite direction.

This, said Shipley, is the alignment issue. "We need to get everyone working in the right direction and working within the big arrow. That's why the National Education Goals and national standards are important: They remind everyone of where the big arrow is pointed."

Business leaders can help with this, said Susan Traiman of the Business Roundtable. "It's not good enough for you as politicians to talk to each other; you also have to talk to the public about these issues, and many members of the public are confused about them."

Running through several 15-second television public service ads developed by a coalition of business, school, and government leaders, Traiman noted that the public would be suspicious of these advertisements if they were developed solely by teachers, backed just by the government, or financed by business alone. The combination of sponsors make them effective, she believes.

Several ads showcased major league baseball players urging students to stay in school and work hard. The next three showed three five- to seven-year-old children playing at various adult occupations, most of them none too successfully. Each of the three made mistakes on the job. Sally dropped her surgeon's scissors into the patient; Billy watched the engine fall off the wing of the plane he was designing; and Johnny looked on as the bridge he was building fell apart. Each of them stared in dismay as disaster struck and the announcer's voice provided the voice-over message—let's hope these kids know what they're doing when the time comes for you [the viewer] to rely on them for surgery or aircraft and bridge design and maintenance.

Business leaders, concluded Traiman, can serve as more than just resources to educators or sources of expertise. They can also serve as active advocates for children and families.

Financing Programs

Good intentions only get you so far; somehow they have to be financed. From the presentations at the meeting, it is clear that a variety of innovative financing possibilities are available today and more are under development. Nonetheless, challenges to social services financing loom on the horizon as the nation's economy goes through the wrenching changes associated with demographic and technological change.

When it comes to child care, observed Anne Mitchell, we need to be careful about the terms we use. Child care is a sort of shorthand for everything from low-quality custodial care to high-quality, developmentally appropriate, early-education programs. A better term she suggested is early care and education.

Most early care and education she pointed out is financed by families, who provide about 60% of all financial support. This situation is in marked contrast to higher education where parents pay less than one-quarter of all support (see Table 1).

TABLE 1

COMPARISON OF SOURCES OF SUPPORT FOR EARLY CHILDHOOD PROGRAMS AND HIGHER EDUCATION

SOURCE	EARLY CHILDHOOD	HIGHER EDUCATION
PARENTS	60%	23%
STATE	39%	47%
PRIVATE SECTOR	01%	30%

Yet, argued Mitchell, "early childhood is much more important than higher education in the long run." Minnesota's Pat Liker agreed with this assessment. Urging the attendees to divide education up into higher education, K-12, and "little education," she made the case that the first two are well-funded, but "little education" is starved for support. "Little education just gets the crumbs off the table from higher ed and K-12; yet little education is the best investment you can make in K-12 and higher education."

State Approaches. How can you finance early childhood programming? Mitchell pointed to several possibilities: Tax credits are one way. Twenty-one states have a counterpart to the federal child and independent care credit she pointed out. To be useful, Mitchell suggested the credit be refundable to the poor (who pay no taxes) and indexed for inflation.

But other, more innovative ways are needed. "A supply of not-very-good, mediocre child care won't get us what we want," argued Mitchell. "Legislators have an opportunity and the authority to create a terrific system." She urged participants to think creatively. Special license plates to finance early child-

hood programming might be an option. Georgia, she pointed out, had used lottery income to finance a program of universal preschool for three- and four-year-olds. Florida established a child care fund through which the state matched what employers put into supporting child care.

Federal Role. An expert from the National Conference of State Legislatures, Sheri Steisel, offered an optimistic assessment of the possibility of federal support for child care. "I predict that by the end of the year, there'll be some kind of new child-care program from the federal level. Everyone is concerned about the quality of care available to their children. It is unrelated to income."

She described three competing approaches at the national level. President Clinton, who had sponsored a November 1997 White House Conference on Child Care, has proposed spending nearly $22 billion over five years on child care. Among other measures, his proposal adds funds to the Child Care Development Block grant to match state funds; increases the tax credit available to families earning less than $60,000; creates a new tax credit for businesses which expand child care; creates an Early Learning Fund to provide state grants for innovative programming; and increases slots and funds for both Head Start and Early Start.

An alternative proposal has been put forward by Senator James Jeffords of Vermont. Jeffords' approach focuses on tax approachs and credentials and accreditation, according to Steisel. It would provide: tax credits for employers sponsoring child care; home-office deductions for in-home providers; and a competitive matching fund for state programs. At the same time, it would stipulate that the only centers eligible for support are those which are accredited or in which credentialed child-care providers are employed.

Long-Term Outlook Cloudy. As promising as these approaches appear to be in the short term, in the long run there is cause for concern, according to Thomas Bonnett, author of *Is the New Global Economy Leaving State-Local Tax Structures Behind?*

The growth of services has transformed the American economy, said Bonnett. Services are now much more significant within the nation's Gross Domestic Product than goods (see Table 2).

TABLE 2

COMPARISON OF SIGNIFICANT ECONOMIC ACTIVITY OF GOODS VS. SERVICES

YEAR	SERVICES (% OF GDP)	GOODS (% OF GDP)
1959	38%	50%
1994	54%	37%

The problem, insisted Bonnett, is a tax issue. "If we're not able to tax services efficiently, we'll be in trouble."

Moreover, electronic commerce compounds the difficulty. Just in banking, he said, about $2.2 trillion changes hands in the United States every single day. Many of these transactions go untaxed. "The good, the bad, and the ugly of electronic commerce," he said, "are easy to see. The good is that information technologies are providing greater efficiency; the bad is the potential loss of public sector revenue from electronic transactions; and the ugly involves the wrestling involved with implementing the technology revolution and the political consequences of dealing with revenue loss."

Bonnett pointed out that Supreme Court decisions have upheld Congressional authority to regulate interstate commerce and decreed that states cannot force vendors without a physical presence within their borders to collect sales taxes. These rulings, which already account for huge public revenue losses from interstate catalog sales, might easily prove disastrous for state and local budgets as electronic commerce on the Internet develops into a multitrillion-dollar enterprise.

Simultaneously, the median age in the United States is growing. Now about 30 years of age, by the year 2050, median age will increase to 35. In the United States we are experiencing fewer births and people are living longer. One consequence, said Bonnett, is that by the year 2040, about 20% of the American population will be 65 years of age or older. During this growth in the number of older Americans, the proportion of Americans between the ages of 15 and 44 (the prime working years) will "decline from about 50% of the population to about 35–40%."

Bonnett argued that, "American society is already providing generous benefits to the elderly, who need them less, and fewer benefits to poor children, who need them more." Unless this challenge is addressed, he said, "soon the imbalance between benefits for the elderly and low-income children will be harder and harder to deal with. There will be many more elderly people, and more and more of them will be insistent on their special tax breaks. By the year 2014, when the Baby Boomers begin to retire, watch out."

There has never been a better time than now to design systemic change for education and social welfare programs, he concluded.

Using Science

"I want to argue that the world of education really centers on the human brain and curiosity," declared John Medina, a molecular biologist from the University of Washington. Medina provided the meeting with an intellectual tour de force in which he outlined how the brain develops and how science has transformed our perception of reality. He also took a stab at defining the relationship between science and education policy.

The brain's a remarkable instrument, he pointed out. It's total power is perhaps six volts; more energy is found in many flashlights. Yet it sends messages to each toe about 177,000 times per second and oversees a nervous sys-

tem that could circle the globe 20,000 times. The word "remarkable" hardly begins to do it justice. The brain with its six volts is the raw power behind the prodigious development of individuals and society.

Research on stroke victims and infants is beginning to unlock some of the brain's secrets, Medina told the group. Because some stroke victims can interpret graphics or vowels, but not text or consonants, it has become clear that different parts of the brain are responsible for text and graphics, on the one hand, and vowels and consonants, on the other. Scientists who have transferred neurons from quails to chicks have created chicks that "trill" like quails. Work on artificial intelligence opens the possibility of creating a silicon chip capable of human thought by placing human neurons within them.

Meanwhile, "at the cellular level, we're learning how neurons process and use information and how babies learn." At six months, said Medina, infants know how to categorize sounds; by eight months they can learn to categorize some sounds that they won't be able to categorize if the sound is presented to them at 12 months. "The brain can rewire itself around language between birth and age five," he said.

Science, said Medina, has completely turned our understanding of reality on its head. Aristotle thought large objects fell to the ground faster than smaller ones. And, it used to be thought that men had fewer ribs than women. But once Galileo dropped different stones from the Tower of Pisa and scientists advanced the art of dissection, it turned out objects fall at the same rate of speed regardless of size and that men and women have the same number of ribs.

"Critical, abstract thinking was a luxury before the 20th century," said Medina. "It is now an absolute necessity." But it is at the top of Abraham Maslowe's pyramid of human needs, he observed. (Maslowe developed a typology of human needs in which the desire for physical necessities lay at the base of the pyramid and self-actualization through intellectual activity served as the capstone.) Medina warned that Maslowe himself said: "The top of the pyramid is borrowed time, a luxury, because if the needs for physical security at the bottom of the pyramid are not met, the needs at the top cannot be maintained."

Claiming that just as a computer programmer knows how a machine processes information and how to get "input" into the machine, a teacher should know how to "input" information into the human brain and maintain it, Medina suggested that teachers "should be functional neurobiologists. They should know something about how the organ of which they are the steward functions," he said passionately.

Moreover, we need to worry about Maslowe's basic needs for security, food, shelter, and love and attention, he said. "I see the cream of the crop at the University of Washington. If what I see is typical, the wheels are falling off the current system." He suggested that teacher training be transformed to require education majors to study neurobiology; that existing teachers who can't pass a neurobiology test be fired; and that schools begin teaching about marriage at an early age. "It should cover finances, emotions, loyalty, the

whole ball of wax. After all, when you get right down to it, marriage is the ultimate collaboration."

Next Steps

This meeting covered a lot of territory: the view from 10,000 feet, the picture from ground level, and a lot in between—strengthening neighborhoods and helping families; organizing for collaboration; designing reform; aligning systems; financing change; and incorporating science into policy.

It also defined a conundrum. The best programs, said Lisbeth Schorr, are invariably led by people who break the rules. What are the implications of that reality, asked Gary Stangler, for those of us at the policy level responsible for making the rules?

It's a good question, and the Policymakers' Program represents a good answer. Through its Winter Meeting and Summer Institute the Policymakers' Program attempts to create a policy environment encouraging flexibility in harness with accountability. State and community leaders are encouraged to do what they need to do to improve results for children and families.

Danforth, the Education Commission of the States, the National Conference of State Legislatures, and the National Governors' Association stand ready to help in that effort. Between the January meeting and the Summer Institute, two state-community teams can look forward to assistance from these organizations and their staff in defining a problem, selecting and organizing a team, and convening at least one team meeting before the Summer Institute begins.

Curiosity is fragile, yet critical to human development, suggested John Medina at one point. It's fragile in policymaking as well, yet equally important. In many ways, what the Policymakers' Program is all about is the effort to apply human ingenuity to policymaking to accelerate change and improve results for children.