

Capacity-Building Case Study

ContinYou and the British Extended Services School Reform: A Marriage of Expertise and Infrastructure

As we think about trying to support efforts to take community schools to scale across the United States, the England experience can be very useful--not only because it serves as an 'existence proof' that scale is possible but also because it shows how relatively modest investments in capacity-building can support national policy and help to translate that policy into good practice in a short time.

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Brief History

Community education has a long and proud history in England, going back to 1980 when John Rennie founded an organization called the Community Education Development Centre (CEDC), with support from Coventry City Council, the Mott Foundation and the Bernard Van Leer Foundation. The goal of these efforts was to promote, support and develop community education and community schools across the midlands region and, subsequently, across England and Wales. The organization developed a structure of regional advisers (generally from local government authorities and/or schools) and networks of practitioners who were working in community schools and community education settings across the country. It also often secured funding for pilots trialled in various schools with published reports or materials at the end of the projects. Gradually CEDC, its staff and its network members became a unique resource and reservoir of expertise. It also developed two other related strands of work: the first around parental engagement in education and the second around links between health and learning (currently rolling out the major programs 'Skill for Health' jointly between the Department for Universities, Innovation and Skills and the Department of Health); thus developing a breadth of operation that was unique in the field.

Following the election of the Labour Government in 1997 and the publication of the report *Building Britain Together*, a number of working groups (Policy Action Teams) were formed to advise the Government on particular issues around social policy. Policy Action Team 11 (PAT 11) was entitled 'Schools Plus: Building Learning Communities' and followed from a report entitled *Raising Standards: Opening Doors*, which was a very early attempt to encourage schools to open their premises more widely to the community (as the community schools around the country had been doing for some time) in the belief that this would raise standards of attainment. PAT 11 drew expertise from industry, education, social health and local authorities; the National Children's Bureau and CEDC represented charities. CEDC's representative was then-CEO Phil Street, who had links with the Children's Aid Society (CAS) Full-Service Schools in New York, encouraged the team to look closely at the development of this type of school as a potential model for England. By 2000, he had persuaded the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to fund the development of a network of community schools that would share ideas and demonstrate cutting-edge practice through publications, networking events and a new website. Thus the reservoir of knowledge and expertise

continued to grow. In 2001, Julian Piper was appointed to manage the growth and development of the Community Schools Network (CSN). At the same time, DfES agreed to fund a small-scale pilot entitled 'Schools Plus Teams,' in response to a proposal from Phil Street, which was designed to test the theory that schools could engage with their communities more quickly and effectively with the help of an experienced team of consultants.

This project was developed and managed by Education Extra (specialists in the development of out-of- school time learning opportunities) and CEDC. Six schools were chosen across England representing a variety of communities and each was allocated a specialist consultant (generally retired head teachers or senior community education staff). The subsequent evaluation of the project was very positive and the impact on the schools was significant, but the consultants and managers agreed that, in bringing together community partners around a single school, this resource could be used effectively to support several schools in a geographical area and would thus be more cost effective (an idea that has led to the development of Extended Schools Clusters in the current roll out program).

The effectiveness of the program encouraged the Government to go further and, following research by the National Foundation for Education Research demonstrating the value of schools addressing the needs of the 'whole child,' the Government outlined a core offer of services that it expected schools to make available. Further, the Government established a national goal that all schools would become Extended Schools (with the core offer) by the year 2010. A 2002 report entitled *Extended Schools, Providing Services and Opportunities for All* outlined this goal and was introduced at a conference in London sponsored jointly with the Local Government Association.

Other key steps in the movement to have every UK school become an Extended School included: the implementation of a new school inspection system in 1993, which led to initial achievement gains, followed by a period of levelling off and even declines; a mass exodus of teachers, under pressure from the inspectors to continually deliver higher standards, but with a workload that was almost unbearable (leading to Workforce Reform and Remodelling); and the tragic death of young Victoria Climbié at the hands of her relatives, which led to a major national report and policy shift (Every Child Matters) bringing Education and Social Services together. There was a growing understanding that, to achieve sustainable improvement in standards, it was necessary to consider the 'whole child' and for schools to work collaboratively with a wide range of partners.

Capacity-Building Activities

The Children's Aid Society maintained a relationship with the work in England throughout the development of the current national policy. Key capacity-building activities included:

- A speech by then-Chief Executive Officer Philip Coltoff of The Children's Aid Society to the British Parliament in 1999, which key informants in England report was very influential in generating national policy interest in community/extended schools.

- Children's Aid's then-Chief Operating Officer C. Warren (Pete) Moses spoke at the above-mentioned 2002 London conference that launched the report on Extended Schools.
- Children's Aid organized several study visits for British officials to community schools in New York City.
- In 2003 CEDC and Education Extra merged to form ContinYou. Phil Street had developed a model, based on his knowledge of CAS and its Technical Assistance Center, that would provide schools and local authorities throughout the UK with support for the development of Extended Schools, which were increasingly at the heart of Government policy. By September 2003, the Government allocated funding to create a national capacity-building effort, led by ContinYou. Julian Piper was appointed as the Director of the Extended Schools Support Service and a regional team of part-time, experienced staff was appointed quickly to work with the pilot 'Full Service Extended Schools' which, it was hoped, would total at least 240 in number by 2005 (at least one in each local authority). ContinYou found itself placed where it could amass unique levels of expertise through sharing in the development of these FSES and use its extensive contacts and resources to ensure that the developments were successful. A team from ContinYou visited New York in 2004 to find out more about the CAS full-service schools and its National Center for Community Schools, and to learn how this model might be further adapted for the English system.
- ContinYou staff have participated in, and presented at, several of the Children's Aid community school Practicum conferences over the years.

Results to Date

By 2004-5 it was clear that Full Service Extended Schools were showing significant signs of success (particularly in bringing areas of Government policy together but also in raising achievement, as evaluation reports were showing) and DfES was impatient to roll out the program across all schools – setting a target of 2010 for the achievement of this goal. It was recognized that the full-service model was too costly and ineffective for all schools to take up and the core offer of 5 key areas of development was established as the criterion for being an Extended School. The branding is now 'Extended Services' and not Extended Schools in an effort to signify more accurately the rationale behind the policy.

The National Remodelling Team of high-powered consultants from industry had been successful in ensuring that all schools had taken on board the ingredients of Workforce Reform and Remodelling over a three-year period, and DfES felt that they could also be the 'engine' that would drive the targets for Extended Schools to ensure that it would be achieved by 2010 as set out. In April 2005, therefore, on the renewal of the grant to ContinYou, it was agreed that the support would be offered jointly and in a complementary fashion through four delivery partners: DfES, ContinYou, 4Children (a small charity with particular expertise in childcare) and the Training and Development Agency (TDA). The Training and Development Agency staff were the developers of various tools and processes to help schools and local authorities achieve the targets and, as a public agency, were able to put considerable pressure on local authorities and

regional development offices to ensure that targets were met. ContinYou and 4Children were the reservoirs of expertise on how to deliver the services, demonstrate quality and measure the outcomes. In 2008, ContinYou, having previously been awarded annual grants to provide the support service, won a competitive tender from the Department for Children, Schools and Families (renamed by Gordon Brown when he became Prime Minister) for two (possibly three) years, which secures the service at least until 2010 and possibly until 2011. In addition, ContinYou contracts to support Community Focussed Schools in Wales, and there have been considerable links between the two teams as the need to find common ground has emerged.

Lessons Learned

- Key to the scaling up of Extended Service Schools in the United Kingdom was the government's willingness to create pilot schools and providing quality technical assistance to expedite the process
- The merging of Community Education Development Centre (CEDC) and Education Extra formed a stronger technical assistance provider, ContinYou
- ContinYou's relationship with the Training and Development Agency for Schools, the lead governmental agency for teachers training, has been key to going to scale quickly
- Strategic partnerships of leading technical assistance providers –to offer joint and complementary support and relevant timely information—facilitates the process
- The Policy Action Team on Education was instrumental in educating the Government about Extended School Services
- The development of a network of community schools that would share ideas and demonstrate cutting edge practice through publications, networking events and a new website has enormous potential
- Evaluation results of the pilots was very important in influencing national policy
- Studying the American full-service schools model and bringing it to the policy-makers' radar was very helpful to make the Extended Services Schools part of the national education reform agenda
- Development of Extended Schools Clusters has made the provision of support more manageable
- Creating networks of experienced community schools practitioners and drawing on their knowledge has also been very helpful.