

Literature Review: Joint Use Policies September 2010

The literature indicates very little policy-oriented research on the joint use of public schools (kindergarten through grade 12)¹. The research that has been completed points out that few states or school districts have adequate policies, guidelines, plans, roadmaps or government systems to support joint use². The literature also notes a lack of acknowledged best practices and models and a lack of state level support in the policies that do exist³. Perhaps the single most important finding noted consistently regarding policy development was the lack of a single overarching strategic vision or philosophy regarding joint use or the community use of public school facilities^{1 2 3 4}.

Many state departments of education and school districts tend to work as independent entities and have placed themselves in “silos”. Silo management in public planning and operations is a tremendous obstacle to joint use and joint development¹. Some states have policies that support and encourage joint or community use of public school facilities and at the same time have policies that hinder joint use strategies¹. Recent research indicates many school districts do not have a robust system of support for joint use and are reluctant or unable to take on additional budget related items such as staffing, maintenance, safety and security or liability¹.

A positive climate for joint use programming tends to exist more often in schools where local principals and their staff are in support of the joint use concept. School districts that support joint use have a general philosophy or “vision” that schools belong to the people^{2 3 5 6}.

In the literature, the following items were emphasized regarding successful joint use policy and arrangements. A joint use policy should:

- Be integral to a shared vision or philosophy
- Provide a level of flexibility while addressing special needs and provide for communication
- Refer to need or demand and public involvement
- Have support and buy-in of decision makers
- Identify the types of use and user groups the facility will support
- Provide for monitoring and evaluation

Other items of note included:

- Increase public access to schools
- Make more efficient use of school facilities
- Build facilities or implement programs that might not otherwise be available
- Build trust and sustainable relationships

- Provide programs and services to students that are aligned with the schools and districts goals

Vision/Philosophy

The literature is clear in that a united common vision and or philosophy at the state and local levels is key in the development of joint use policy. At the local level, partners need to establish a shared vision that reflects what partners seek to achieve. A common vision or philosophy sets a clear direction and framework to develop a community culture of sharing from top district leadership to school sites⁵.

Flexibility

Joint use policy development decisions must be able to be made at the local level to fit each district's needs^{1 5 6 7}. These needs should be approached on a priority basis set by local stakeholders and as resources permit. Common concerns noted in the literature regarding the extra burden were liability and insurance, maintenance, staffing, scheduling, and most importantly, on-going costs. In California (California School Board Policy 1330), as well as in North Carolina, and even New South Whales, Australia, schools are allowed to charge for the use of their facilities. However, existing polices in these same states make joint use a break-even prospect at best^{7 8 9 10}.

North Carolina and New South Whales, Australia, have similar policies regarding user fees. In California, the type of groups that may use school facilities is determined by the Civic Center Act. The literature indicated school districts end up subsidizing joint use due to limited ability to charge users appropriately⁵. A report published by the Center for Cities and Schools describes the use of a joint use calculator to determine the school district's cost to operate and maintain its facilities. The calculator was developed to assist school districts in fully understanding the costs associated with facilities in order to develop appropriate policies and fee structures for community use of their facilities. The calculator recommends a fee scale for private users that is fair and helps the district in recovering expenses with community use⁵.

Public Need or Demand

Today, as more and more children are overweight or obese due in part to a lack of physical activity, schools can play an increasingly important role as the local green space and safe venue for physical activity. The fall 2007 issue of "Active Education", published by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, concluded that physically active and fit children tend to have better academic achievement through enhanced concentration, cognition and classroom behaviors¹¹. Joint use is at the heart of the full service community school, which allows the schools

facilities to be used by the general public. Demand for safe convenient places to exercise and recreate will only increase as the population grows².

Support

Dedicated support and buy-in to joint use from community members, stakeholders and decision makers is a critical point for successful policy and long term joint use success^{6 7 8 12}. Support at the state level from existing policies helps set policy guidelines, while support at the district level ensures staff have the right tools and authority necessary to overcome concerns and barriers³.

User Groups

Existing joint use policy describes the groups and organization allowed to use schools facilities and under what conditions^{6 7 9 10}. Schools must not let their facilities be used by any entity that has a vision or mission that contradicts that of the school, district or state and most certainly, does not compromise safety, security or welfare of the students.

Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring, reporting, and evaluation are critical to the success of most programs, on-going joint use is no exception. In the Building Schools, Building Communities Report, it lists “Continually Evaluate Use and Operation” as one of the best practices to successful joint use facilities. New South Whales joint use policy charges the local jurisdiction officer to be responsible for successful implementation. North Carolina charges the Local Education Authority (school district and or principal) with the responsibility of evaluation^{6 7 13 14}.

Attached are examples of current joint use policies:

1. Excerpt from North Carolina State Board of Education Community Schools Policy Manual
2. North Carolina General Statutes. Community Schools. Article 13, Sections 115C-206
3. New South Whales (Australia) Department of Education: Joint Use Policy Statement
4. New South Whales (Australia) Department of Education Outline of Community Use of School Facilities Policy
5. U.C. Berkeley: Centers for Cities and Schools, Steps to Successfully Create Joint-Use School Facilities: Putting Best Practices to Work

ENDNOTES:

¹ Jeffery M. Vincent, PhD., Partnership for Joint Use (U.C. Berkeley: Centers for Cities and Schools, 2010) 2-33

² Mary Filardo, et al., Joint Use of Public Schools: A Framework for a New Social Contract (U.C. Berkeley: Centers for Cities and Schools, 2010) 1-12

³ Tamar Cooper and Jeffery M. Vincent, Joint Use School partnerships in California Strategies To Enhance Schools and Communities (U.C. Berkeley: Centers for Cities and Schools, August 2008) 23-44

⁴ Vincent, Jeffery M., PhD., et. al., Building Schools, Building Communities: A Forum on The Role of State Policy in California, Centers for Cities and Schools. (U.C. Berkeley, Centers for Cities and Schools, 2007) 1-25

⁵ Jeffry Vincent, et al., San Francisco's Public School Facilities as Public Assets: A Shared Understanding and Policy Recommendations for the Community Use of Schools (U.C. Berkeley: Centers for Cities and Schools, March 2010) 7-8

⁶ New South Wales, Australia Community use of School Facilities. Policy Statement and Implementation Procedures (New South Wales Department of Education, 1994) 2-6

⁷ North Carolina, Policy Defining Application Process for Units Applying for State Community Schools Funds (North Carolina State Board of Education Policy Manual, # 16NCAC 6F.0003) 1-2

⁸ New South Wales, Australia, Communities Use of Schools Policy (New South Wales Government Education and Training, August 2009) 1-5

⁹ California, California School Board, Board Policy 1330 Community Relations (California School Board Association) 1-3

¹⁰ California, California School Board, CBSA Sample Policy 1330.1(a) Community relations Joint Use Agreements (California School Board Association) a-d

¹¹ G. Trost, PhD., Active Education: Physical Education, Physical Activity and Academic Performance (Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, Fall 2007) 1-4

¹² Constance E, Beaumont, State Policies and School Facilities: How States can Support and Undermine Neighborhood Schools and Community Preservation (National Trust for Historic Preservation, May 2003) 5-31

¹³ North Carolina Department of Public Instruction, Community Schools in North Carolina (Division of School Support and Planning Section, September 2008) 1-14

14 Jeff Vincent, Steps to Successfully Creating Joint-Use School Facilities: Putting Best Practices to Work (U.C. Berkeley: Center for Cities and Schools) 1-2

WEB REFERENCES

“Community Schools in North Carolina”:

<http://www.schoolclearinghouse.org/pubs/communityschools.pdf>

“Community Use of School Facilities”:

<http://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/uploads/documents/Appendix4CommunityUseofSchoolFacilitiesPolicyStatementNSWDepartmentEducation.pdf>

“Community use of School Facilities Policy Statement and Implementation Procedures”

<http://www.hornsby.nsw.gov.au/uploads/documents/Appendix4CommunityUseofSchoolFacilitiesPolicyStatementNSWDepartmentEducation.pdf>

“Joint Use School Partnerships in California: Strategies to Enhance Schools and Communities”, <http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/>

Joint use of Public Schools: A Framework for a New Social Contract

http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/reports/2010_JU_Concept_Paper.pdf

North Carolina State Board of Education, 16NCAC 6F.0003 Policy defining application for units applying for state community Schools funds, Policy Statutory Reference GS 115C-206

www.ncleg.net

Partnerships for Joint Use, Expanding the Use of Public School Infrastructures to Benefit Students and Communities”, <http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/>

San Francisco’s Public School Facilities as Public Spaces, A Shared understanding and Policy Recommendations for the Community Use of Schools,

<http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu/>

State Policies and School Facilities; How States can support or Undermine Neighborhood Schools and Community Preservation”

http://www.preservationnation.org/issues/historic-schools/additional-resources/schools_state_policies.pdf

Steps to Successfully Creating Joint-Use Facilities: Putting Best Practices to Work” <http://citiesandschools.berkeley.edu>

