



# School Community Partnerships: Let's Rock the Boat!

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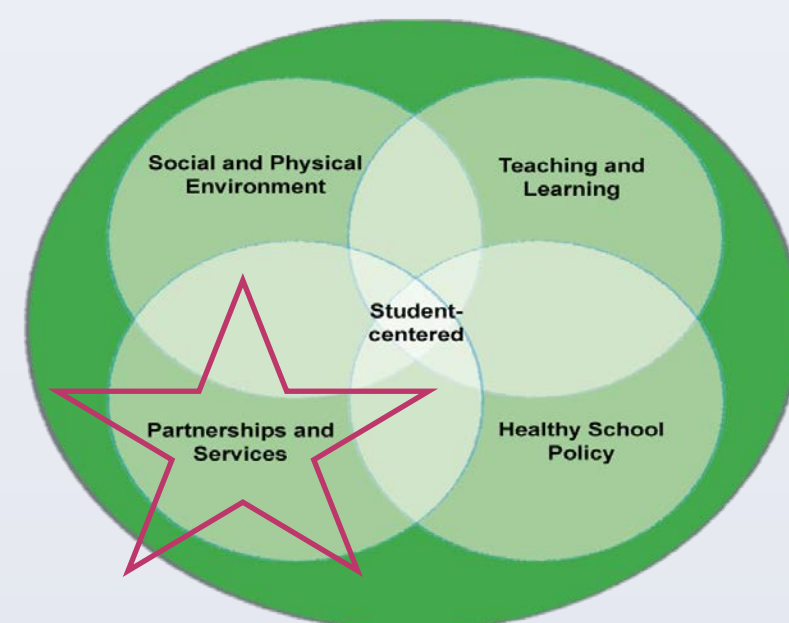


## Introduction

- Ever Active Schools has been looking at after school programming through the support of a grant from the Public Health Agency of Canada since 2012.
- A key component of quality after school programming is partnerships and services between schools and community.
- This survey was developed and analyzed with the assistance of Brenda Herchmer from Grassroots Enterprises
- Distributed across a number of provincial listservs
- From October - December 2014, 395 individuals responded to the survey

## Background

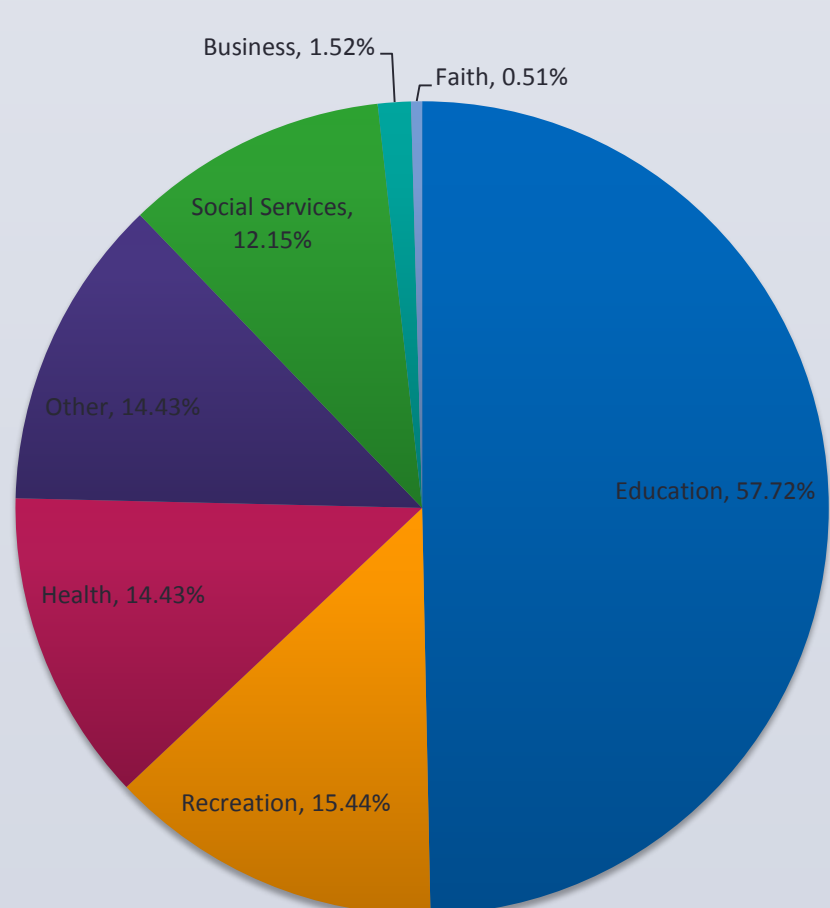
- Healthy students are better learners, and better-educated individuals are healthier
- Making school health a reality requires working together in a planned, integrated and holistic way
- Partnerships and Services – one of the four pillars of comprehensive school health – is essential, and at times under-developed.



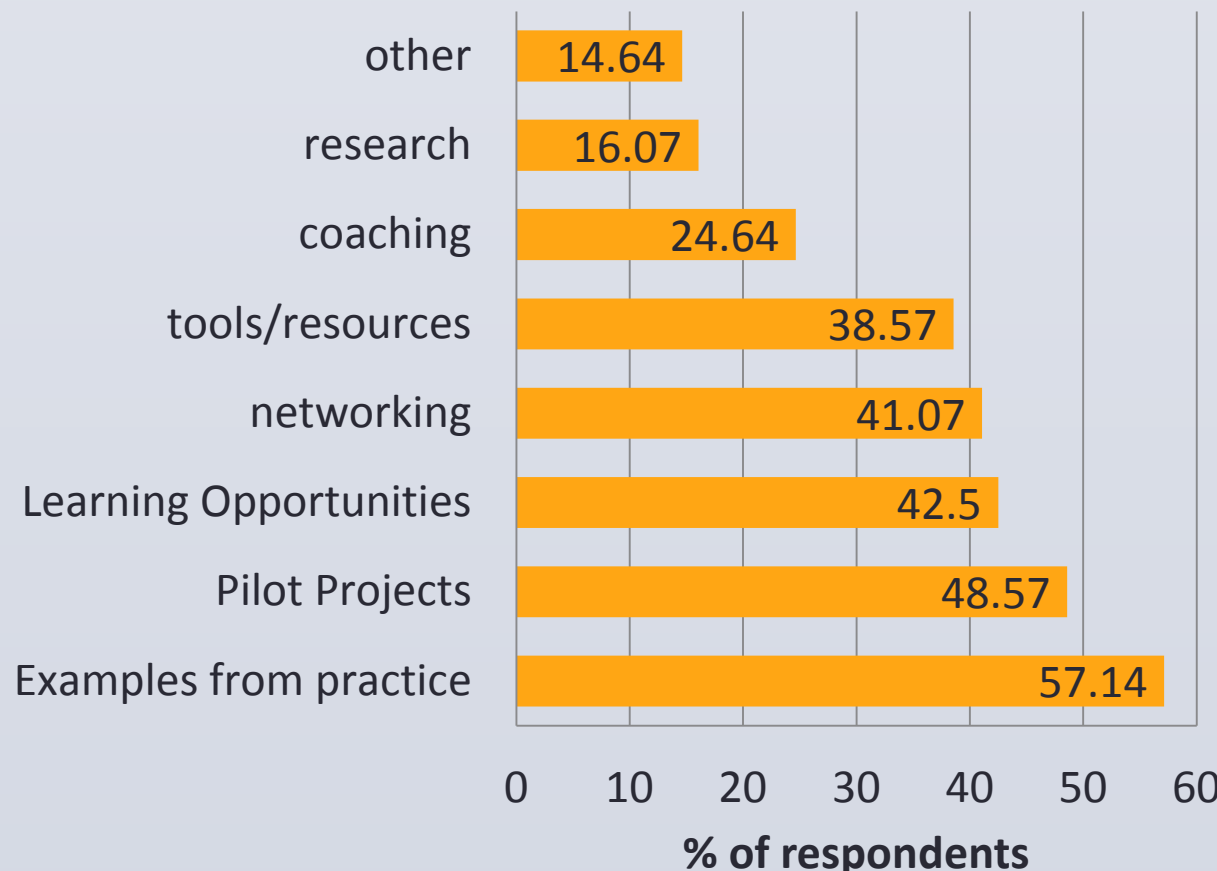
## Objectives

- Gather examples of successful school-community partnerships.
- Identify the common denominators of successful school-community partnerships.
- Better understand the challenges and barriers involved in developing successful school-community partnerships.
- Determine levels of internal and external support for schools to work collaboratively with external organizations and businesses.

## Sector's represented by respondents



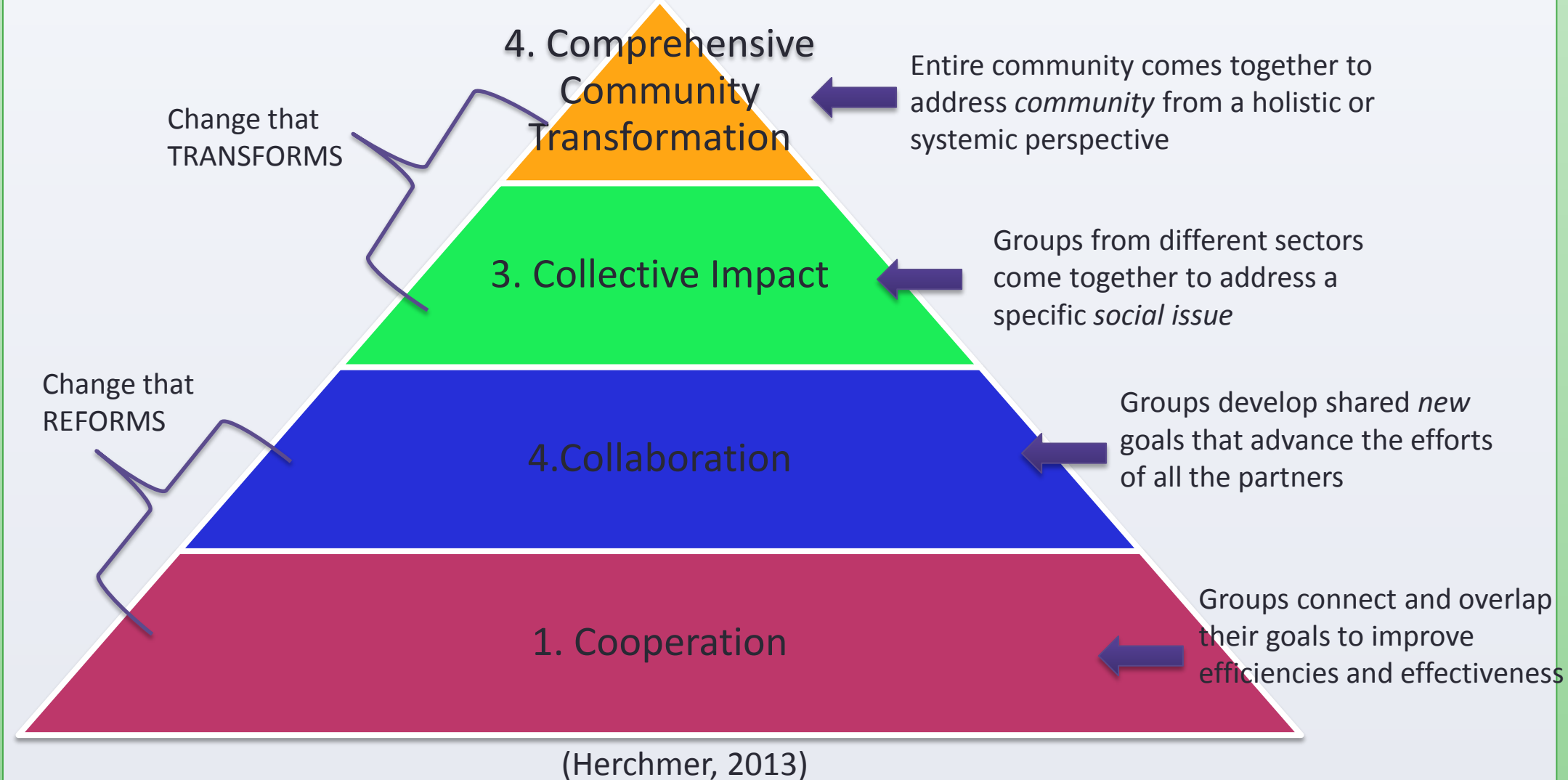
## What would help support more school-community partnerships



## Key Findings

- While most respondents would agree school-community partnerships are important, a lack of time and funding were identified as barriers
- It appears that even when time and funding are available, there is a lack of understanding on how to initiate and build partnerships
- On the continuum of partnerships most of the examples shared were change that reforms; traditional examples were shared such as shared facility use, shared equipment, programs, and networking
- While we are making inroads into partnerships that reform, there appears to be less understanding and support for transformative partnerships
- A clear need was identified for more how-to's, practical examples, learning and coaching.

## Types of Partnerships



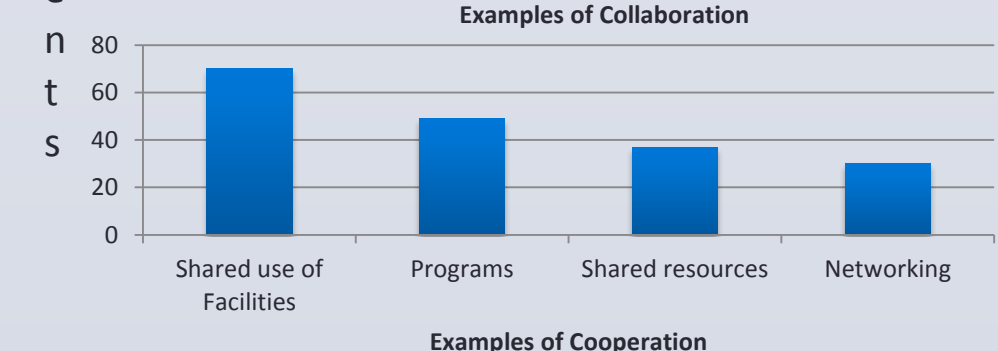
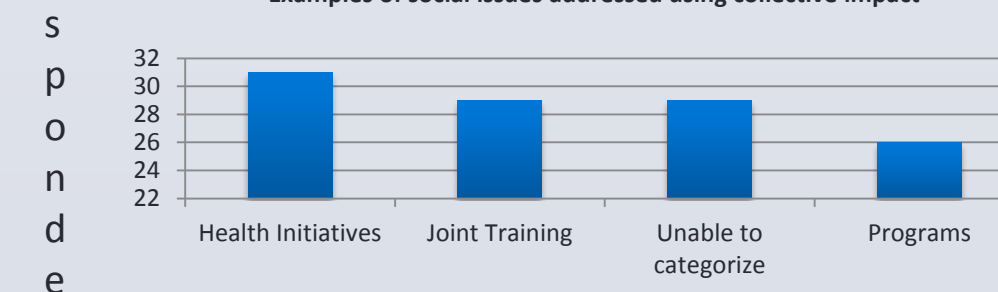
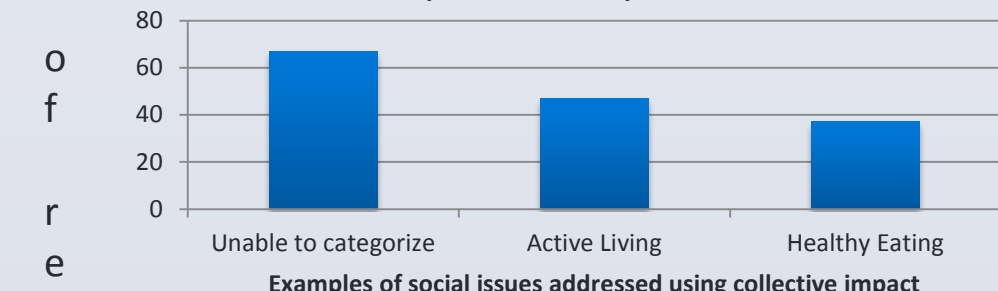
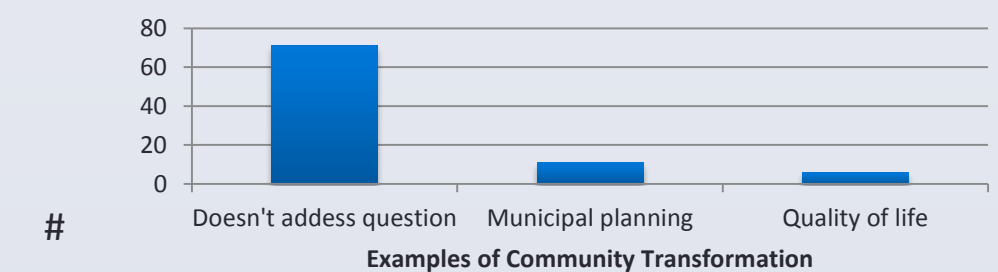
Participants were presented with the above diagram and asked 4 questions, one addressing each type of partnership. Two hundred and ninety one respondents answered the four questions. Sixty percent identified they are working in cooperative partnerships, 48% on collaboration, 65% are participating in collective impact, and 40% in community transformation.

Community Transformation 40%

Collective Impact 65%

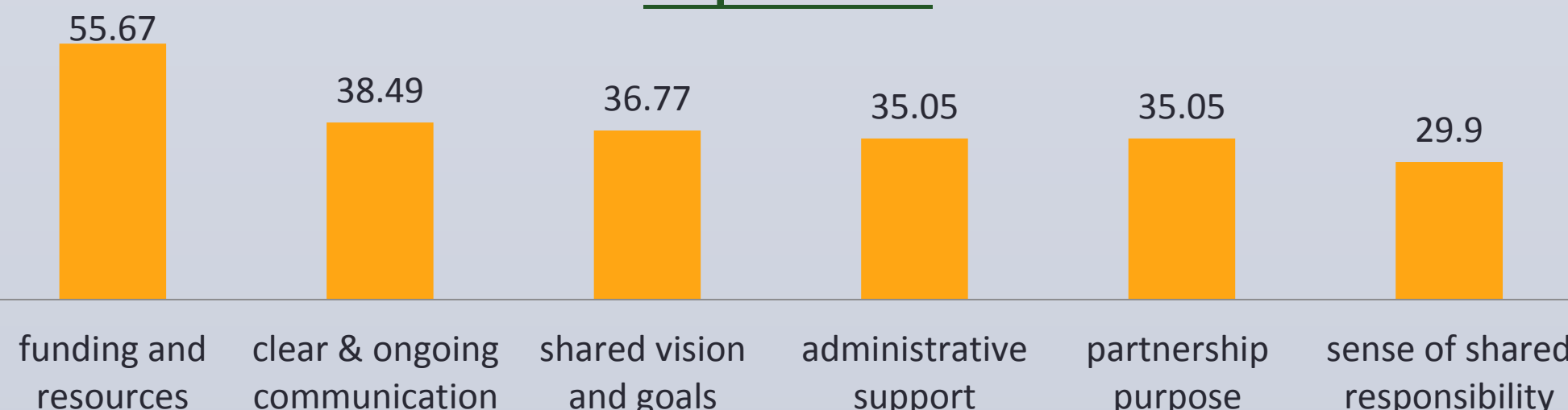
Collaboration 48%

Cooperation 60%



Although many answered "yes" to all four types of partnerships, the majority of the answers in the top 3 categories did not address the question, providing examples that were not relevant. Respondents may not have been clear on the differences between cooperation and collaboration, about social issues or about partnerships addressing the community from a holistic point of view. Given the unclear examples, and the number of respondents who skipped this question, it is possible respondents didn't fully read or understand the question.

## Common denominators of successful partnerships as identified by respondents



## On why school community partnerships are important



Working together and utilizing everyone's best possible education and opportunities.

I believe it is a necessary part of a community to partner with schools. Children are the future for us and learn from others and be more willing to put their time back into the community.

I think such partnerships would be of great value to students and organizations alike. So often, a student's world is so focused on school itself that they do not look to their decision making path for the future.

Anytime there has been an opportunity to create a partnership, it has been successful. It is a win-win for all

## Insights

There needs to be a leader who brings the service organizations together with the goal of building on each organization's strengths and coordinating activities so we can achieve stated goal.

The relationship with the school is always dependent on the beliefs and attitudes of the principal.

School Boards have to buy-in to community partnerships.

It takes a leader to engage the various partners in seeing a common vision and purpose and visualizing what part they can play.

## From the Field!!

More connections need to happen at an administrative level where those decision makers know what is going on in their schools and those communities. Approval from Managers and Boards above these communities to collaborate and create common goals. Get on the same positions to collaborate and share resources. At the end of the day school boards, non-team and share resources. If the budget is the problem, then sharing resources is a great way to stretch our dollars!

Someone who has a vision to bring the groups together and provide some organization is always helpful in moving forward.

## On the importance of Leadership

## Considerations on where to go from here...

- Incentives**: Short term financial (or other resource) incentives for both schools and community organizations to work collaboratively (other than the benefits that will accrue from such collaboration in the longer term)
- Pilot Projects**: In theory, school-community partnerships are good. However, sticking to the status quo is much easier. There needs to be more incentives provided for these entities to want to uptake change.
- Family and Volunteers**: Pilot projects to address specific community issues would help us build trust across sectors and get beyond our silo-thinking
- Businesses**: A community will only be as strong as the individual families homes within it. By educating and strengthening the family you will increase parental engagement. Parents example of leading a healthy, active lifestyle will be the most powerful indicator of whether the children will do so as well. Actions speak louder than words. I think school-community partnerships are important. Relationships of trust are key!
- School as Community Hub**: I attended a community resource group in our community, and was always surprised that none of the businesses in the area were in attendance. Perhaps, this needs to be mandated at a municipal level, that these businesses should be involved with the community on a greater level
- Active Living Initiatives**: I have lots of ideas on how schools, businesses, community programs and even health services could all coordinate through one school building. However, it is difficult to share this vision as most of these agencies feel tight on budgets, staff and time as it is.
- Improve Communication**: The reciprocal use of City Facilities and Schools is an important tool in providing a high standard of educational, cultural and recreational opportunities for the residents of the city in a manner that reduces or eliminates the need to duplicate facilities thereby saving costs and making the most effective use of the limited economic resources of the Parties.
- Staff Coordinators**: School-community partnerships are a very valuable tool. Parents, students and the community can see that many sectors of the community value the movement to help people make healthier choices.
- Work collaboratively**: Having a list of interested businesses and or organizations that are interested in partnering with schools in a close proximity to our school
- Work collaboratively**: Community partners need to reach out more to schools
- Work collaboratively**: One of the key ingredients will be hiring coordinators to bring together multiple community partners, of which the school is one.
- Work collaboratively**: It seems that these relationships or partnerships need people to grow the relationships yet sometimes there are not enough people to do this work. The teachers need to focus on the job of teaching and administrators need to focus on their administrative tasks. Sometimes staff are asked to build these relationships with community, however there is rarely funding to complete these tasks or hire people to lead these initiatives.
- Work collaboratively**: More work needs to be done to bring school and community leaders together to talk about their realities. Each of these sectors is strapped for time. Many problems that I see taking place with children, youth and families may be attributed to "lack of community, sense of belonging, connections, supports". We need to work hard to facilitate opportunities for schools and communities to connect so they may be able to plan, goal set and visualize a sustainable future - together, initiatives.