Strategies to Achieve a Common Purpose

Tools for turning good ideas into good policies

The Policy Exchange
Institute for Educational Leadership

STRATEGIES TO ACHIEVE A COMMON PURPOSE

Tools for Turning Good Ideas Into Good Policies

Special Report #12

by

Lisbeth Schorr

Kathleen Sylvester

&

Margaret Dunkle

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1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036.
Telephone: (202) 822-8405. Fax: (202) 872-4050. E-mail: iel@iel.org
Copies may be downloaded from the Internet at http://www.policyexchange.iel.org.

CONTENTS

See the center spread of this publication for a pull-out poster: "The Policy Tool Box at a Glance."

INTRODUCTION

Margaret Dunkle

It is not easy to turn good ideas into good policies. This is especially true for issues affecting children and families, where cause and effect are often both complex and separated by decades. The blunt tools policymakers use — channeling funding streams, specifying eligibility criteria, defining which services and benefits get support, and the like — are far *less* nuanced and far *more* contentious than general principles with no price tags attached.

Recognizing this, the IEL Policy Exchange held a February 1998 seminar, *Achieving a Common Purpose in Early Childhood*, that began by laying out broad strategies to improve social policies. But this seminar did not stop there. It went on to tutor an already sophisticated audience about specific tools they could use to implement these policies. The seminar concluded by providing participants with a hands-on opportunity to apply these strategies and tools to an important and timely issue — early childhood development.[1]

This publication is designed to share this powerful learning experience with a broader audience.[2] First, Lisbeth Schorr, a well-known public policy commentator, outlines seven broad strategies she believes are essential to moving to the next stage — sustaining and "scaling up" from small successes. These strategies are based on Schorr's thoughtful 1997 book *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods*

[1]See Appendix A for the agenda from the February 6, 1998, Policy Exchange seminar *Achieving a Common Purpose in Early Childhood.*

[2]This report does not include the excellent overview of pending federal child-care legislation that John Sciamanna of the American Public Welfare Association gave at the 1998 Policy Exchange seminar, since Congress no longer is considering these proposals.

to Rebuild America,[3] in which she argues that our educational, welfare and family support systems have failed to improve the life prospects of disadvantaged children and families.

Next, Kathleen Sylvester, director of the Social Policy Action Network, discusses specific ways to implement these strategies in the real world of policies, programs and politics. Her practical tool box of ideas gives real-life examples of "what you can do on Monday" to translate inspiring ideas into programs and policies that produce the results you want.

Finally, I describe the process we used to help seminar participants move from the abstract to the concrete — that is, to use Schorr's strategies and Sylvester's tools to design effective early childhood programs and policies. This small-group process, which challenged even the most savvy participants, is not unique to early childhood programs — it can be used to help policymakers craft more sensible solutions to other social issues as well.

As you will see in the following pages, this report is aimed at the people who make and influence policies for children and families. In fact, seminar participants included congressional staff, officials from several federal agencies, foundation program officers, representatives of associations and advocacy groups, and state and local policymakers and practitioners.[4]

Margaret Dunkle is director of the IEL Policy Exchange, which conducted the February 1998 seminar that provided the material for this report. She may be contacted at: IEL Policy Exchange, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 822-8405, ext. 104. E-mail: dunklem@iel.org.

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[3] See Appendix C for a synopsis of *Common Purpose* and ordering information.

[4] See Appendix B for a list of seminar participants.

Strategies That Make a Difference

Lisbeth Schorr

I am particularly delighted to be here and to have a chance to talk to people who can do so much to change the rules and the conditions that determine how we go about improving the life trajectories of disadvantaged children.

On the basis of my work of the last 15 years, I can tell you it is possible to overcome the barriers that have kept us from succeeding in our efforts to combat our toughest social problems — problems such as high rates of school failure, single parenthood, child abuse, youth violence and poverty.

The good news is that these problems can be solved. The bad news — or at least the complicating news — is that if it's to be done on a scale large enough to matter, it can't be accomplished overnight and will require fundamental departures from the way we've always done things. It will require not only that we think anew, but also that we act anew. It will require that we do more than just add to what we've done before. We actually will have to stop doing things that are second nature to us and start doing things that will feel strange and unfamiliar.

Understanding the Context

Among the outmoded instruments of social change that we have to replace are the "vending machine" and the demonstration project. The vending-machine approach to social change, says former U.S. Secretary of Health, Education and Welfare John Gardner, responds to problems by "inserting a coin that delivers a law that is expected to solve the problem."

Joseph Califano, White House domestic policy advisor under President [Lyndon] Johnson, described the heyday of vending-machine social policy this way: "We had a law for everything. Fire safety. Water safety. Pesticide control for the farm. Rat control for the ghetto. Bail reform. Juvenile delinquency. Safe streets. Tire safety. Age discrimination. Fair housing. Corporate takeovers. International monetary reform. Sea grant colleges."

As Califano recalls, "When we discovered that poor students needed a good lunch, we enacted the school lunch program. When we later found out that breakfast helped them learn better, we whipped up a law for school breakfasts. When a pipeline exploded, we proposed the Gas Pipeline Safety Act. When my son, Joe, swallowed a bottle of aspirin, President Johnson sent Congress the Child Safety Act."

Categorical Programs: Vending Machines That May Not Deliver

In the optimism of the time, everybody assumed that a coordinated system would somehow materialize. If there were signs that no such coordinated system was emerging, that was less important than the fact that categorical funding suited legislators and philanthropists who were eager to attach visible victories to their names. They were eager to take political credit for defining a new problem and a new program to solve it — even though funding might be only at token levels. A Nixon administration official called categorical grant programs "the porkiest of the pork" because they delivered identifiable program benefits to narrowly drawn constituencies for which legislators could take credit.

Modest and incremental improvements made by adding more categories — whether or not they fit with what was already there — became particularly attractive as the chances for new universal programs and major new spending dimmed in the 1970s and 1980s and virtually ended in the 1990s.

That simply passing a law no longer can be considered the best way to solve a problem doesn't mean that lawmaking should go out of fashion. It does suggest a more thoughtful approach to making laws. And, as John Barth of the National Education Goals Panel puts it, it does mean "a shift from mandating and regulating to facilitating." I also would add "listening" to Barth's list. It means recognizing that policymakers, whether in Washington or in state capitals, will accomplish

more when they are willing to listen to how communities perceive both problems and solutions and when they listen to how their law-making affects what actually happens on the front lines.

Demonstration Projects: Too Often a Mask for Social Disinvestment

The second example of the old and familiar that we have to replace is our reliance on demonstration projects and pilot programs as a way of bringing about large-scale change. There was a time when it generally was assumed that successful programs contained the seeds of their own replication. Demonstrations were funded for many years by foundations and with public funds because everybody believed that promising models would spread automatically.

After all, the Ford Foundation's Gray Areas Program became the basis for the federal Office of Economic Opportunity's Community Action Agencies in 1964; the Community Mental Health Act of 1964 incorporated foundation-funded experiments in community mental health; and the early childhood programs that began with foundation support in the early 1960s provided the impetus and justification for incorporating Head Start into the War on Poverty.

Initially, the evidence that this comfortable arrangement no longer was working was widely ignored. Pilot programs simply ended when the demonstration funds ran out. Beginning in the mid-1970s, the public money for "taking to scale" what had been learned from successful demonstrations dried up. Both foundations and government agencies adopted the language of demonstration and pilot project. These labels masked their disinvestment in social programs and justified funding for programs so small in scope that they couldn't be expected to have any effect.

An End to the Era of Wishful Thinking

It wasn't until very recently that many people began to see how profoundly our efforts to improve the circumstances of disadvantaged children and families had been dominated by wishful thinking instead of by hardheaded analysis. By the mid-1990s, several pieces of evidence jolted people in the social policy world into taking a new, hard look at what we had been doing.

OUR EFFORTS TO IMPROVE THE CIRCUMSTANCES OF DISADVANTAGED CHILDREN AND FAMILIES HAD BEEN DOMINATED BY WISHFUL THINKING INSTEAD OF BY HARDHEADED ANALYSIS.

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First, the public was disenchanted with traditional responses to social problems and did not trust the government — especially the federal government — to solve the problem. In 1996, this disenchantment led to the most far-reaching rollback of federal responsibility for poor families in the nation's history, when the federal government shifted the responsibility for the welfare system to the states.

Next, most of the indicators of well-being were getting worse. More and more young people were coming into adulthood unprepared for productive work, engaged citizenship and responsible parenting.

And finally, interventions that were promising to turn around these high rates of rotten outcomes — the seemingly successful programs — weren't being spread and replicated. The ones that worked disappeared or were diluted into ineffectiveness at much the same rate as those that didn't work. Most of the successful programs I reported on in 1988 in my first book, *Within Our Reach*, were either no longer in existence or not being built upon just five years after the book came out. These developments caused many funders, policymakers, service providers and community activists to question the way we had been doing things and to be more open to new answers.

My work of the last several years, which I report on in *Common Purpose*, is an effort to take a fresh, hard look at what is and isn't working in efforts to sustain successful programs and to reach more people.

President Clinton has called the challenge of implementing large-scale social change "our enduring problem in American public life." The day before his first inauguration in 1993, he said that his number one disappointment as Arkansas governor had been that it was so hard to "take something that works to the next level and figure out a way to make the exception the rule."

What It Takes: Breaking the Rules

After several years of traveling the country, looking at both successes and failures, I am convinced that the reason we haven't been able to build upon success on any significant scale is that we have ignored the mismatch between the attributes of effective programs and the gravitational pull of prevailing systems. The attributes of effective programs

are undermined by their systems' surroundings, especially when the programs attempt to expand to reach large numbers.

Practitioners know that effective programs are characterized by flexibility, comprehensiveness, responsiveness, front-line discretion, high standards of quality and management, a family and neighborhood focus, community rootedness, a clear mission, and respectful and trusting relationships. Those practitioners' insights now are supported by theory, a convergent body of research and front-line experience in many different disciplines.

I was recently in Charlotte, N.C., talking about the attributes of effective programs. A short time later, I received a letter from the director of a community health center in Charlotte. She wrote that the attributes of effective programs I had described reflected precisely the daily work of the community health center staff — and were precisely the opposite of the mandates placed on the health center by the hospital under whose auspices the center operated.

This is the stuff that people on the front lines know works, the stuff they know is important and the stuff that many fight to sustain amid pressures designed to move them in exactly the opposite direction. Marc Tucker of the National Center on Education and the Economy says this: "When you find an individual school that works, it's almost always because it's running against the grain. You find a teacher or a principal who really doesn't give a damn about the system. They are willing to ignore or subvert every rule in the book in order to get the job done for the kids."

You can hear the same thing from child-protection workers, staffs of job-training programs and everyone else on the front lines. They feel that when they succeed, it is because they are able to beat the system by breaking the rules.

This leads to the question of whether we have the right rules. Should we always have to count on wizards — some combination of Mother Teresa, Machiavelli and a certified public accountant — who are forever trying to beat the odds against the survival of effective interventions? Shouldn't we be thinking more about changing the odds so that effective programs can scale up, spread and be sustained? Shouldn't we be thinking about how to do that without being destroyed or diluted

by the red tape, rigid bureaucracies and financing formulas that undermine the very attributes of success?

In *Common Purpose*, I collected evidence that this could indeed be done. It has been done, somewhere, by officials at every level of government, by nonprofit agencies and by new public-private partnerships. And whether you looked at schools or family support or welfare-to-work or child protection or early childhood, the successes that occurred at scale seemed to incorporate a handful of common strategies. Of these strategies, I have tried to select those that seem most important for you to understand — whether you are a rule maker, an opinion maker or someone in charge of effective implementation.

Seven Strategies for Successful Sustainability, Scale-Up and Replication

Strategy #1: Combine replication with flexibility.

Don't try to clone. Don't expect a single model, whether designed in Washington, D.C., or in state capitals, to be effective everywhere. Identify and replicate the essence of a successful intervention while adapting many of its components to a new setting. Success in spreading what works requires two seemingly contradictory approaches: identifying and replicating the essence of a successful intervention while simultaneously adapting many of its components to a new setting, with its particular — and perhaps unique — assets and needs.

In complicated interactions between human beings that involve teaching and learning, growth and development, pain and suffering, life and death, and isolation and connectedness, you cannot simply clone good models as though they were McDonald's hamburgers. When local people set out to replicate a promising intervention, they usually find they have to adapt it to make it work and to make it their own. Successful replication means using intelligence, experience and wisdom to differentiate between the essence of an intervention that can be defined and disseminated centrally and those parts that must be adapted to fit local circumstances.

All the successful replicators I found have rejected the top-down, one-size-fits-all, cookie-cutter models of replication. Their successes suggest

that parts of wheels do have to be reinvented, but also that time, money and energy can be saved when outsiders provide local entrepreneurs with the formula for calculating the circumference of the wheel and with information about the materials for making sturdy spokes. The local wheels that work smoothly typically blend imported principles together with local construction.

In the early childhood domain, I would suggest four essentials to keep in mind. First, poor-quality care damages young children — and we know how to define quality care. Second, caregiver turnover damages children, because to a toddler "turnover" equals loss. Third, engaging parents is essential. And finally, developmentally oriented child care and education must be accompanied by an array of health, mental health and social services and supports — particularly for disadvantaged children.

Strategy #2: Create a new balance between regulation and accountability.

Recognize that the way programs are funded, regulated and held accountable can support or undermine the attributes of effectiveness. Recognize that it is necessary to create a new balance between regulation and accountability. When models that accomplish wonders in the hothouse emerge into the real world, they generally wither because they are forced to operate in systems that undermine the very attributes that led to their hothouse success.

With few exceptions, successful initiatives have flourished only outside or at the margins of public systems. They often operate under some sort of protective bubble created by foundation funding, by a powerful political figure, by a leader who is a wizard or by promises that they will be limited in scale and time. Or, as in the case of Head Start, the bubble is created by setting up a parallel federal-local structure as part of the unprecedented and

SEVEN STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESSFUL SUSTAINABILITY, SCALE-UP AND REPLICATION

1. Combine replication with flexibility.
2. Create a new balance between regulation and accountability.
3. Make use of outside intermediaries.
4. Establish new partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations.
5. Take a longer view of change. Target interventions toward two generations.
6. Combine what works to target defined neighborhoods.
7. Build a constantly evolving knowledge base about what works and what is promising.

WE MUST LEARN NOT TO BE SO EAGER TO MAKE IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR PUBLIC SERVANTS TO DO SOMETHING *WRONG* THAT WE MAKE IT VIRTUALLY IMPOSSIBLE FOR THEM TO DO ANYTHING *RIGHT*.

short-lived War on Poverty. This is the reality that explains why Head Start people are so leery about collaborating with other programs in child care and early education. Head Start people know how the attributes of flexibility, comprehensiveness, responsiveness, front-line discretion and a family focus are central to their success. They fear losing their souls in the process of becoming parts of larger systems.

But why should we be so stuck in our efforts to move from the model to the mainstream? What has to happen to preserve the attributes of success beyond the protective bubble? The evidence of success that I have collected makes clear that the environments in which effective interventions can thrive do not just happen but must be deliberately created. Their shape must be determined by local experience. But those who fund the initiatives and hold them accountable decide which rules must be observed and which can be bent or changed, how much can be put together, and how much will remain fragmented. These funders and rule makers have the power to shape the environments in which local people will succeed or fail and in which magnificent pilot programs will be sustained and spread or be diluted or dismembered.

And let no one be lulled into thinking that superficial fixes such as "case management" or "one-stop shopping" are all that is needed. Case managers trying to help families gain access to fragmented services rendered by large bureaucracies find their efforts inordinately time consuming and energy depleting. And co-location does not make services integrated, appropriate or responsive.

The front-line flexibility and responsiveness that is so essential to effectiveness requires a new balance between regulation and accountability. A new focus on results, rather than on compliance with a maze of rules, makes it possible to tame bureaucracies in ways that preserve essential protections against corruption and poor quality. At the same time, it permits the autonomy, flexibility and variation at the front lines that are the hallmarks of successful local programs.

This is not a matter of throwing out all the rules — especially in the child-care arena, where we probably have too few rules rather than too many. It is instead a matter of reappraisal. We must learn not to be so eager to make it impossible for public servants to do something *wrong* that we make it virtually impossible for them to do anything *right*.

But this reappraisal must be attuned to front-line experience: It must sort out the rules that are important from those that are not. Florida's Healthy Start and Early Head Start programs found that home-visitor effectiveness depended more on the personal characteristics of the visitors — including their listening skills, empathy and sensitivity to clues from family members — than on their educational backgrounds. But Florida also found that using home visitors who did not have extensive professional training worked effectively only if the visitors' supervision was ongoing, intensive and supplemented by routine professional consultation.

Strategy #3: Make use of outside intermediaries.

Successful scale-up rarely occurs without the support of outside intermediaries. Almost uniformly, the successful initiatives that I studied received crucial help in developing and sustaining reform from some form of intermediary organization that offered expertise, legitimization, clout and outside support for national, state and local networking and peer-to-peer dialogue.

The National Committee to Prevent Child Abuse (NCPCA) went beyond identifying the Hawaii home-visiting program as a useful model from which to scale up and obtained funding to disseminate the idea. The NCPCA also established an intermediary to set and maintain quality standards and train personnel for local home-visiting programs in 20 states.

The stories in my book show that every one of the systems and institutions on which major scale-up efforts have tried to gain a foothold contain features "that force reformers back toward the status quo and eventually exhaust them." Intermediary organizations and the networks of reformers supported by intermediaries strengthen local reformers in countering those pressures.

Strategy #4: Establish new partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations.

Developing, operating and sustaining effective interventions typically involves establishing new partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations. There is no way that a single institution or agency can provide all of a community's children with access to high-quality early childhood programs and to the health, mental health and other vital services that low-income children need, while also involving and engaging parents. That requires partnerships.

In addition, partnerships often are essential because prevailing arrangements are too far removed — physically, psychologically and administratively — from the communities they serve. In child welfare, for example, agencies increasingly are trying to establish partnerships with families and neighborhoods to anchor help for troubled families right where families live by involving churches, neighborhood groups and social workers who come from the same ZIP code. Partnerships increase the chances that neighbors will help neighbors, be it with a casserole, with a crib or as a babysitter. They can help families feel less isolated in their child rearing, respond to a family's self-defined need for help, and bridge the gulf of mistrust between public agencies and the community.

Because the new partnerships bring mainstream funding to community-based agencies, they require significant administrative and fiscal changes in entrenched bureaucratic practices, ranging from how money and resources are allocated to how accountants and auditors monitor community organizations.

Strategy #5: Take a longer view of change. Target interventions toward two generations.

Funders and developers of the most effective interventions take a longer view of change, often targeting their interventions toward at least two generations. Important outcomes do not happen overnight. The most frequently cited lesson from major current reform efforts is that they take so much more time than expected — both to launch the initiative and to reach the point of showing an impact on real-world outcomes.

A long-term view of change also means a two-generation focus, recognizing that strong families are the key to healthy children and that often parents must be nurtured so they can nurture their children. A long-term view requires that the prospects of children not be sacrificed to short-term concerns with moving their parents into the workplace.

A LONG-TERM VIEW OF CHANGE MEANS A TWO-GENERATION FOCUS, RECOGNIZING THAT STRONG FAMILIES ARE THE KEY TO HEALTHY CHILDREN.

When you superimpose the findings of the new research on early brain development on the nation's new welfare policies, our past unsystematic, laissez-faire, freelance approaches to supporting healthy growth in the early years become untenable. It is untenable for government to decree that mothers must leave their babies in the care of others without being able to assure that these babies' prospects at school and in life will not be damaged in the process. By focusing so heavily on getting low-income young mothers into the workforce, we have become so shortsighted that we forget that their children's day-care experiences could jeopardize their futures and their chances to become self-sufficient.

But here, too, we are finding oases of hope. A number of two-generation programs are combining efforts to help low-income parents achieve economic self-sufficiency with efforts to help their children get a good start in life. For example, Avance, an organization now operating programs in more than 50 Texas sites, teaches parents not only that they can help their children learn from the moment they are born, but also how to help them learn. Through weekly home visits, parenting workshops and family support centers, parents who have felt overwhelmed gain control of their lives and radically change their own and their children's prospects. Avance helps parents complete their formal education and improve their English, and it trains and places them into jobs by working with local businesses. Avance also hires participants to work in the program, which includes on-site nurseries and top-notch early childhood programs.

A model with strikingly similar purposes, but operating under entirely different auspices, was developed by Edward F. Zigler, eminent Yale University psychologist and one of the founders of Head Start. His Schools of the 21st Century program, supported by the Yale University Bush Center as intermediary, makes neighborhood public schools the sites of full-day, high-quality child care for three-, four- and five-year-olds and the hub of a network of services for children under three and their families. These programs also include home visiting and supports for

family day-care providers. Child care also is available before and after school and during vacations for children up to age 12. A sliding fee schedule makes it possible to serve all children, regardless of income.

Early childhood initiatives like these show how much can be accomplished during this period of unmatched opportunity — and vulnerability — and show that we need not sacrifice the next generation in our efforts to bring their parents into self-sufficiency.

Strategy #6: Combine what works to target defined neighborhoods.

The sixth element of successful scale-up involves combining what works to target defined neighborhoods. As community-based initiatives increasingly recognize the limits of a single strategy, they become part of or link up with other efforts. These other efforts may include child development and family support, school and service reform, community building, public safety, and economic development. And they operate with enough intensity and scope to create the synergy that strengthens families and neighborhoods.

A dramatic story illustrating this comprehensive approach comes out of Boston. As most of you know, Boston has had only one single gun-related youth homicide in the last two and a half years. *The Boston Globe* reports that "the sound of gunfire is no longer routine and teenagers have stopped dying." There seems to be general agreement about the interventions that brought about this result. In the worst-hit neighborhoods, everyone worked together, first to understand much more precisely what was going on and then to apply strategically everything that was known to work in the targeted neighborhoods. Preachers, teachers, police, probation officers, youth workers and parents organized to cut juvenile violence by reclaiming parks and sidewalks, tutoring at-risk kids, promoting local economic development, strengthening families and sharing information to resurrect "the civil life of their jobless, drug- and crime-infested neighborhoods."

Howard Snyder, research director of the National Center for Juvenile Justice in Pittsburgh, says, "What they have accepted up there, which a lot of cities have not yet accepted, is that there is not one magic bullet that will stop juvenile crime."

Successful efforts to bring communities back to life in the inner city may not act in every domain all at once, but they use a comprehensive lens to look at the world and put together enough of what works to restore hope in depleted inner-city neighborhoods. But the obstacles they must overcome are formidable. I hardly need to tell this crowd that it is very hard, no matter at what level you are operating, to address cross-cutting issues that involve more than a single committee, program or department because of the fragmented nature of decision-making in government, and even in foundations. But it is happening.

It is happening in the Sandtown neighborhood of Baltimore, Md. It is happening in the South Bronx. It is happening in Savannah, Ga., where the Youth Futures Authority began as an effort to integrate services. Then its leaders became convinced that "physical, economic, social and human capital strategies had to be integrated" as part of comprehensive community building with the residents of a defined neighborhood.

These initiatives have gone beyond sterile debates about choosing between bottom-up and top-down approaches. Depleted inner-city neighborhoods cannot turn themselves around without very substantial help from outside. But neither can outsiders impose solutions. Effective neighborhood transformation requires that outsiders draw on information, expertise and wisdom that can come only from the neighborhood itself and that community-based organizations be able to draw on funding, expertise and influence from outside.

Strategy #7: Build a constantly evolving knowledge base about what works and what is promising.

This brings me to my last point: the need to build a knowledge base about what works and what is promising. This strategy is one level above the specifics of any one piece of legislation but surely will determine our capacity to act effectively in the future. Ultimately, progress depends on a robust knowledge base that can inform midcourse corrections and guide public investments.

We have paid a high price for our past reliance on the experimental method and random assignment as the sole source of credible knowledge. Because we have sought certainty, we have learned primarily about the narrowly defined, circumscribed, often trivial interventions

BECAUSE WE HAVE SOUGHT CERTAINTY, WE HAVE LEARNED PRIMARILY ABOUT THE NARROWLY DEFINED, CIRCUMSCRIBED, OFTEN TRIVIAL INTERVENTIONS.

that can be assessed by traditional methods. But we have very little information about the promising interventions that are complex and not standardized from one site to another. Much more attention now must go to gathering and analyzing the information that would enable funders, policymakers and program people to draw on a reliable body of accumulated knowledge about the most promising practices and interventions and about the most probable connections among interventions and outcomes.

That is why I believe that the time has come for more support — probably at the national level, perhaps through public-private partnerships — for mapping some of the links along the chains that connect interventions and interim benchmarks with long-term outcomes by systematically putting together the knowledge that is already out there, from both research and experience.

Final Thoughts

Let me leave you with this thought: There is evidence that we can do better than we are now doing in spreading what works, taming bureaucracies, crafting new partnerships, developing and supporting new intermediaries, targeting two generations, and putting together a critical mass of what works to transform entire neighborhoods. All over the country, we are seeing evidence of success as these new social strategies are applied.

The time may be ripe. People could choose to be audacious and take risks, to become part of making the large-scale changes that may not have the visibility of enacting a new piece of legislation but that may be as important as new laws. By changing the culture of our major systems, we can begin to restore confidence in our public institutions and enable local communities to act effectively to alter life trajectories among those most at risk — and thereby ensure that all of our children can grow up with a realistic expectation that they can participate in the American dream.

Lisbeth Schorr, author of Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Communities to Rebuild America, *is director of the Harvard University Project on Effective Interventions. Through her many experi-*

ences with social policy and human service programs and leadership with national efforts on behalf of children and youth, she has become an authority on "what works" to improve the future of disadvantaged children, their families and their communities. She also has written Within Our Reach: Breaking the Cycle of Disadvantage. *Lisbeth Schorr may be contacted at: 3113 Woodley Road, NW, Washington, DC 20008. Telephone: (202) 462-3071. E-mail: hpoei@erols.com.*

CRAFTING A POLICY TOOL BOX

Kathleen Sylvester

Lisbeth Schorr has just delivered the good news that successful social programs can indeed survive, grow and even be replicated. But what can administrators and legislative bodies do to create the conditions under which that can happen? In other words, now that you've been inspired by these insights, what can you do on Monday?

Tools for Implementing Schorr's Strategies

Over the past few months, I've interviewed many of the social policy entrepreneurs cited in *Common Purpose.* And I asked them an entirely different set of questions than Lisbeth Schorr asked. Instead of asking them *what* they did, I asked them *how* they did it. Here are some of their answers — tools for building effective policies and programs for children and families.

Tools for Strategy #1: Combine replication with flexibility.

So how do we encourage this delicate balance? Two ideas come to mind. First, we may want to consider requiring states or communities to distribute funding as flexible contracts, not as open-ended block grants. Don't "round up the usual suspects" and give them the money unconditionally. Find the people most likely to do the best job, specify what you want and let them do their best to produce worthwhile outcomes.

See the center spread of this publication for a pull-out poster:"The Policy Tool Box at a Glance."

When Los Angeles County decided to use community-based organizations to deliver child-welfare services, the county gave those organizations contracts, not grants. Peter Digre, the head of the county's Department of Children and Family Services, said it was critical to specify exactly what services community-based organizations were expected to deliver. They had to be able to provide 23 specific kinds of services to families. This included providing highly skilled, 24-hour-per-day case workers who could "see all of the children all of the time."

When Public/Private Ventures (P/PV) began its work with communities trying to improve outcomes for at-risk young people, it didn't give them grants to sit around and do lots of planning and thinking about "what works." P/PV gave them a list of strategies, such as mentoring and after-school programs, that have produced good results. Then P/PV let them choose among those strategies, according to what suited their communities. Now P/PV is giving them technical assistance to implement the strategies effectively.

In Missouri, the Caring Communities funds are flexible, but they are not block grants. Communities must make a case for everything they do, and their proposals must relate to the six goals:

- parents who are working;
- children who are safe in their families and families that are safe in their communities;
- children who are healthy;
- children who are ready to learn;
- children who are succeeding in school; and
- children who are ready to enter the workforce as productive citizens.

Proposals that don't relate to the goals will not get funded. Projects that don't produce results may not get funded again in the future. The state requires communities to monitor outcomes at all times. The flexibility comes in what communities emphasize when choosing to implement the goals. While some communities may need to improve high school graduation rates, others may not.

Missouri's human services director Gary Stangler tells how he turned down a community's plan to buy a dental chair for a school so that the school could take advantage of the volunteer services of a local dentist. Stangler told the community that a dental chair didn't relate directly

to the goal of "better educational outcomes." So the community found another source of money. Two years later, the community presented him with a report showing higher self-esteem and higher school achievement among the students whose teeth had been fixed. Their project, as it turned out, was related to one of the six goals.

A second way to help ensure that the essential elements of good approaches are included in replication efforts is to be very clear about what those elements are. When Robert Slavin of Johns Hopkins University talks about how his Success For All program improves the reading skills of children in the early grades, he makes it very clear that the program cannot work if it does not include these three elements:

- one-on-one tutoring by trained, certified professionals in small classes;
- frequent assessments, perhaps as frequent as every eight weeks; and
- some version of a Family Support Team to foster parent involvement.

Slavin also requires that at least 80 percent of the professional staff of a school commit to the Success For All program and that schools commit to Success For All for at least three years. While some elements of the approach are optional, these three elements are not.

Tools for Strategy #2: Create a new balance between regulation and accountability.

As I see it, there are two ways to look at the fundamental purposes of regulation and accountability. We can choose to see them as tools for defining and ensuring minimal standards, or we can choose to see them as tools for encouraging and promoting high standards.

Why not use federal funds to create bonuses for communities that increase the number of highly trained and certified child-care providers or that reach out to home-based providers? For example, instead of offering federal funding for programs such as Head Start unconditionally, the federal government could condition grants (or offer bonuses) to states and communities that create approaches for integrating the new insights about brain development into their Head Start programs — and that produce measurable results.

I ENCOURAGE APPROACHES THAT PROMOTE COMMON-SENSE FLEXIBILITY.

I also would encourage approaches that promote common-sense flexibility. Here's what I mean. One of the Community Development Corporations (CDC) in the South Bronx determined that an important community priority was finding a local site for a primary health-care practice, and the only logical site was in a senior citizen residence run by the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD). But HUD regulations prohibited using the senior citizen residence as the site because the health-care practice would be run by a for-profit provider. Luckily, in that case, the director of the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project, the intermediary working with the CDCs in the South Bronx, was Anita Miller, who had enough political clout to get an appointment with the HUD secretary to negotiate an exception. But every exception shouldn't require a high-powered "lobbyist."

Perhaps government agencies should change their regulations to grant automatic exceptions to some of the housing regulations when they are endorsed by community-based organizations with broad support. Or perhaps they should create "Barrier Buster Boards" made up of people empowered to grant common-sense exemptions to recurring barriers.

Another common-sense approach might be requiring up-front consultation with the people who will have to live by the rules. When Congress considered legislation to fund group homes for teenaged mothers, the bill's sponsors, Sens. Kent Conrad of North Dakota and Joseph Lieberman of Connecticut, asked the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services to check with practitioners who run group homes to see if the legislation made sense.

Sure enough, the practitioners pointed out that Food Stamp recipients are not allowed to use their Food Stamps for food consumed in congregate living arrangements. The fix was clear, if not simple: Redraft the legislation to stipulate that no one living in a group home would become ineligible for any federal income-support program by virtue of their living arrangements. This kind of up-front consultation with the people who must live with the consequences of a legislative or administrative decision must become a regular part of the decisionmaking process.

Continued on page 23, after pull-out poster

Put this pull-out poster on your wall for a ready reference to tools you can use to implement Lisbeth Schorr's strategies in the real world of policies, programs and politics.

TOOLS FOR STRATEGY #1: Combine replication with flexibility.

- Require federal, state and local agencies to disburse funds to community-based organizations through a contracting process, not a grant process. Require that contracts specify outcomes.
- Disseminate information about the scope and depth of successful programs to ensure that replications remain true to concept.

TOOLS FOR STRATEGY #2: Create a new balance between regulation and accountability.

- Require or encourage establishment of "Barrier Buster Boards" at the federal, state and local levels.
- Require or encourage federal agencies to grant automatic exceptions to some regulations when those exceptions are endorsed by community-based organizations with broad support.
- Raise expectations for grantees. For example, offer bonuses to states and communities that develop models that integrate new knowledge about brain development into Head Start programs — and that produce measurable results.
- Reward measurable results. Create a bonus fund to reward states and communities that increase the number of highly trained early childhood caregivers. Create a fund that gives bonuses to child-care providers who complete training and certification. Create bonuses for states that upgrade the training or provide support to home-based child-care providers.
- Require state and community grantees to do quality assurance surveys.

TOOLS FOR STRATEGY #3: Make use of outside intermediaries.

- Fund intermediary organizations that can help develop good models; link communities to best practices; and provide training, monitoring, peer support and "competition."

TOOLS FOR STRATEGY #4: Establish new partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations.

- Require or encourage grantees to produce private-sector matching funds as a way to ensure that projects have local political clout.
- Require or encourage grantees to produce proof of in-kind involvement of local nonprofits.
- Require or encourage grantees to involve private-sector leaders as advisors or board members.
- Encourage cross-agency collaborations by allowing and funding the inclusion of professionals funded by one agency to work for another.

Box at a Glance

Exchange

Tools for Strategy #5: Take a longer view of change. Target interventions toward two generations.

- Require grantees to make reports to the public to ensure accountability and build public confidence.
- Encourage strategies that can provide some early and tangible results and create a centralized management information system to help track results.
- Consider creating intermediaries that are chartered by legislative bodies to provide political clout and survivability.

Tools for Strategy #6: Combine what works to target defined neighborhoods.

- Allow categorical funds to be combined at the community level.
- Encourage cross-agency collaborations by allowing and funding the inclusion of professionals funded by one agency to work for another, such as putting job specialists in Head Start programs.
- Set aside federal, state or local funds to create incentives for communities to adopt integrated approaches to community development and social service delivery.

Tools for Strategy #7: Build a constantly evolving knowledge base about what works and what is promising.

- Disseminate detailed information on the scope and intensity of services required by successful programs to ensure that replications have a chance to succeed.
- Require grantees to gather new data so that implementation strategies are based on new realities, not old presumptions.
- Take a percentage of the money from categorical programs, pool it and offer it to states trying to solve problems. For example, use the funding toward the creation of a single computerized system to track data.
- Provide technical assistance to states and communities by creating common units of measurement for comparative data collection.
- Encourage the use of alternative evaluation techniques such as time-use studies that provide information for midcourse corrections.

— *Kathleen Sylvester*

This poster is part of an IEL Policy Exchange report, Strategies to Achieve a Common Purpose: Tools for Turning Good Ideas Into Good Policies, *by Lisbeth Schorr, Kathleen Sylvester and Margaret Dunkle. Copies are available for $5 from the Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 822-8405.*

Institute for Educational Leadership
IEL Web site: www.iel.org
Policy Exchange Web site: www.policyexchange.iel.org

Legislators also should make sure that they do not penalize success. Under the old rules of Title I of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, schools that improved the skills of disadvantaged students actually *lost* funding. Under the new system, they do not. Perhaps it's time to begin routinely using funding formulas that allow effective programs to "reinvest" the money they save into new approaches.

Tools for Strategy #3: Make use of outside intermediaries.

What do intermediaries do? They do what the people on the front lines — the people who are solving day-to-day problems — do not have time to do. They pay attention to systems change.

Otis Johnson, the long-time director of the Savannah Youth Futures Authority, says it is possible to change the way an entire community deals with needy families and children with just three people:

- one person who manages the data and keeps meticulous track of the results;
- one person who functions as a networker to keep the politics and the communications among agencies running smoothly; and
- one person who looks at the big picture and pays attention to long-term goals and planning.

Intermediary organizations also develop good models; link communities to best practices; and provide training, monitoring, peer support and "competition." The Schools of the 21st Century program offers a good example. The Yale University Bush Center has created a growing network of experienced teachers and program coordinators who can help others. The Center often pairs experienced 21st Century School superintendents with superintendents who are in the planning stages of implementing the program and arranges for principals who are new to the program to visit principals in established sites.

The Center provides technical assistance upon request and helps schools deal with issues such as competition and turf, lack of support within the school building, and difficulty finding start-up funds. Key players in the school districts are required to attend a three-day training institute at Yale. The Center also collects comparative data to show schools how they are doing and to help arm them with

information for their communities. Finally, the existence of a national network creates a healthy climate of competition. Schools compete to produce good results, to offer creative add-ons and services to their programs, and to be named as Yale Bush Center national demonstration models.

In Missouri, the first intermediary of the Caring Communities was the Danforth Foundation, which provided the seed money that was essential to the Walbridge Caring Community, supporting the original staff and paying for conferences and meetings to link that staff to other groups and experts.

Missouri's Family Investment Trust now serves as the Caring Communities' intermediary. The Trust has a small core staff but brings in consultants for technical assistance and training. It also serves as an intermediary with state government on policy issues and puts out a variety of how-to guides and handbooks for communities. Another essential feature of the Trust is its peer network.

Intermediaries can provide political clout, too. Missouri Gov. Mel Carnahan did not use party affiliation as a test for the board membership on the Trust. He took it out of the political process and appointed a board made up of all "first-round draft picks," private-sector representatives who are the state's heavyweights. And because the Trust is a public/private entity, it creates a useful tension. The private actors are essential in keeping the public-sector folks "honest." No state department director wants to go to a meeting of the Trust unprepared. Though the accountability mechanism is informal, its presence is obvious.

Tools for Strategy #4: Establish new partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations.

How might government reach out to community-based organizations (CBOs)? One way is to consider what kinds of tasks might be better carried out by those CBOs and then give them the help they need to do it.

In Los Angeles, when community groups were charged with helping reform the child-welfare system through the use of community home visitors, the county made sure that the community groups got the sup-

port and training they needed on the administrative side. People who know how to work with families may not know how to fill out budget and accounting forms, according to Peter Digre, who heads the county's Department of Children and Family Services.

In Colorado, former governor Roy Romer fostered an interesting partnership between government and churches called Bright Beginnings. When a child is born, community volunteers visit the family to tell them about government and community resources available to help them keep their children healthy. But it's not just an information exchange — it's also a human exchange.

The short-term goal is more effective private use of public resources. The project's organizers want to increase the number of children getting quality health care — they want to make government work better. But the long-term goal is to focus on children as a way of reviving communities. People who are isolated from each other can rediscover a sense of neighborhood and kinship when they gather together to talk about the well-being of children. If the Colorado effort succeeds, we likely will see a self-sustaining grassroots movement of citizens who are advocates for children for many years to come.

THE SHORT-TERM GOAL IS MORE EFFECTIVE PRIVATE USE OF PUBLIC RESOURCES. ... THE LONG-TERM GOAL IS TO FOCUS ON CHILDREN AS A WAY OF REVIVING COMMUNITIES.

How could we foster more of such collaborations? Perhaps by requiring recipients of government contracts or grants to include community members on their boards. Perhaps by requiring them to show evidence of community support by stipulating that they raise a certain percentage of funding, or in-kind support, from the community. Perhaps by rewarding efforts that are generous with their own communities. Or perhaps we should reward those early childhood programs that don't limit their training to the teachers in their schools but that also provide training to home-based day-care providers.

Tools for Strategy #5: Take a longer view of change. Target interventions toward two generations.

This may be the toughest challenge on this whole list. How can government encourage a longer view of change in the world of politics, a world driven by short-term results? I can think of a few ways.

The first is to require public accountability. Accountability is not the enemy of programs that work. It protects them against faddishness. In

IT IS A POLITICAL WORLD AFTER ALL. SO IT'S BEST TO DESIGN A PROGRAM THAT OFFERS SOME EARLY INDICATORS OF SUCCESS.

Missouri, where Caring Communities initially were supported by the Danforth Foundation, the Foundation insisted on evaluations. At first, the state did not buy into the Caring Communities concept, but when the evaluations proved that the project had raised student achievement and increased parent and teacher involvement, legislators paid careful attention. There are now more than 80 Caring Communities in the state.

The second way is to tell the truth from the very start. Don't set false expectations. Project Match in Chicago helps welfare recipients get jobs. Toby Herr, who designed the program, once explained that she built long-term support for her program by telling the truth: that it's hard for women who have been on welfare to keep their first jobs. They aren't used to the world of work, and they may lose one, two or even three jobs before they learn to manage their lives well enough to stay employed. And that makes sense to most people when they think about it. So Toby Herr tells the truth, and the public supports her sensible, long-term approach.

But it is a political world after all. So it's best to design a program that offers some early indicators of success. Many early childhood programs don't fully reveal their results until a child reaches adolescence. While it's heartening that the participants of the Perry Preschool Program, which provides intensive enrichment for preschool-aged children, were doing well when they reached age 27, most programs need to produce results sooner than that. But aren't there enough early indicators that could tell the public that a program is on the right track? School readiness? Appropriate social skills? Good health?

Another strategy to consider is chartering the intermediary organizations that support innovative and promising approaches. In other words, make them election-proof. The Youth Futures Authority in Savannah, Ga., for example, was created as a quasi-public organization just so politicians couldn't refashion its agenda after every election, and so that government workers couldn't ignore it as a short-lived political creation of one mayor.

Tools for Strategy #6: Combine what works to target defined neighborhoods.

One way to combine approaches in neighborhoods is to create incentives with funding. In Missouri, for example, the state's joint budgeting approach creates the flexibility to let communities mingle Title I, child-care and Head Start funds to create all-day, year-round early education and child care. Government could take a step farther and offer bonuses to communities that use such approaches.

Another option is to encourage cross-agency collaborations by allowing — and funding — the inclusion of professionals funded by one agency to work for another. At the Comprehensive Community Revitalization Project (CCRP) in the South Bronx, leaders recognized that families couldn't become economically self-sufficient without day care. So CCRP worked to get a Head Start program. But CCRP also saw another sensible way to link child care and work. They used a successful model from Toby Herr's Project Match, which provides an employment specialist to work at the Head Start site to build relationships with Head Start mothers and help them find jobs.

Tools for Strategy #7: Build a constantly evolving knowledge base about what works and what is promising.

Government, especially the federal government, may have a very large role in building the knowledge base. And the first common-sense strategy government can use is to require grantees to gather new data so that implementation strategies are based on new realities, not old presumptions.

When Susan Kelly set out to redesign Michigan's child-welfare system, she began with a $5 million budget and 18 months to plan. She learned a lot about why the old system didn't work, but she also learned a lot more about the population it served. She discovered that most children were ending up in the foster-care system because of neglect, not abuse. To respond to this reality, Kelly designed a new service delivery strategy based on the premise that families who neglect their children can change. Consequently, the new system focuses on supporting families to nurture their children.

POLITICIANS OFTEN WANT TO SPREAD MONEY AROUND LIKE PEANUT BUTTER.

THAT DOESN'T ALWAYS MAKE SENSE.

The problem of teenage pregnancy raises the same issue. For years, we based our approaches to teen pregnancy reduction on the premise that teenaged girls were having sex with their high school classmates. In more recent times, we have learned that the majority of men who father teenaged girls' babies are not peers. The fathers typically are three to five years older — and usually they are not in school. This information has real policy implications. It means that we cannot address the problem effectively with school-based programs alone.

It is also crucial to use data analysis to ensure that money is targeted to areas most in need. Politicians often want to spread money around like peanut butter. That doesn't always make sense. When Los Angeles County reformed its child-welfare system, the analysis identified the communities with the most problems, and the money went first to those areas rather than being evenly distributed by political jurisdictions. Beverly Hills, Calif., where there were just two children in foster care, was targeted to get services last.

Government could improve data collection with another strategy: Take a percentage of the money from categorical programs, pool it and offer it to states trying to solve problems. For example, government could use the funding toward the creation of a single computerized system to track data.

One good example comes from the U.S. Department of Labor. The Labor Department has given grants to groups of state agencies to develop specific solutions to some of the issues that arise as states try to create "one-stop" agencies for employment and training services. State labor experts in Texas and Florida now are working together to develop a system that tracks outcomes for all people served by federal and state employment and training programs. They are trying to figure out how to track the employment and wage histories of students who graduate from public high schools and postsecondary institutions as well as federal or state programs like the Job Corps and welfare-to-work programs.

Texas and Florida have just completed a database and "workbook" that can be adapted and used by other states. Without federal funding, the two states would have created separate systems for their own use, and states without the resources to develop tracking systems would have been left behind.

Tools for Fresh Thinking

These are some of the specific "tools" that legislators can use to promote and nurture large-scale effectiveness in public programs for children and families. But I hope that in addition to encouraging you to try out some of the tools, the examples I've cited here also will prompt you to think differently about the role of government in social change.

Instead of asking yourself whether the federal government should use its funds to create more slots, improve training or provide tax credits for parents and businesses, ask yourself these questions:

- What steps could the federal government take to encourage replication of the very best programs?
- How could government use its regulatory and accountability mechanisms to encourage high standards?
- How could government create intermediary organizations to promote more effective and efficient approaches for helping children and families?
- How could government encourage — perhaps even require — partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations?
- How could government encourage communities to combine what works to target defined neighborhoods?
- What could government do to create the political will to support interventions that may take two generations to achieve real results?
- And finally, how could we build a useful knowledge base to help practitioners along the way?

Kathleen Sylvester is director of the Social Policy Action Network (SPAN), a nonprofit intermediary that promotes effective social policy by strengthening the linkages among four networks critical to the policy process: social service providers, policymakers, academics and researchers, and the news media. SPAN's agenda focuses on a broad range of policy issues including early childhood, community building and education reform. Kathleen Sylvester may be contacted at: Social Policy Action Network, 1725 K Street, NW, Suite 200, Washington, DC 20006. Telephone: (202) 293-1217, ext. 322. E-mail: ksylvester@edtrust.org.

Using Schorr's Strategies and Sylvester's Tools To Improve Early Childhood Policy

Margaret Dunkle

Let's face it: Translating good ideas into good practice is not easy. But it also is not impossible.

That is why the Policy Exchange seminar built on Lisbeth Schorr's strategies and Kathleen Sylvester's tools by asking participants to use what they had just learned to identify concrete ways to improve early childhood programs and policies. We tested a process to move from theory to practice, and we learned that the process produced both insight and frustration. We saw insight as participants came to better understand the pros and cons of the policy tools at their disposal. And we saw frustration as participants struggled to achieve subtle and precise goals using an arsenal of tools that is rarely either subtle or precise.

The eclectic collection of policymakers, administrators, advocates and thinkers participating in the seminar worked for more than an hour in five small groups.

- To focus the task, we began by predefining the goal the groups would work to reach.
- We then asked each group to identify which of Schorr's strategies they considered most important.
- And, last but not least, we challenged each group to outline a specific federal approach that used Schorr's strategies effectively to reach its goal.

Because this was an exercise in getting from a broad goal to implementation, and not an exercise in setting goals, the small groups began with a brief description of the goal that each group would work to achieve. (Of course, in the real world, agreeing on a common goal is often a major hurdle.)

We told each small group that its goal, or end result, was to ensure that our country's youngest children (through age 5) are healthy, nurtured and safe and that they develop to their fullest, mentally, physically, socially and emotionally. In concrete terms, we explained that this means, for example, that:

- the percentages of healthy birthweight babies (of at least 5.5 pounds); mothers who get good medical care early in pregnancy; pregnant women not using drugs, tobacco and alcohol; and children who are well nourished *go up;*
- the percentages of babies who die before their first birthday; children with untreated vision, hearing or other health problems; and children who suffer injuries *go down;*
- the percentages of children entering kindergarten who meet or exceed baseline developmental standards (i.e., cognitive, language/literacy, physical and social/emotional) and parents who have at least a high school education *go up;*
- the percentage of children who grow up in stable families with caring and competent adults with sufficient income and resources to lift the family above the federal poverty level *goes up;*
- the rates of teenage pregnancy, child abuse and neglect, and dependence on public assistance *go down;* and
- the percentages of children who spend long periods of time in foster care and families that spend more than a third of their income on housing *go down.*

Which Strategies Are Most Important for Early Childhood?

With this background, the five small groups in the seminar huddled to answer the question: *What are the two or three most important strategies for achieving a "common purpose" in early childhood?* That is: Which two or three strategies are most critical to ensuring that our country's youngest children are healthy, nurtured and safe and that they develop to their fullest, mentally, physically, socially and emotionally?
The result of this discussion was both reassuring and surprising. It was

reassuring that participants generally agreed that Schorr's strategies were sound and sensible. No one identified an important strategy that was missing from Schorr's list of seven. And no one suggested that any of Schorr's strategies was frivolous or just plain wrong.

At the same time, the rankings seminar participants gave to the seven strategies were unexpected. Research and evaluation ranked as number one. Four of the five groups said that Strategy #7 ("Build a constantly evolving knowledge base about what works and what is promising") was one of the most important strategies. In other words, this room full of policy experts was frustrated that they did not have the knowledge they needed to design programs and policies that would work! No other strategy drew as many votes.

THIS ROOM FULL OF POLICY EXPERTS WAS FRUSTRATED THAT THEY DID NOT HAVE THE KNOWLEDGE THEY NEEDED TO DESIGN PROGRAMS AND POLICIES THAT WOULD WORK!

Three of the five groups emphasized Strategy #5 ("Take a longer view of change. Target interventions toward two generations"). For one group, this strategy was the "overwhelming winner" since members of this group believed that *any* effort was doomed to failure if it did not focus on families and involve parents as well as children.

Three groups also mentioned Strategy #2 ("Create a new balance between regulation and accountability"). They felt it was vital to recognize that how systems fund, regulate and hold programs accountable can support or undermine the attributes of effectiveness.

Two groups chose Strategy #4 ("Establish new partnerships between formal systems and community-based organizations") as "most important." And two groups chose Strategy #1 ("Combine replication with flexibility"), saying that it was important to identify and replicate the essence of a successful intervention while adapting many of its components to new settings.

Strategy #3 ("Make use of outside intermediaries") and Strategy #6 ("Combine what works to target defined neighborhoods") were not chosen by any group as "most important." At the same time, the group discussion made clear that these strategies weren't *unimportant* — they just weren't top priorities.

What Should the Federal Government Do to Implement These Strategies?

Building on the consensus of which strategies were most important, we then asked each small group to pick one strategy and spell out: *What, specifically, should the federal government do — or not do — to implement Schorr's strategy and meet the goal of healthy, nurtured and safe young children who can develop to their fullest?*

To answer this question, participants used a worksheet that sorted through a messy tool box, tool by tool.[5] This worksheet (see p. 35) enumerated the nitty-gritty decisions that go into making policy:

- how to measure success;
- who is eligible;
- what services and benefits to fund;
- how much funding and in what form;
- who gets the money;
- how people actually apply for and receive benefits and services;
- how the program is administered and who administers it;
- how much coordination and red tape there is; and
- what legislative committees are responsible for the program.

Participants plunged into this discussion with enthusiasm and creativity, identifying a range of ideas, from blending funding among different programs to building public demand for policies that nurture the healthy development of young children.

We suspected correctly that seminar participants would not be able to complete the worksheet questions in the time allotted. In fact, watching the savvy seminar participants struggle to complete even part of the worksheet made painfully clear how difficult it is to tailor public policies that actually produce good results.

[5]The worksheet was adapted from *Asking the Right Questions: Eleven Questions to Ask of Every Program or Policy Affecting Children and Families*, by Margaret Dunkle, the IEL Policy Exchange.

Small-Group Worksheet

What, Specifically, Should the Federal Government Do — or Not Do — to Implement Lisbeth Schorr's Strategy for Early Childhood Programs and Policies?

1. To implement this strategy, keeping your eye on the goal/result you want to achieve: Which specific program(s) or policy(ies) should the federal government create or support?

2. Spell out just how these programs or policies would get you to your overall goal/result (above). How would you measure success?

On to the nitty gritty: Be sure your specifics to implement this strategy actually support your goal/result!

3. Who or what would be eligible for services and benefits? Who would receive priority? How many people would be affected?

4. What services and benefits would your program or policy provide?

5. What federal funding would there be? How much? In what form?

6. What state, local and other funding, if any, would there be? And where would the funds come from? Required matching funds? Voluntary contributions?

7. How would funds be distributed? How would funds flow, and using which formula or criteria? Who could apply for funding?

8. How would participants — that is, ultimate beneficiaries, customers or clients — actually apply for and receive benefits and services?

9. How would the program or policy be administered at the federal level? And, if there are state and local roles, how would it be administered at the state and local levels?

10. What requirements or incentives (such as waivers or joint reporting) would there be for more flexibility, coordination and partnerships and less red tape?

11. What congressional committees would be responsible for authorization, appropriation and oversight of the program or policy?

Adapted from *Asking the Right Questions: Eleven Questions to Ask of Every Program or Policy Affecting Children and Families*, by Margaret Dunkle, the IEL Policy Exchange.

In Conclusion

Despite — or perhaps because of — these frustrations, participants rated the seminar highly. They reported that it was powerful as well as useful to learn new strategies, augment their personal "tool boxes" and practice applying these tools to early childhood. Their main (and quite justified) complaint was that they did not have enough time to make a significant dent in the daunting tasks assigned to their small groups.

Looking to the future, the Policy Exchange hopes to use the process developed in this seminar to push the policy envelope on other issues important to children and families — identifying more effective ways to use the policy tools available to implement strategies that work for children, families and communities.

Please write, call or e-mail your comments about Lisbeth Schorr's strategies, Kathleen Sylvester's tools and the policy process outlined in this chapter to the IEL Policy Exchange. We especially encourage you to help us identify other issues that would benefit from this type of scrutiny and analysis. The IEL Policy Exchange may be contacted at: 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 822-8405. Fax: (202) 872-4050. E-mail: policyexchange@iel.org.

APPENDIX A

SEMINAR AGENDA
ACHIEVING A COMMON PURPOSE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

February 6, 1998

9:00 a.m. **Introduction and Overview**
Margaret Dunkle, Director of the IEL Policy Exchange

9:30 a.m. **Lessons and Strategies from *Common Purpose***
Lisbeth Schorr, Author of *Common Purpose: Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods to Rebuild America*

9:55 a.m. **Federal Strategies Concerning Early Childhood and Child Care — An Overview of the Approaches and the Bills**
John Sciamanna, American Public Welfare Association

10:10 a.m. **A "Policy Tool Kit" to Implement the Strategies in *Common Purpose***
Kathleen Sylvester, Social Policy Action Network

10:30 a.m. **Small Groups — Applying the Strategies of *Common Purpose* to Early Childhood**
What are the two or three most important strategies from *Common Purpose*? Why?
What should the federal government do — or not do — to implement these strategies and meet the larger early childhood goals?

11:30 a.m. **Reporting Out**
What strategies are most important?
What should the federal government do?

12:00 noon **End of Seminar**

APPENDIX B

SEMINAR PARTICIPANTS
ACHIEVING A COMMON PURPOSE IN EARLY CHILDHOOD

February 6, 1998

Chandini Bachman
Program Assistant
Governance Programs
Institute for Educational Leadership

Maggie Bailey
Program Associate
Program for Community Problem Solving

Kimberly Barnes-O'Connor
Children's Policy Director
Committee on Labor and Human Resources
U.S. Senate

Linda Barnett
Budget Analyst
Committee on the Budget
U.S. House of Representatives

Diane Bernstein
President
D.C. Action for Children Today

Cassie Statuto Bevan
Professional Staff Member
Subcommittee on Human Resources
Committee on Ways and Means
U.S. House of Representatives

Mary Bissell
Heinz Senate Fellow
Office of Sen. Rockefeller

Martin Blank
Director
Together We Can Initiative
Institute for Educational Leadership

Amanda Braun
Vice President
Public Education Fund Network

Vee Burke
Specialist in Income Maintenance
Income Maintenance Section
Education and Public Welfare Division
Congressional Research Service
Library of Congress

Delvin Burton
Program Associate
EZ/EC Foundation Consortium

Suzanne Cambria
Public Policy Analyst
D.C. Action for Children Today

Deborah Cohen
Writer and Consultant

Faye Drummond
Minority Senior Health Counsellor
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate

Barbara Dyer
Partner
Public's Work

Sue Fialkoff
Project Associate
Organizational and Professional Development
American Public Welfare Association

Evelyn Ganzglass
Director
Employment and Social Services Policy Study
National Governors' Association

Millie Garcia
Director
Hispanic Policy Development Project

Lynne Glassman
Senior Associate Executive Director
American Association of School Administrators

James Harrell
Deputy Commissioner
Administration on Children, Youth and Families
Administration for Children and Families
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Nancy Hatamiya
Chief of Staff
President's Crime Prevention Council
Executive Office of the President

Sarah Ingersoll
Special Assistant to the Administrator
Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention
Office of Justice Programs
U.S. Department of Justice

Julie Isaacs
Senior Research Analyst
Pelavin Research Associates

April Kaplan
Research Associate
Welfare Information Network

Dane Linn
Program Director
Center for Best Practices
Education Policy Studies Division
National Governors' Association

Alan Lopatin
President
Ledge Counsel, Inc.

John Love
Senior Fellow
Mathematica Policy Research

Marie Mayor
Title I Coordinator
Baltimore County Office for Children and Families

Phyllis McClure
Independent Consultant

Amanda Sadoma McMahon
Project Manager
Workforce Development — Head Start
National Alliance of Business

Ed Morawetz
Supervisor
Child and Adult Care Food Program
Child Nutrition Division
Food and Consumer Service
U.S. Department of Agriculture

Julee Newberger
Writer
KidsCampaign
Benton Foundation

Brian Nienaber
Legislative Aide
Office of Sen. Mike DeWine

Jackie Noyes
Associate Executive Director
American Academy of Pediatrics

Paul Offner
Commissioner
Commission on Health Care Finance
D.C. Department of Health

Barbara Pryor
Legislative Assistant
Office of Sen. John D. Rockefeller IV

Stephanie Robinson
Chief Counsel for Low-Income Policy and Children's Affairs
Democratic Staff
Committee on Labor and Human Resources
U.S. Senate

Ann Segal
Deputy to the Deputy Assistant Secretary for Human Services
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

William Shepardson
Director
School-Community Collaboration Projects
Council of Chief State School Officers

Gerald Sroufe
Director
Government and Professional Liaison Program
American Educational Research Association

Matthew Stagner
Senior Policy Analyst
Children and Youth Division
Office of the Assistant Secretary for Planning and Evaluation
U.S. Department of Health and Human Services

Helene Stebbins
Senior Policy Analyst
National Governors' Association

Doug Steiger
Professional Staff
Committee on Finance
U.S. Senate

Jule Sugarman
Chairman
Center on Effective Services for Children

Linda Thompson
Special Secretary
Governor's Office for Children, Youth and Families
State of Maryland

Shelley Waters
Research Associate
The Urban Institute

Marisha Wignaraja
Associate Program Officer
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation

Featured Guests

Lisbeth Schorr
Author, *Common Purpose*

John Sciamanna
Senior Policy Associate
American Public Welfare Association

Kathleen Sylvester
Director
Social Policy Action Network

IEL Policy Exchange Staff

Margaret Dunkle
Director
Policy Exchange
Institute for Educational Leadership

Scott Gates
Executive Assistant

Lauren Handel
Executive Assistant

Jeanne Jehl
Senior Associate

Lora Kandarian
Intern

Nancy Williams
Intern

APPENDIX C

SYNOPSIS OF *COMMON PURPOSE: STRENGTHENING FAMILIES AND NEIGHBORHOODS TO REBUILD AMERICA*

by Lisbeth B. Schorr

Common Purpose documents what it takes to turn around high rates of single parenting, school failure, child abuse, youth violence and persistent poverty.

The good news is that it can be done. The bad news is that if it is to be done on a scale large enough to matter, it will require fundamental departures from tradition on several fronts at once and cannot be accomplished overnight.

Interventions that are effective in changing life trajectories for youngsters growing up in high-risk circumstances have seven common attributes:

1. They are comprehensive, flexible and responsive.

2. They deal with children in the context of families, they deal with families as parts of communities and they are rooted deeply in the neighborhood.

3. They have a long-term, preventive orientation and a clear mission and continue to evolve over time.

4. They operate in settings that support high-quality standards, and skilled, supportive managers hold staff accountable for achieving shared purposes.

5. They operate with enough intensity and perseverance to achieve agreed-upon outcomes.

6. They encourage staff to expand the boundaries of their job descriptions to build strong relationships, based on mutual trust and respect, with the individuals, families and professionals with whom they work.

7. They recognize the limits of a "service" strategy and become part of or link up with efforts to build community and expand economic opportunity.

These attributes are undermined by most systems within which effective interventions are expected to operate if they are to reach more than a token number of children, families and neighborhoods. To achieve valued public purposes, good people often find they have to break the rules. Success on a scale large enough to matter requires new rules, because the old rules often do not support what works.

The community builders who are combining what works to transform a whole neighborhood, the principals and teachers who have built a learning community in which all children learn at high levels, the child-protection professionals who are partnering with neighborhood churches, the early childhood programs that have tried to meet children's developmental needs along with parents' needs for reliable child care, and the community-based organizations that have converted schools or housing projects from hostile fortresses into valued community centers, all have had to swim upstream and buck or bend or break the rules to succeed. The stories of these successes make clear that, if we want to succeed on a larger scale, the rules will have to change.

The new strategy wizards, who have gone from changing the rules in one isolated demonstration program at a time to changing the rules that govern how whole systems provide funding, maintain accountability and tame bureaucracies, have shown that success can be achieved. The new strategies no longer rely on what former Department of Health, Education and Welfare Secretary John Gardner calls "the vending-machine approach to change," in which "you respond to a social problem by inserting a coin that delivers a law that is expected to solve the problem." Rather, the new strategies sustain and scale up from small successes by:

1. Combining the *replication of the essence* of a successful intervention with the *adaptation* of many of its components to a new setting.

2. Recognizing the *importance of the systems and institutional context*, and removing the obstacles to large-scale change.

- They *tame bureaucracies* by creating a new balance between essential bureaucratic protections and the autonomy, flexibility and variation needed at the front lines.
- They *form partnerships* between the public and private sectors, between neighborhoods and formal institutions, and with outside intermediaries.
- They *focus accountability on results*, rather than on compliance with a maze of rules.
- They *supplement traditional evaluation* techniques with new methods that provide less certainty about causation but more usable information about the links between complex interventions and their outcomes.

3. Ensuring that all stakeholders think *more strategically and in broader and longer-range terms* about improving outcomes among high-risk children, families and neighborhoods.

- They *link action* in the domains of community building, economic development, school and service reform, child development, and family support.
- They ensure that interventions operate *early enough in the life cycle* and with enough *intensity and scope* to create the synergy that can tip depleted neighborhoods toward becoming functional.

Common Purpose applies its analysis to three systems now in transition — welfare, child welfare and schools — showing that while each of these systems has become archaic, systems-change pioneers throughout the country are showing how to improve systems to accomplish purposes valued by a large majority of Americans.

The book concludes by describing seven place-based neighborhood transformation initiatives. All have created synergy by putting together a wealth of knowledge and experience from many different domains, suggesting that neighborhood transformation efforts could combine into a major national strategy to combat poverty, rebuild the inner city and reverse the growth of an American underclass.

Common Purpose:
Strengthening Families and Neighborhoods
to Rebuild America,
published by Bantam Doubleday Dell,
is available for $15.95 from your local bookstore
or online from amazon.com.
For bulk orders, call Jennifer Thomas at
Bantam Doubleday Dell, (212) 782-9689.

SPECIAL REPORTS BY THE IEL POLICY EXCHANGE

Solving the Maze of Federal Programs for Children & Families: Perspectives from Key Congressional Staff, Special Report #1, 1993, $10.

Linking Schools with Health & Social Services: Perspectives from Thomas Payzant on San Diego's New Beginnings, Special Report #2, 1994, $10.

Who Controls Major Federal Programs for Children & Families: Rube Goldberg Revisited, Special Report #3, 1995, $20 (including two color posters).

A Primer on Program Rules for Five Major Federal Programs — AFDC, Food Stamps, Medicaid, Section 8 Housing and Public Housing, Special Report #4, 1995, $15.

Workbook of Application Packets for San Diego Assistance Programs, Special Report #5, 1995, $40.

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The New Oregon Trail: Accountability for Results, Special Report #7, 1996, $5.

Steer, Row or Abandon Ship? Rethinking the Federal Role for Children, Youth & Families, Special Report #8, 1997, $5.

Partnerships for Stronger Families: Building Intergovernmental Partnerships to Improve Results for Children and Families, Special Report #9, 1997, $5 (first 10 copies at no cost).

Mixed Results: Lessons Learned from a Case Study of Interagency Collaboration, Special Report #10, 1998, $5.

The Measure of Success: What Are the Policy Implications of the New National Indicators of Child Well-Being?, Special Report #11, 1998, $5.

Strategies to Achieve a Common Purpose: Tools for Turning Good Ideas Into Good Policies, Special Report #12, 1999, $5.

OTHER PUBLICATIONS BY THE IEL POLICY EXCHANGE

Standards Count: How Can the National Assessment of Educational Progress Make a Difference in the Next Ten Years? (Papers prepared for the Tenth Anniversary Conference of the National Assessment Governing Board, produced cooperatively with the National Assessment Governing Board), 1998, no cost.

Flexibility in Federal Education Programs: A Guide Book for Community Innovation (developed with the Center on Education Policy), 1997, $4.

Simulation Hearing on Obtaining Federal and State Assistance (transcript of a March 27, 1995, congressional hearing), 1995, $5.

Dollars and Sense: Diverse Perspectives on Block Grants and the Personal Responsibility Act (produced cooperatively by the IEL Policy Exchange, the American Youth Policy Forum and the Finance Project), 1995, $5.

Comprehensive Strategies for Children and Families: Report on an October 4, 1994 Seminar (co-sponsored by the Domestic Policy Council of the White House and the IEL Policy Exchange), 1994, $10.

These publications are available from the Institute for Educational Leadership, 1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310, Washington, DC 20036. Telephone: (202) 822-8405. Fax: (202) 872-4050. E-mail: iel@iel.org. There is no charge for shipping and handling on prepaid orders. For billed orders, the shipping and handling charges are $2 for the first book and $1 for each additional book, up to $5. Full text and summaries of select publications are available on the Internet at http://www.policyexchange.iel.org.

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The Institute for Educational Leadership helps people,
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and youth through leadership, policy and bridging strategies.

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communities by connecting policies and policymakers across systems,
levels of government and ideologies.

Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Avenue, NW, Suite 310
Washington, DC 20036
Telephone: (202) 822-8405. Fax: (202) 872-4050. E-mail: iel@iel.org.
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