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COMMUNITY EDUCATION PLAN FOR NORTH KENT CONSORTIUM

by

Charlene M. Bunnell

A Project Report
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the
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Western Michigan University
Kalamazoo, Michigan
December 1988

COMMUNITY EDUCATION PLAN FOR NORTH KENT CONSORTIUM

Charlene M. Bunnell, Ed.S.

Western Michigan University, 1988

The purpose of this project was to design a working document which could be used by the four-school community education consortium in its management practices. The underlying question was whether it was possible to design a document which would be simple and complete, but still address the many needs of four different school systems.

The completed project includes a document which addresses the many facets of administering a multi-district consortium. It outlines the duties and responsibilities of each district at the present time while allowing for the realigning of those duties and responsibilities at a later date.

As a result of studying the purposes of community education and the characteristics of the four school systems, a plan was developed which will enable the consortium to manage with improved efficiency and to continue promoting education as a lifelong process.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I gratefully acknowledge the many people who assisted me in gathering the facts and background information for this study.

Special recognition to my assistant, Judy Johnson, for her patience in assisting me to uncover historical data as they relate to this project.

I also express my sincere appreciation to my husband, Douglas, for his love; support; and most of all, for his willingness to counsel me through this experience.

Charlene M. Bunnell

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

The Problem

The objective of the paper is to design a working document to be used by a four-school community education consortium to aid in the management of that consortium. The members of the consortium in this study have been operating under an out-dated, "piece-meal" plan which has caused concern due to the recent changes in administration in some of the member schools.

For this study, the directors of other community education programs and the Michigan State Department of Education were consulted to gain input as to the procedures and guidelines which should be followed in designing a workable document to be used by four diversified school systems.

The Purposes

The purposes of this project were: (a) to determine what the local school systems and the state perceive as the reason for community education, (b) to examine the demographics of the four school systems, (c) to study the historical data of the consortium, and (d) to generate a workable plan utilizing the information.

Minzey and LeTarte (1979), in discussing the processes necessary in building a strong framework for a community education program,

stressed the importance of having a clear understanding of what the organization is all about and what it purports to do.

Introduction

"The definitions of Community Education have many similarities and few differences. All of the definitions refer to Community Education as a process involving people in the community in such tasks as assessing needs, identifying problems and assigning resources" (Roudebush, 1987, p. 24). This process links community involvement and community agencies such as the schools, churches, hospitals, businesses, and libraries in providing a lifelong learning process.

The terms community education and adult education were found to be interchangeable in most documents and literature used in this project.

One of the key concepts in the definitions was that education is a lifelong process. In discussing the goals of community education programs, Decker (1975) emphasized that if educational institutions are to fulfill one of their major roles, which is to prepare individuals to be productive and contributing members of society, then those institutions must develop comprehensive educational programs which are available to all.

To expand on that concept, one can site the Constitution of the State of Michigan (Article 8, Section 1, cited in Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education, 1986) which states: "Knowledge being necessary to good government and the happiness of mankind,

schools and the means of education shall forever be encouraged" (p. ii).

The Adult Extended Learning Services of the Michigan State Department of Education (1983) has incorporated the following in its guidelines for adult education programs.

Adult education programs have the responsibility for providing education which is adapted to the intellectual, social and emotional needs of students as they prepare for life and work in a democratic society. Such opportunities should not be precluded by the sex or social/ethnic background of the student. Neither should such opportunities be precluded by the age of the student, for the constantly changing technology of our culture mandates that the educative process continue throughout life to provide training, retraining and supplemental education. (p. 1)

Background of Community Education

It is a widely accepted belief that the community was an essential part of the early schools. The school, as a publicly owned facility, often represented the center of the community being used as the meeting place for civic projects, work bees, and other community activities. The school was also a gathering place of citizens where many of the decisions affecting the community were developed and decided. The school was available for citizen use regardless of age (Tanner & Tanner, 1987).

Michigan, through the years, developed into an industrial and urbanized society. Accompanying this change, schools became large institutions operated primarily for youths. The community's involvement with the school was gradually minimized.

During the 1940's, two steps were taken to rekindle the concept of "community" in Michigan education:

The first was demonstration programs in eight small communities sponsored by the K. W. Kellogg Foundation.

The second was the beginning of a community activities program in Flint sponsored by the Flint Public Schools and the C. S. Mott Foundation. The initial intent of utilizing existing public school facilities was for recreational purposes. Out of this interaction came expressed concerns regarding other school and community-related problems which encouraged citizens to join forces to discuss and plan activities and events which would foster educational improvement. (Michigan State Department of Education, 1988, p. 1)

In 1969, as more communities established community school programs, the legislature provided state monies which allowed local districts partial reimbursement for community school directors' salaries. This funding has varied between \$1,000,000 and \$3,260,000, with the exception of 1971-72 when the item was vetoed (Michigan State Department of Education, 1988). The community education amount for 1988-89 has not been determined as of this writing, but in 1987-88 the state aid act provided \$3,120,000.

During the nearly 20 years of state support of community education, the program grew from a few school districts to 264 districts out of the total of 539 K-12 districts with 315 persons employed as community education coordinators or directors and millions of Michigan residents participating over the years (Michigan State Department of Education, 1988).

One aim of this project is to look at the beliefs upon which the concept of community education has evolved and to use those findings when developing the plan for the consortium.

CHAPTER II

DETAILED PLAN

Institutional Purpose

The Community--Demographic Data

North Kent Community Education is a consortium made up of four school districts which are located to the immediate west, north, and east of the city of Grand Rapids. The districts are a mixture of suburban, agricultural, industrial, and residential. The four communities include low income housing, senior citizens housing, retirement homes, and foster care facilities.

The School Systems

The fiscal agent, Comstock Park Public Schools, is a suburban/rural in-formula school system with 1,789 full-time equated students. It has two elementary schools and combined middle school and high school. The board of education has been extremely committed to the consortium concept ever since the beginning of the consortium in 1974. At the present time, the school system is studying the feasibility of building a new middle school/high school. They are planning to present the bonding issue of approximately \$8.7 million to the voters this fall of 1988 or the spring of 1989 (Johnson, 1988).

Northview is a suburban in-formula school system located in the northeastern portion of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. It has 2,774 full-time equated students in the K-12 program. The district has three elementary schools, two middle schools, and one high school (Roberson, 1988).

Kenowa Hills is a suburban/rural out-of-formula school system in the northwestern portion of the Grand Rapids metropolitan area. It has 2,250 full-time students in its K-12 program. The district has four elementary buildings, one junior high, one high school, and one community/special education building (Van't Hof, 1988).

Forest Hills is a suburban out-of-formula school system in the eastern portion of the county that borders the eastern and southern area of metropolitan Grand Rapids. It has approximately 5,078 students in its K-12 program. The district has five elementary schools, two middle schools, and two high schools (Bruckman, 1988).

The North Kent Community Education Consortium was formed in school year 1974-75. In the beginning there were just three districts involved. Two years later a fourth was added and the following year a fifth district became a participant. Over the past years, one district chose to become independent of the consortium.

During the past several years, programs have been added to the basic element of high school completion. These additions included programs such as: (a) retirement home and senior citizen programs, (b) migrant education, (c) alternative education, and (d) adult basic education.

The consortium is also the second largest participant in the Kent County Skill Center adult program. The consortium is built on the premise that cooperation enhances programming and supervision for the participating districts.

Adult Education

North Kent Community Education is based on the belief that:

1. Education is a life-long process.
2. All students are to be provided equal opportunity to educational excellence.
3. Quality education embodies both the learning and general welfare of each student.

North Kent Community Education endeavors to enhance and promote public education by using the resources of our schools and communities to assess educational needs and develop programs and activities to meet the unique needs of all people.

North Kent Community Education's Mission Statement

The mission of North Kent Community Education is to provide a quality education for every student. The accomplishment of this mission requires effective leadership and a dedicated staff possessing high expectations for themselves and their students, who assist each other and each student to achieve his or her potential; a learning environment in each school which is orderly and positive for all involved; student and staff progress which is monitored fairly on a frequent and regular basis; and strong parental and community support

(Hickey, 1986).

Accomplishment of this mission will be demonstrated by students who, after applying their maximum effort and completing the course of study available to them through the North Kent Community Education Consortium, will successfully pursue higher education or acquire an occupation and be prepared to be contributing citizens.

The following existing programs meet the specific needs of the community as described above: (a) adult basic education, (b) high school completion, (c) migrant education, (d) senior citizens programming, (e) alternative education, (f) pregnant teen program, and (g) vocational classes.

Programs provided by North Kent Community Education shall be made available regardless of age, racial/ethnic background, sex, or handicap.

Organization, Administration, and Control

Organizational Chart

An organizational chart will be designed to assure effective board/administrator, community relationships.

Employment Procedures

The adult education program administrator is involved in the selection, retention, promotion, and assignment of all personnel in the various adult education programs.

Job Descriptions

Job descriptions and lines of administrative and supervisory authority between the fiscal operating district and the adult education staff have been clearly defined in order to provide the necessary autonomy and authority for effective operation of the program.

Teacher Handbook

In order to help clarify the purpose of the program and to assure achievement of its goals, it is necessary for the adult education teaching staff to know procedures and basic school operations; therefore, teacher handbooks have been developed and distributed to all staff members.

Adult Education Services

North Kent Community Education Program shall develop services and classes which will meet the needs of the students in an organized and planned fashion. To facilitate these needs, master calendars, class schedules, and student handbooks will be reviewed and, if needed, revised annually.

Records and Reports

Records and reports needed for effective planning operation, evaluation and reporting results are to be kept for student personnel purposes, as outlined by current legislation.

The student files will contain: (a) transcript or proof of effort to obtain, (b) planned program, (c) cumulative report card, and (d) copy of current registration form.

Annual Report

It is essential that the individual boards of education of the consortium be apprised of the status of the adult education program and its compliance with current legislation; therefore, an annual report will be presented to the individual districts' boards of education.

Instructional Program

The instructional program shall be designed to meet community needs.

Course Descriptions

Course descriptions shall be comparable to the regular high school programs of the individual districts. Course descriptions shall be developed as new classes are added or rewritten as course objectives change.

Curriculum

North Kent Community Education has established a goal that curriculum will be reviewed annually by the consortium.

Objective: A process for the annual curriculum review will be developed by December 1988.

Textbooks and Materials

The textbooks and materials for the adult education program will reflect adult needs and reading levels.

Objective: Professional staff will review proposed new texts and materials annually.

Student Assessment

In order to meet student retention goals, students must be placed in classes appropriate to their needs and academic proficiency.

Objective: All North Kent Community Education students will be assessed and/or reviewed annually for proper placement in adult basic education or high school completion programs as evidenced by program plan update in each student file.

Staff Development

In order to maintain staff enthusiasm and expertise, as well as to keep them abreast of new developments in the education of adults, yearly staff in-services are essential.

Objective: An assessment of staff development needs will be conducted each year. Appropriate staff development opportunities will be made available to adult education employees.

Availability of Program

The North Kent Community Education Program reflects the particular needs of the students, is offered in locations accessible to adults, and at times which reflect adult students' schedules.

Professional Staff

The North Kent Consortium Program shall be staffed by administrators and teachers who are well qualified in professional, subject matter, and technical skill areas and who are actively encouraged by the system to improve their competencies. The staff shall have appropriate involvement in decision making which affects the program and they shall teach under conditions favorable to effective performance.

1. Teachers must be certified with a provisional or continuing permanent certificate from the state of Michigan.
2. Teachers will be hired by the North Kent Community Education Consortium upon the recommendation of the Community School Director.
3. If applicant meets certification requirements, hiring will be based upon qualifications and estimated success that said applicant will have in teaching adults.
4. In the event that a certified teacher cannot be found, a teacher may be utilized who meets prevailing Vocational Education Certification requirements or who received a temporary teaching certificate.

5. Salaried staff and staff for new programs must be approved in advance by the superintendents.

6. Replacement of current part-time staff and additional part-time staff for current programs require only the Community Education Director's approval.

7. Personnel files for the consortium shall be kept in the administering district.

8. Staff in-service and staff development will be encouraged and adequate funds will be provided for same in the budget.

Student Personnel Services

Comprehensive student personnel services are provided for all students by the North Kent Community Education Consortium. The consortium will facilitate a student's comprehensive education allowing each student to use all or part of the options available.

Guidance

The consortium will provide guidance to aid students in their various educational, vocational, social, civic, and personal concerns.

1. The consortium will complete a follow-up on high school dropouts and assist them in enrolling in the appropriate adult education program.

2. The consortium will complete a follow-up survey of dropouts from consortium programs.

3. The consortium will assess a student's academic needs in order to place a student in the appropriate program or classes with movement toward upward mobility. Each program will update a student's transcript of credits received twice per year and review the transcript yearly with each student until graduation.

4. The consortium will make use of the K-12 counseling programs when appropriate.

5. The consortium will provide guidance in career choices and planning.

6. The consortium will provide guidance and assistance to students investigating higher education, vocational education, or the military.

7. The consortium will provide services to help students with exceptional needs overcome economic, educational, mental, physical, or social limitations.

8. The consortium will in-service teaching staff in the guidance process.

9. The consortium will provide seminars for students on relevant subjects, i.e., substance abuse.

Educational Plan and Implementation

An educational plan has been established and implemented by the North Kent Community Education Consortium. Students must meet consortium requirements for graduation.

1. Using academic assessment tools, a student will be placed in a program of study suited to that student's long-term goals. A

student will be placed at their appropriate academic level, and implementation of a long-range plan of upward academic movement in all subject areas will begin.

2. The consortium will offer a variety of academic classes in six subject areas to include: English, mathematics, science, history, government, and social studies.

3. The consortium will provide classes in basic life skills.

4. The consortium may offer a career development program which may include training in job-obtaining skills and job-exploration components.

5. The consortium may provide a structured work experience program for students who are working and attending school.

Placement

A placement program for both higher education and employment is an important part of the North Kent Community Education Program.

1. The consortium will provide college and technical program placement guidance and services for those graduates seeking further education.

2. For vocational program components, the consortium will provide placement guidance and services to students and graduates.

3. The consortium will provide, to appropriate students, referrals to a work site for employment.

4. The consortium will provide an on-the-job-site study program for its students.

Community Bridging

The community provides a wide range learning base for students. North Kent Community Education makes use of the community as part of the learning process.

1. The consortium will obtain copies of agency listings for a variety of needs: educational, vocational, occupational, social, civic, and personal.

2. The consortium will serve as liaison for, and make referrals to, appropriate agencies in the community which might facilitate individual student growth and education.

Health Services

Good health, both physical and mental, is necessary for any student participating in the North Kent Community Education Consortium Program.

1. The consortium will provide for and assist students to seek health services needed including referral to the appropriate agency.

2. The consortium will encourage students to take part in leisure time physical and social functions within the program.

Agency Coordination

To provide the best educational program possible and to prevent duplication of program, the North Kent Community Education Consortium will participate in agency coordination within the community.

1. The consortium will make specialized program information available to other programs and agencies within the community to prevent duplication of programming when applicable.

2. The consortium will make student referrals to appropriate programs which might better serve that student.

3. The consortium will coordinate adult education with other agencies and programs.

Institutional Adaptability

1. Administration shall be provided with the authority necessary to stimulate the continuous assessment of changing societal conditions and student characteristics and to provide leadership in accomplishing the adaptation of the program in the light of such assessments.

2. An advisory council representative of the school community shall be involved in the review and planning of the educational program.

3. Systematic assessments of changing economic and societal conditions, the characteristics of the student body, and program objectives and operations shall be conducted. These assessments should take into account such factors as schedules, guidance, and library services; and teaching strategies and materials should be organized in a manner to encourage modifications needed to adapt the program to its changing environment.

Instructional Media Program

The North Kent Community Education Consortium has traditionally supported a strong instructional media program for its adult students. A wide range of K-12 materials are available through each local district's libraries. The consortium also belongs to and utilizes the services of Kent Intermediate School District's Instructional Media Facility. Various types of equipment, supplies, and laboratory environments will be accessible to the program.

Library and Media Equipment

All library facilities and instructional media equipment for the K-12 program are accessible to the adult programs with borrowing privileges for students. Also, each school district has access to public library facilities within their own district.

Financial Support and Control

Comstock Park Public Schools is the administrative district and fiscal agent for the consortium. Each member district employs a director for the purpose of supervision and management on the local level. All funds generated by the adult education program will be credited to the North Kent accounts. A financial statement is made available to each member district monthly, with a final statement in the month of June.

Each district will have personnel designated to perform the following:

Personnel: be responsible for evaluating consortium personnel assigned to their supervision. Make recommendations to the administering district for employment or termination of personnel under their assigned supervision.

Budget: prepare preliminary budgets for those programs for which they are assigned responsibility. Oversee approved budgets as assigned.

Supplies and equipment: prepare and submit requisitions for supplies and equipment needed in programs for which they are assigned responsibility. See that the supplies and equipment are properly stored and utilized.

Payroll: prepare and submit payrolls and other reports as required.

Supervision: see that programs for which they have been assigned responsibility are run according to consortium standards and state regulations. Periodic reports will be made to the directors and superintendents.

Curriculum: responsible for a constant evaluation of activities for the purpose of upgrading existing programs and implementing new ideas. All course work required of an adult for a high school diploma is to be offered within the consortium.

Registration: responsible for registration of students in programs under their assigned jurisdiction.

In addition to the above duties, the following specific duties are assigned by district:

Comstock Park: shall monitor all purchase orders, billings, and payroll functions; shall convene meetings and set agendas; shall represent the consortium on the Kent Regional Community Education Association (KRCEA) Governing Board; shall see that all state and intermediate district reports are properly filed; and shall share responsibilities with Northview for the supervision and evaluation of the alternative education programs.

Forest Hills: shall be responsible for all skill center programming, registrations, and monitoring of attendance; shall represent North Kent on the KRCEA Program Development Committee; shall share responsibility with Kenowa Hills for the supervision and evaluation of the retirement home programs; and shall coordinate activities with local area colleges and junior colleges.

Kenowa Hills: shall be responsible for all migrant programming, registrations, and monitoring of attendance; and shall share responsibilities with Forest Hills for the supervision and evaluation of the retirement home programs.

Northview: shall be responsible for the development of the public relations program, the development of the North Kent brochures and advertising program, and shall share responsibilities with Comstock Park for the supervision and evaluation of the alternative education programs.

Retention Plan

The North Kent Adult Education Program recognizes that its goal is to meet the needs of the adult student and to provide him or her

positive educational experiences. The retention of students is integral to the philosophy of providing a program of adult basic education and high school completion.

A Definition of the Retention Plan

The North Kent Adult Education Program defines retention as the completion or progress toward completion of an individual student's planned program. The planned program involves the assessment of student ability, as well as the individual's educational short- and/or long-term goals (Michigan Association of Community and Adult Education, 1986).

The Purpose of the Retention Plan

The purpose of the retention plan is to assist each student in achieving his or her individual needs as outlined in his or her planned program.

The North Kent Retention Plan

In order to more satisfactorily meet students' educational needs, it is necessary to determine reasons for interruptions of student's planned programs.

Retention activities are an essential part of the overall North Kent Adult Education Program. Student retention activities have been identified and have been made objectives of the adult education program. They include: (a) proper placement, (b) instructional

staff, (c) outreach, (d) physical environment, (e) curriculum, and (f) professional development.

Follow-up

A Definition of the Follow-up Plan

The North Kent Adult Education Program defines follow-up as the contact and assessment of those students who have successfully completed their individual planned programs. For the majority of students, the planned program will be the completion of high school or an equivalency program.

The Purpose of the Follow-up Plan

The purpose of the follow-up plan will be to determine, through various means, how the individual students' needs have been met through the education process.

The Follow-up Plan Overview

The North Kent Consortium recognizes that follow-up is closely related to retention. The positive rewards of completion of a planned program can be used to develop further retention plans.

Future Needs and Concerns of the Consortium

The North Kent Consortium recognizes the fact that the plan needs to be constantly reviewed and revised to address current and future trends and needs of the communities served (Banach, 1988).

Reviews will be made with the prospect of adding the following programs in a continued commitment to addressing the changing needs of learners: (a) an alternative education program for students under the age of 16, and (b) latch key or after-school enrichment programs for the students in Grades 1 through 8.

CHAPTER III

SUMMARY

The purpose of this project was to design a working document which could be used by the four-school community education consortium in its management practices. The underlying question was whether it was possible to design a document which would be simple and complete, but still address the many needs of four different school systems.

The completed project includes a document which addresses the many facets of administering a multi-district consortium. It outlines the duties and responsibilities of each district at the present time while allowing for the realigning of those duties and responsibilities at a later date.

The process of developing the plan has caused the directors to become aware of the strengths and weaknesses of their programs. It has given them a guide to use in preparing future goals and objectives to better the program. The plan allows each of the school systems to run their own individualized needs programs while participating in those programs which are common to all school systems in the consortium.

One of the consortium's shortcomings which emerged through the developing of this plan was the issue of up-to-date communications between the four schools' K-12 programs and the consortium's community education programs. Initially, the writer attempted to design a

communication system within the plan to correct the problem, but this proved to be a problem beyond the scope of this project, and one which will have to be addressed later.

The basic belief throughout the plan is that there is a need for schools to serve learners from cradle to grave. The writer agrees with the statement of standards made by North Central Association of Colleges and Schools (1987) which states:

The changing social and technological climate of our society mandates high levels of understanding and technical skill for many people. Since educational experiences which are meaningful in the regular secondary school program are not always suited to the needs of adults, the NCA endorses and encourages the development of adult learning opportunities to accomplish diploma-completion and other desirable adult educational goals, within limits prescribed by local school boards. (p. 38)

As a result of studying, the purposes of community education and the characteristics of the four school systems, a plan was developed which will enable the consortium to manage with improved efficiency and to continue promoting education as a lifelong process.

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