



**Helms Community School  
San Pablo, CA**

*Prepared for:*

**PLUS Cities**

April 24, 2009

**Children spend over 70% of their waking hours outside of school**

**Imagine if the line between school and home were blurred.**

**Imagine if an entire community took responsibility for the education of its children.**

**Imagine if an entire school took responsibility for the education of its community.**

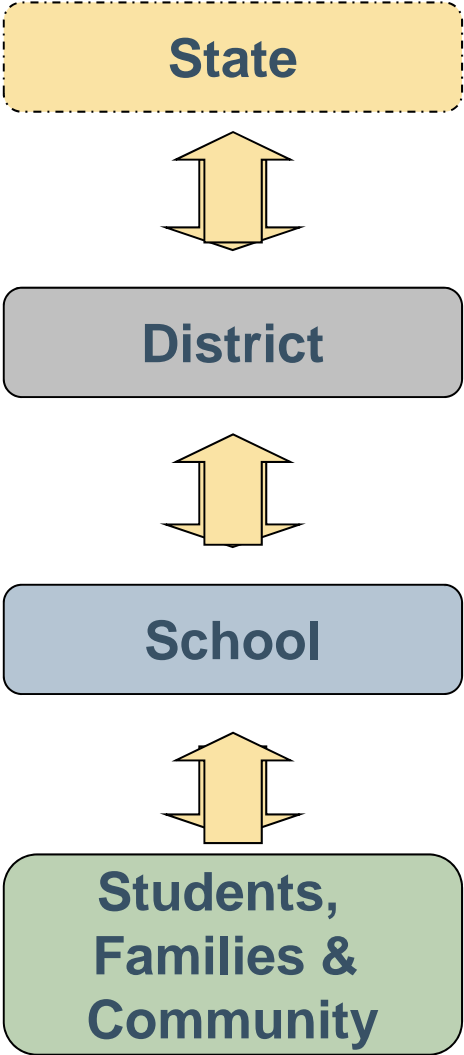
**Stop Imagining. Start Believing.**

**Welcome to Helms. Where community and school are one.**

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# Helms Approach to Reform

## Traditional Model



## **Helms is Delivering High Quality Education and Support Services by Redefining Boundaries Between School, Home & Community**

### **What is Different About Helms?**

- Education program with additional support services
  - Children, families and community
- School level changes have impacted district decisions
- Partnerships with over 20 community organizations

### **Who Does Helms Serve?**

- Grades 6-8 with 92% free and reduced lunch
- 78% Latino, 12% African American, 2% White, 8% Asian

### **How Do We Know It Works?**

- Reduction in behavioral referrals
- Highest attendance rates in district (~95% for 2007-08)
- Increase in parental participation
- Test scores increasing in both reading and math

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## There Are Multiple Reinforcing Components to an Effective Community Schools Strategy

Vision and Program Design

Joint Use

Strategic Partnerships

Evaluation and Performance Tracking

District and City Policy

Staffing and Funding

Marketing and Communication

*These are some of the key areas that Helms has been focused on over the last three years*

*Today we will briefly focus on key challenges facing Helms and proposed solutions in a couple of these areas*

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## Strategic Partnerships

### Situation

- City leaders involved in development and design of Helms but involvement based on relationships and not institutional support or formal agreements

### Challenge

- Changes in key positions can bring about significant changes in support
- Not every city council member was supportive

### Solution

- City leadership turns over, elected on community schools platform
- Educating and building relationships at all levels of district is necessary
- City and district agree to financial and joint use compromises



### Lesson

***Leadership at the top matters.  
Mayoral and city council buy-in enables stronger partnerships  
This takes time.***

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## Joint Use

### Situation

- New Helms school will open in January 2010
- Center of Community will serve as shared space for school and community activities, service delivery and recreational space for the city

### Challenge

- No MOU for joint use or shared space currently exists
- Educating and aligning stakeholders with vested interests is difficult

### Proposed Solution

- ✓ Identify stakeholders and decision makers early and form a working group
  - Determine what each group needs to “give” and what each wants to “get”
  - Focus on shared use purpose, scheduling, budget, maintenance

Lesson

***Joint use is as much as about the process as it is the MOU  
The MOU is critical for institutionalizing the work***

## The Following Framework Provides a Starting Place for Discussing Joint Use Between Different Stakeholders

Stakeholder Group	Need to Give	Want to Get
<b>Teachers</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time</li> <li>• Space</li> <li>• Control in exchange for improved student outcomes</li> <li>• Improved student outcomes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lower rates of student absence</li> <li>• Community support for instruction</li> <li>• Information about vision/modeled</li> <li>• Students ready to learn</li> <li>• Network of support</li> <li>• Project based learning environment</li> <li>• Less isolation</li> </ul>
<b>City Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Time, money, access</li> <li>• Policy backing</li> <li>• Support to district</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More access to parents/community</li> <li>• Improved student and community outcomes</li> <li>• Lower rates of student absence</li> <li>• Access to space for joint use</li> <li>• Network of support</li> <li>• Headlines</li> </ul>
<b>County</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Healthcare access and services</li> <li>• Funding</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduced health disparities</li> <li>• Cost saving through prevention rather than treatment</li> </ul>
<b>District Leaders</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Control and authority</li> <li>• Funds</li> <li>• Institutional support</li> <li>• Policy and procedural changes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved student outcomes</li> <li>• Funds from city</li> <li>• Access to space for joint use</li> <li>• Cost savings</li> <li>• Headlines</li> </ul>



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# Marketing and Communication

## Situation

- Wide variety of programs and activities
- “Helms is doing wonderful work but they need to package it.”

## Challenge

- Lots of information without a clear way of organizing.
- Talking points and written materials needed.

## Proposed Solution

- ✓ Develop one pagers on general overview and each major program
- ✓ Create a short ‘pitch’ deck and use vehicles such as Moodle
  - Develop education/awareness campaign

Lesson

***Communication needs to be tailored to specific audiences with an appropriate level of detail***

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## District, School and City Policy

### Situation

- District policies governing decisions are based on a traditional school model
- Helms is not a traditional school model

### Challenge

- Identifying policies and procedures that need to (and can) change
- Finding the optimal balance between autonomy and accountability
- School level policies can change with administration

### Proposed Solution

- Determine which district and union policies should be revisited
- Work with district and union on these policies



Lesson

***District level policies can advance or hamper community schools work if they are not thoughtfully considered***

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## Key Lessons

### Strategic Partnerships

- Leadership at the top matters
- Mayoral and city council buy-in enables stronger partnerships but takes time

### Joint Use

- Joint use is as much about process as it is the MOU
- Identify stakeholders, focus on purpose and logistics

### District and City Policy

- Don't assume traditional policies will work
- Identify opportunities to be flexible in ways that advance the work in exchange for accountability

### Marketing and Communication

- Communication needs to be tailored to specific audiences with an appropriate level of detail
- Engage stakeholders around marketing material

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