



MEETING SUMMARY

Creating our Common Story

Monday, April 13, 2009

Location: Minnesota Department of Education

Hosts:

Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals (Joann Knuth)

Sheltering Arms Foundation (Denise Mayotte)

Youth Community Connections (Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn)

Attendees/Contact Information: See p. 11

COMMUNICATION INITIATIVE OBJECTIVES:

- Initiate & support informal partnership building, communication & shared planning among a cross section of stakeholders in early care, K-12, and out of school time.
 - Practice/evaluate a common story that provides inspiration, validation, guidance & clarity to the common mission and work of these stakeholders.
- Outline opportunities to use our common story to influence society at large & achieve needed resources in support of our shared missions.
- Assess interest in continuing informal partnership building, communication and shared planning among these stakeholders.

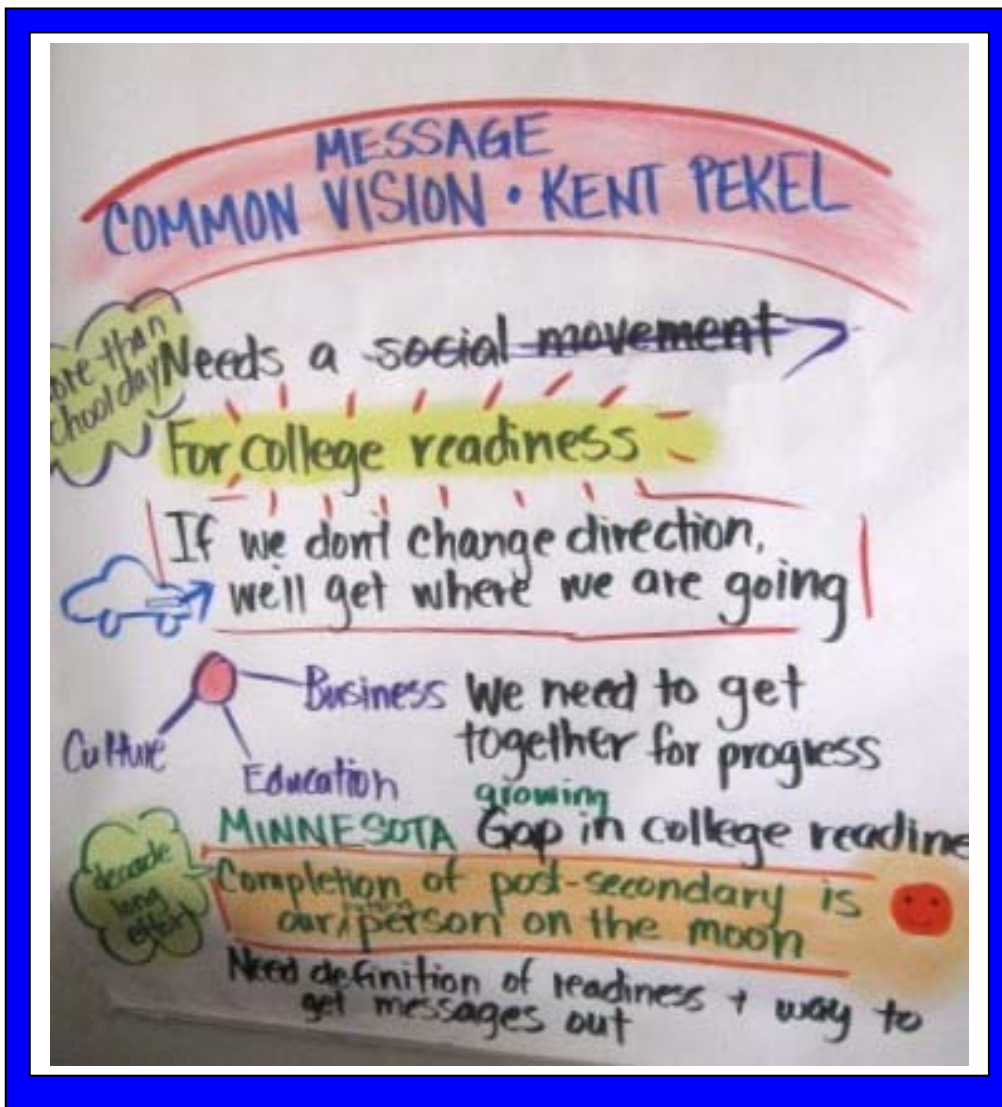
HOW WE GOT TO TODAY:

Creating A Common Story: Early Care, K-12, and Out-of-School Time Communication Initiative

Background

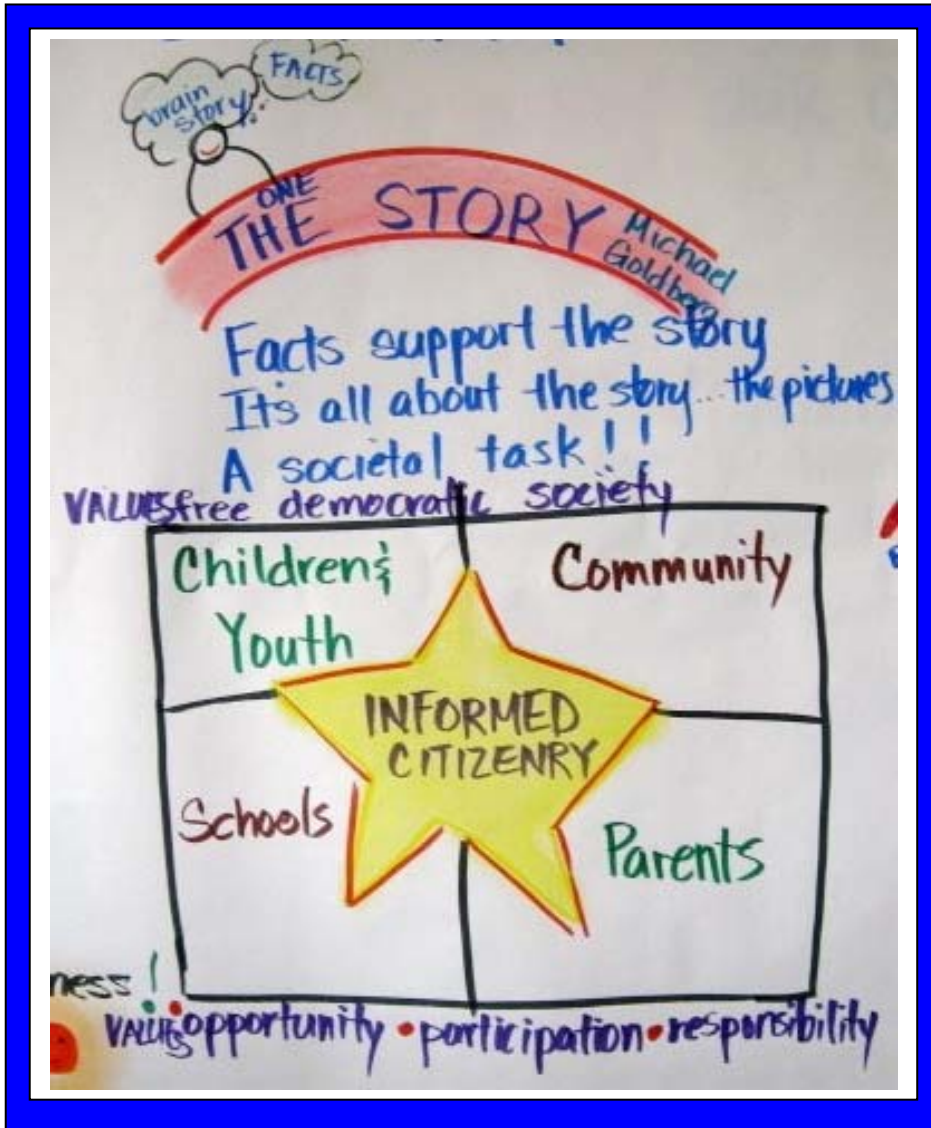
In May 2008, the [Minnesota Afterschool Summit](#), sponsored by the Department of Education, Governor Pawlenty's Office and several key stakeholders, brought together business leaders, educators, public safety representatives and funders to make the case that high-quality afterschool learning opportunities are essential for all children and youth as they learn, grow and develop. One important outcome of the event was a call from participants in the education and business communities to use common language and messages to discuss how classroom and out-of-school time learning opportunities complement one another.

[Youth Community Connections](#), Minnesota's Statewide Afterschool Alliance (YCC) in partnership with [The Sheltering Arms Foundation](#) and [Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals \(MASSP\)](#) agreed to pilot a project to develop a clear, engaging story that builds support for a continuum of high quality learning opportunities in Minnesota for children and youth ages 0 to 21. Stakeholders representing early childhood education, K-12 and out-of-school time have worked together over the past several months to identify messages that link, bridge or connect these learning experiences and opportunities into one common story. Action Media has provided consultation on this effort with financial support from the Minnesota Department of Human Services.



Kent Pekel, from the University of Minnesota's College Readiness Consortium, made a case for the need for a common story and a common vision, citing national and Minnesota statistics suggesting that the gaps are increasing in post-secondary readiness.

The common vision he put forth was the completion of a post secondary education suggesting that this is a decade long effort that is comparable to the 1960's goal of putting a person on the moon. And the effort to accomplish this requires a social movement in partnership with business, education and a host of other organizations.

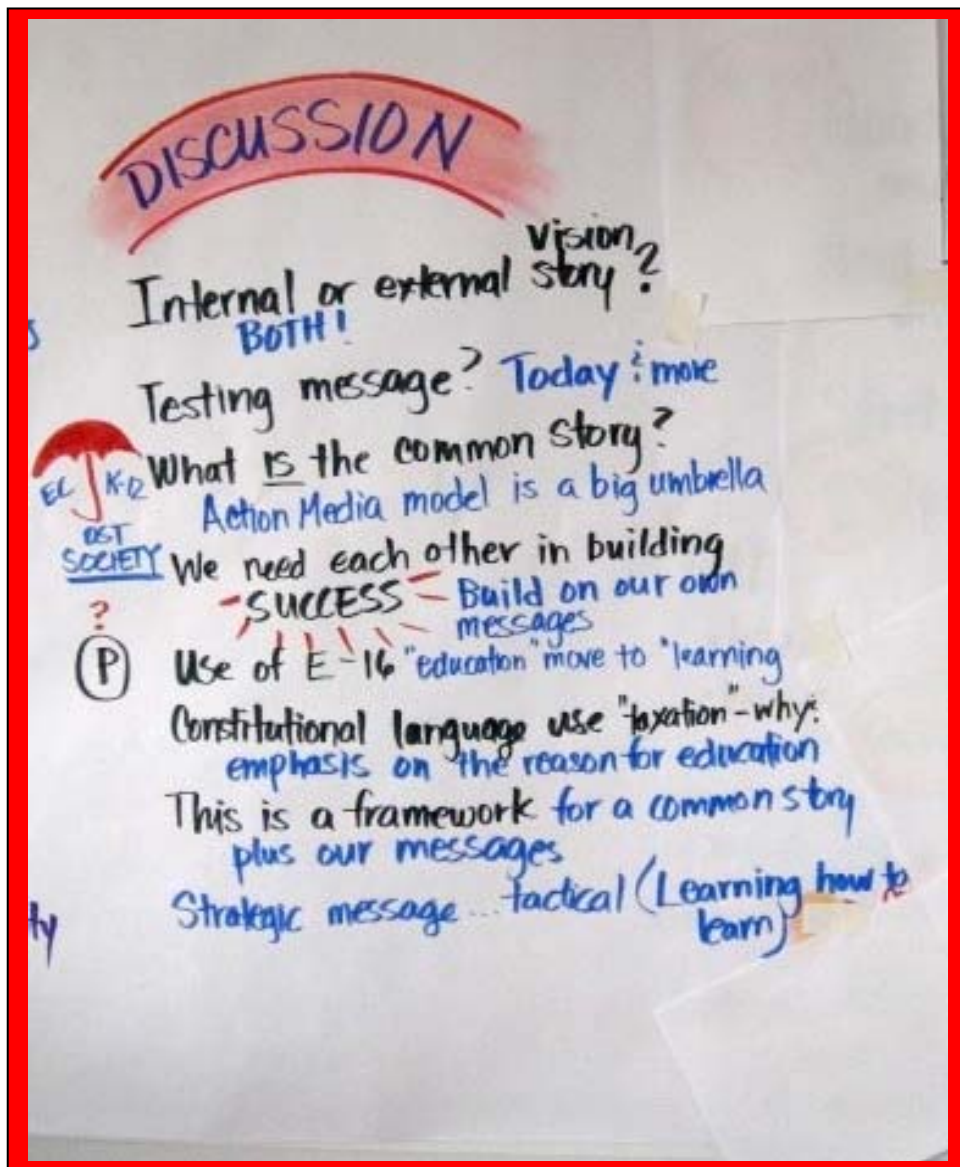


Michael Goldberg, consultant from Action Media, built on a Communications Framing Memo which suggested a framework for a story in the broadest common public interest. He began with a reference to Minnesota's State Constitution which specifically refers to the role of education in setting up public schools for the "the stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people."

"When the work is defined as providing society with an education and equipped citizenry, it instantly becomes a story about everyone, not just about students, parents, educators and youth workers....It also supports telling stories about life long learning, both in the sense of the successive stages of life and in the sense of community and civic life....

"Defining "education. We know much more today about learning and development than was known when the constitution called for "the intelligence of the people." We now understand how learning—and the crucial architecture of the brain that will determine future ability to learn—begins at birth.....we now understand that learning doesn't end when the bell rings, but continues and is supported by the experiences young people have outside of school...we know a high school education is no longer enough for the current generation to succeed economically...

"..the key values of the story —a free, democratic society— one which provides opportunity to all, and expects participation by all, equality of opportunity, and of civic participation. A related value is responsibility. Our policies and our institutions must apply what we know about development & learning to fully equip our young citizens. Anything less is untenable for our economy, unsustainable for our democracy, and unacceptable for our children."
---selections from memo (see attachment for full memo)

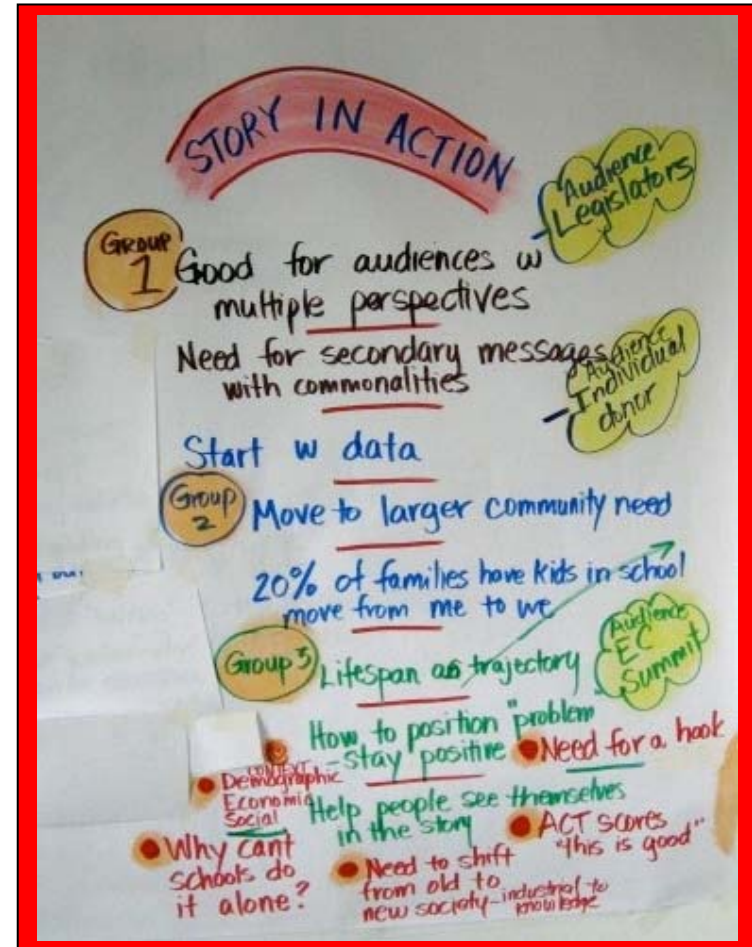
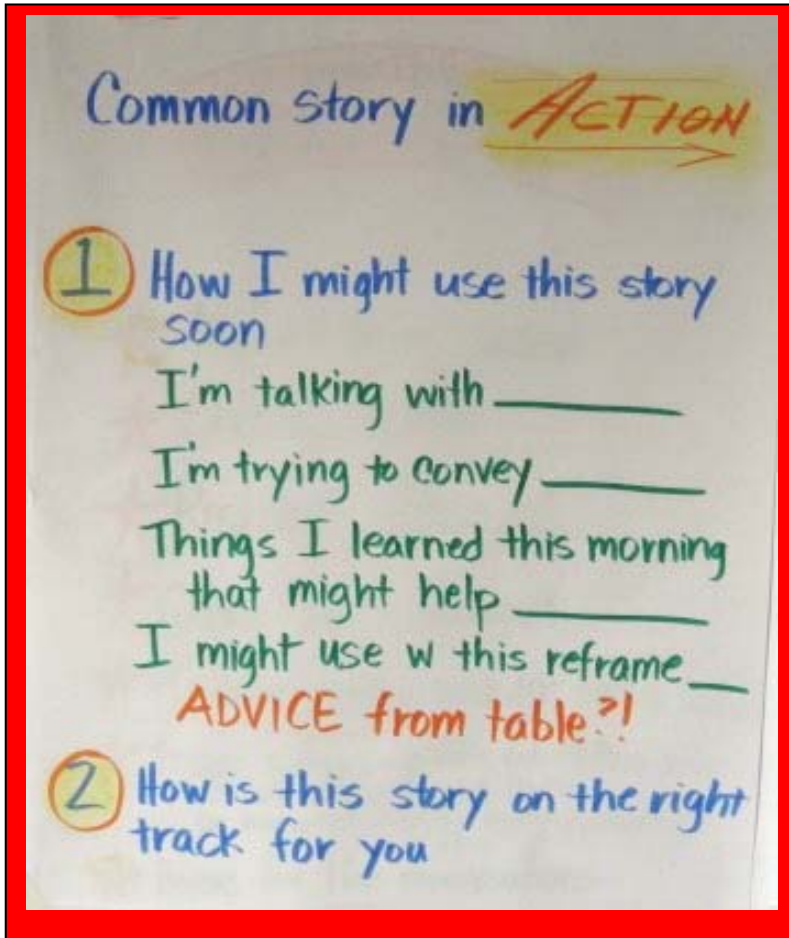


The intent of discussion at this point was to gain clarity about the common story and the background information (the need to obtain a post-secondary education) presented by both Michael Goldberg and Kent Pekel.

Some questions included:

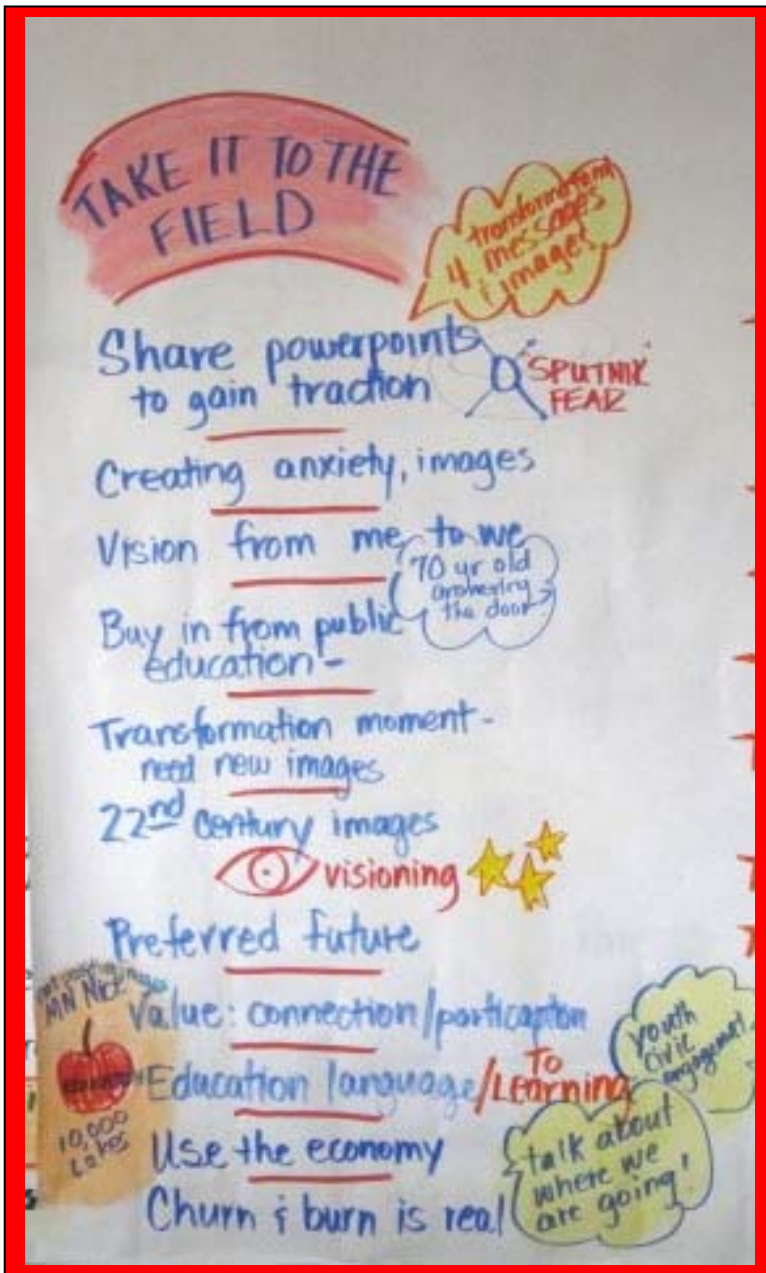
- Is this story intended to be a story for us or a larger audience?
- Have these messages been tested?
- What then IS the common story?
- Was the use of E-16 language intentional?
- Was the use of constitutional language around the use of "taxation" intentional?

Some discussion followed about needing to develop both strategic messages within the story of *an educated and equipped society to ensure a free and self governing society* as well as tactical messages, which are relevant for early care, K-12 education, out of school learning opportunities and post-secondary attainment.



Attendees formed in to small groups to identify opportunities to test this common story in the coming weeks where meeting participants would be presenting to a group or talking to individuals. After identifying the scenario, they discussed how they might use the story framework in these situations.

Overview comments suggested the need “for a hook” or a compelling need not currently in the story. One comment indicated a complacency in seeing positive ACT scores, and another that some expect that schools SHOULD be able to do it alone...”they always have”. We need to build a story that emphasizes the significant changes in the demographics, economy and social institutions that call for the need to prepare all to be “equipped” & participating adults.



Moving from the individual scenarios for the coming weeks, the group discussed what was needed to move the initiative forward. Suggestions included:

- Creating a common compelling image/anxiety with an effect similar to the impetus inspired as a result of the 1957 launch of Sputnik.
- Spending time identifying/developing new images for this transformational time that help talk about a “preferred future”.
- Leveraging the economy.
- Building on a move from “me” to “we” so that the story for the 70 year old with no children in school can see why this is personally important.
- Coming up with 4 -5 transformational messages and images that can be used with the common story and use them for a while.
- Creating PowerPoint slides and share them widely.
- Understanding that current images of education (apples, blackboards) and MN (Minnesota nice, 10,000 Lakes) are not positive images for many.
- Exploring the civic engagement of youth in making and telling the story.

possible NEXT STEPS

- ★ Build some context
- ★ Sharing slides
- ★ Reshape memo
- ★ Create key messages
- ★ Consider inviting broader invitee list
- ★ Focus groups - public education role
Seniors - minority resource centers -
or many community conversations
- ★ Home for the conversations
- ★ Electronic evaluation - today + future options

Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn from Youth Community Connections took an informal poll about interest level in moving forward with this work. There were many thumbs up and a few in neutral; those reporting neutral indicated steps that would bring them back to the table.

Laura will send out an electronic evaluation both for today's meeting, to explore future options, and test the willingness of others to help work on the initiative.

This memo offers a story about the public interest in education and learning. It is intended to encourage advocates to strengthen their communications, by basing them in a perspective that cuts across ages and programs, and *explicitly* defines the issues in terms of the broadest common public interest.

The Public Interest

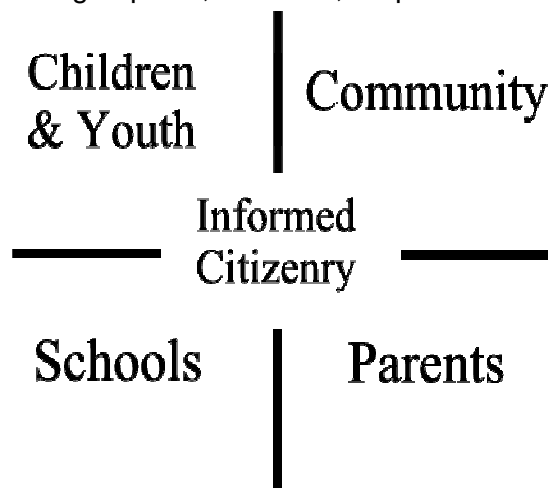
At present, advocates talk about their goals as providing education to all children and youth – a transaction between knowledge providers and students, with youth as the primary beneficiary. But there is a broader, more inclusive story about education. Minnesota’s State Constitution is very specific about the public purpose: “*The stability of a republican form of government depending mainly upon the intelligence of the people*, it is the duty of the legislature to establish... (and) secure a thorough and efficient system of public schools throughout the state.”

When the work is defined as *providing society with an educated and equipped citizenry* it instantly becomes a story about everyone, not just about students, parents, educators and youth workers. This more inclusive perspective will strengthen the advocates’ position with its target audiences, and be mutually reinforcing among the currently separate spheres of early childhood, K-12, Out of School Time, and secondary education. It also supports telling stories about life long learning, both in the sense of the successive stages of life, and in the sense of community and civic life, where social interactions and sense of community are just as important as specific knowledge and skills.

America, having given the world the model of a free and democratic society, invented universal public education. Today, our economic and social future as a self-governing people depends on every member of society being capable, informed, responsible participants in an increasingly complex economy.

Defining “education”

We know much more today about learning and development than was known when the State constitution called for “the intelligence of the people”. We now understand how learning – and the crucial architecture of the brain that will determine future ability to learn – begins at birth. We understand that parents are teachers. We recognize that success at school increases when students feel connected to their school and community, and when they have the personal skills and goals to take responsibility for their own learning. We now understand that learning doesn’t end when the bell rings, but continues and is supported by the experiences young people have outside of school. And, we know that a high school is no longer enough for the current generation to succeed economically – every Minnesotan must be prepared to pursue post-secondary learning, and be able to continue learning throughout



their careers and life.

It will be challenging for advocates to change their communications in this way. It's always hard to change habits. Advocates and the groups they represent currently frame their communications in terms of the needs and capabilities of young people, because young people are the immediate beneficiaries of that work. However, a new perspective could be strategically put forward. There is nothing in the recommended change that contradicts either the objectives or the pertinence of current communications.

Shared Values

When telling the reframed story it is critical to explicitly evoke the key values of the story - a free, democratic society – one which provides opportunity to all, and expects participation by all, equality of opportunity, and of civic participation.

A related value is responsibility. Everyone has a responsibility to engage in or otherwise support this shared social mission. Achieving it requires that young people become responsible adults, able to take care of themselves, their family and community.

The State constitution refers to “the intelligence” of the people. That century old phrase is better communicated today in terms of the values of knowledge, skills, and relationships that create the capacity to be informed members of a self-governing society, in an increasingly complex economy: productive, contributing, self-reliant adults engaged with others.

Schools, parents early childhood programs, after-school activities, or any combination of these, cannot do it alone. This is a societal task, and requires the full participation of all.

We must do more to support and involve parents, and to ensure early learning. We need to do much better at providing Minnesota's children with an enriching environment of college-oriented peers and supportive adults. We need to better connect our schools to our communities, and to enhance our communities with meaningful participation of young people. We need action to give all Minnesotans learning experiences that begin in earliest childhood and continues through a career.

Our policies and our institutions must apply what we know about development and learning to fully equip our young citizens. Anything less is untenable for our economy, unsustainable for our democracy, and unacceptable for our children.

Attachment 2

List of attendees/ contact information

Ellen Bracken, Minnesota Department of Education
Dick Brooks, Action Media
Karen Cardigan, Children, Family and Youth Consortium, UMN
Mary Cecconi, Parents United
Kari Dennisen, City of St. Paul's 2nd Shift Initiative
Marceline Dubois, Minnesota Department of Education
Angie Eilers, Growth and Justice
Michael Goldberg, Action Media
Lynn Haglin, Northland Foundation
Glory Kibbel, Minnesota Department of Education
Heather Kilgore, Parent Education Resource Center
Joann Knuth, Minnesota Association of Secondary School Principals
Jane Kretzmann, The Saint Paul Foundation
Laura LaCroix-Dalluhn, Youth Community Connections
Kathy Lentz, Greater Twin Cities United Way
Denise Mayotte, The Sheltering Arms Foundation
Todd Otis, Ready 4 K
Kent Pekel, College Readiness Consortium, UMN
Fred Storti, Minnesota Association of Elementary Principals
Jack Tamble, Minneapolis Community Education
Sally Wherry, Minnesota Department of Education

Eddie Meissner, Facilitator
Ceil Meade, Administrative Support