Below is a check list of steps that a lead organization should take to develop a community-wide literacy initiative.

**Check List**

- As the lead organization, gather and disseminate data on the scope of the adolescent literacy problem.
- Meet one-on-one with community leaders, school officials and other stakeholders/organizations to identify shared interests and provide a vision for how literacy can be integrated with other community initiatives.
- Convene meetings, forums or summits to further build community awareness and develop partnerships around adolescent literacy.
- Develop key partnerships with community leaders, school officials and other stakeholders/organizations that incorporate strategic planning and programmatic outcome targets for an adolescent literacy initiative.
- Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the community mobilization for adolescent literacy efforts.

Component 1: Strategies for Community/Organizational Mobilization for Adolescent Literacy

A community effort to address the adolescent literacy crisis can have a myriad of strategies. Of course, no two communities are alike, nor should the strategies be the same. Below are some suggestions to help galvanize a community to increase literacy development:

- **Create and Expand Awareness, Understanding and Urgency:** Print materials, public information campaigns, religious sermons, billboards and presentations centered on the adolescent literacy crisis nationally and locally help to inform a community about the issue.
- **Provide Leadership, Take the Lead:** A lead organization can take the initial step to organize an education summit, community meetings, and forums to generate momentum for a community adolescent literacy initiative.
- **Provide Training and Education:** Community-based workshops can be sponsored or courses developed that train parents/guardians on literacy. Also, speakers can be invited to address the issue and help inform the community of viable strategies to combat the adolescent literacy crisis.
- **Develop, Revise, Enhance Programs and Services:** Organizations, especially a lead organization, should add a literacy component to out-of-school time programs and youth development activities or seek funding to develop adolescent literacy programming.

See Mobilizing Communities to Support the Literacy Development of Urban Youth, pg. 27

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Community/Organizational Mobilization for Adolescent Literacy

Community/Organizational Mobilization for Adolescent Literacy

It’s hard to imagine a community in any county that does not have a stake in literacy development for adolescents. Parents want their children to succeed and be able to explore multiple opportunities. Policy makers and elected officials are hoping voters who are able to read and to understand complex issues. Health and human service agencies want people to be able to successfully navigate the complexities of the system to get what they need. Community members want safe neighborhoods, and viable local economies. Employers want workers who have solid reading comprehension and communication skills that they can apply to on-the-job learning and performance improvement. Policy makers and elected officials want voters who are able to read and to understand complex issues. Health and human service agencies want people to be able to successfully navigate the complexities of the system to get what they need. Community members want safe neighborhoods, and viable local economies.

In order to address the complexity of the adolescent literacy crisis and to understand the varied conditions in which families and children live, new systems need to be developed that will allow communities to create or enhance their own structures of support. The oft used "one-size-fits-all" programmatic approach will not suffice. In fact, thoughtful coordination and collaboration among schools, businesses, community organizations, and families to mobilize resources will need to promote positive change in young people’s lives and ensure greater sustainability of programming over the long term.

Traditional community mobilization strategies focus primarily on public awareness. In the guise of rallies, public awareness campaigns, etc., these are helpful in increasing public understanding on an issue, but are essentially linear and short-term, each event is a separate entity and efforts lack momentum.

Therefore, a useful comprehensive community mobilization model to address adolescent literacy entails both public awareness and clear, workable systems to get what they need. Community members want safe neighborhoods, and viable local economies. Employers want workers who have solid reading comprehension and communication skills that they can apply to on-the-job learning and performance improvement. Policy makers and elected officials want voters who are able to read and to understand complex issues. Health and human service agencies want people to be able to successfully navigate the complexities of the system to get what they need. Community members want safe neighborhoods, and viable local economies.

A targeted community for the adolescent literacy initiative should have a lead organization level. Sufficient capacity at the community level, the school district level and the individual organizational level.

Pre-Requisites for Community/Organization Mobilization

The research on community mobilization highlights the community strengths that are needed to implement and run a successful initiative. There must be sufficient capacity at the community level, the school district level and the lead organization level.

Community Capacity:

A targeted community for the adolescent literacy initiative should have some history of successful collaborative efforts – partnerships, coalitions and linkages among schools, businesses, community-based agencies, faith-based groups and other organizations. It should have a supportive political climate and a level of social cohesion that is conducive for broad-based participation. Lastly, education reform and student achievement should be widely recognized as a collective concern and the involvement of all groups.

School District Capacity:

The school district should have a commitment to education reform and improved student achievement, with literacy as a priority focus, and have a clear plan for engaging a broad range of community members in supporting student achievement. The superintendent should also have a productive relationship with the lead organization providing the adolescent literacy initiative. Most importantly, there should be a literacy action plan for all grade levels that includes teacher professional development around literacy instruction.

Lead Organization Capacity:

As the Lead Organization, it is important that your organization has a mission that explicitly focuses on youth development and also has literacy development as a programmatic priority. It should be located in a particular community and have a track record for “getting things done” in that community. Literacy, the organization’s leadership should have a strong vision and commitment to community development and mobilization in the area.

A community mobilization model must incorporate (see Anderson’s 8 also):

- A shared vision, a common set of goals, outcomes and objectives among stakeholders.
- A commitment to language and literacy strategies for all grade levels.
- Action plans based on assessments of local strengths and needs (an asset model approach).
- Visible implementation strategies and programmatic models.
- Restructuring and leveraging local resources.
- Periodic evaluations of the models’ effectiveness on communities.

A Shared Vision, a Common Set of Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

The National Urban League and the Urban League of Champagne County develop a Community Mobilization on Education Equity Hanerwosk that has been widely used in the Urban League movement. One initial step to creating a shared vision, goals and outcomes among stakeholders in a community mobilization for adolescent literacy initiative is for an organization spearheading the project to have a clear vision about its own goals, outcomes and objectives as an organization. Before engaging in such a larger effort to enhance adolescent literacy, a lead organization's Board of Directors, the CEO to the frontline staff must view the initiative as reflecting its organizational priorities. This is not a corporate initiative. In this endeavor, some strengths as well as glaring needs will certainly be identified in the initiative. The superintendent should also have a productive relationship with the lead organization providing the adolescent literacy initiative. Most importantly, there should be a literacy action plan for all grade levels that includes teacher professional development around literacy instruction.

Action Plans Based on Assessments of Local Strengths and Needs (An Asset-Based Approach)

The action plans that emerge from the local strengths and needs of the community. In this manner, some strengths as well as some glaring needs will certainly be identified in the community. An asset-based approach to community mobilization presumes that challenges are present in communities.

3 For more on asset-based approaches to community initiatives see “Project Ready College Access Program User’s Guide”.

Viable Implementation Strategies and Programmatic Structures

The action plans must be connected to viable implementation strategies and programmatic structures. This entails coordinating and aligning efforts and by various stakeholders with each other to make the proposed adolescent literacy goals and outcome targets.

Restructuring and Leveraging Local Resources

Utilizing an asset-based approach to community mobilization for adolescent literacy requires identifying the assets in a community. These assets include human, social, educational, environmental, monetary, political, etc. These assets can be identified and strategically planned through the deliberate efforts of the stakeholders involved in the initiative.

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Community/Organization Mobilization for Adolescent Literacy

A Commitment to Long-Range Strategic Planning Among Stakeholders

In order to address the complexity of the adolescent literacy crisis and to understand the varied conditions in which families and children live, new systems need to be developed that will allow communities to enhance or even reframe their local structures of supports. The often used “one-size-fits-all” programmatic approach will not succeed. In fact, thoughtful coordination and collaboration among schools, businesses, community organizations, and families to mobilize community assets that can promote positive change in young people’s lives and ensure greater sustainability of programming over the long term.

Traditional community mobilization strategies focus primarily on public awareness, in the guise of rallies, public awareness campaigns, etc. These are helpful in increasing public understanding on an issue, but are not ways to strategize or mobilize a community-wide strategy. Therefore, a useful comprehensive community mobilization model to address adolescent literacy entails both public awareness and clear mechanisms for the public engagement.

Pre-Requisites for Community/Organization Mobilization

The research on community mobilization highlights the conditions that are needed to implement and run a successful initiative. These include:

- Sufficient capacity at the community level, the school district level and the lead organization level.

Community Capacity:

A targeted community for the adolescent literacy initiative should have:

- History of successful collaborative efforts: partnerships, coalitions, and linkages among schools, businesses, community based agencies, faith-based groups, and families to mobilize community assets.
- Knowledge and expertise about the key conditions that are conducive to high performance outcomes.
- An awareness of the social and emotional climate of the community.

School District Capacity:

The school district should have:

- A commitment to education reform and improved student achievement with literacy as a priority focus, and has a clear plan for engaging community members in supporting student achievement.
- A productive relationship with the lead organization promoting the adolescent literacy initiative.

Lead Organization Capacity:

As the Lead Organization, it is important that your organization has a mission that explicitly focuses on youth development and also has literacy development as a programmatic priority. It should be located in a particular community and a track record for “getting things done” in that community. Lastly, the organization’s leadership should have a vision and commitment to community development and mobilization in this area.

A community mobilization model must incorporate (see Anderson’s 8) its:

- A shared vision, a common set of goals, objectives and outcomes among stakeholders.
- A commitment to language strategy and agenda.
- Action plans based on assessments of local strengths and needs (an asset model approach).
- Viable implementation strategies and programmatic structures.
- Restructuring and leveraging local resources in support of the initiative.
- Periodic evaluating the models’ effectiveness on communities.

A Shared Vision, a Common Set of Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

The National Urban League and the Urban League of Champaign County developed a Community Mobilization on Adolescent Literacy in 2007, which serves as a model for assessing and implementing the adolescent literacy crisis in a community.

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- Periodic evaluating the models’ effectiveness on communities.

A Commitment to Long-Range Strategic Planning Among Stakeholders

Once an organization is clear on its own goals, objectives and outcomes, it can begin to form an effort to interact with other organizations, with businesses, and with schools to build awareness and buy-in to the initiative. This collaborative convening of a meeting or an initiating an Education Summit of business leaders, principals, district administrators, school board members, and other key stakeholders to both inform about the adolescent literacy challenges in your community by providing data such as summative state assessment results, national, state and local comparisons of student performance in reading and writing, and subsequently promote an action by all those present. One crucial step is generating some outcomes for the initiative. Subsequently, a series of working groups can emerge from the summit or meetings that can set priorities, develop action plan, and facilitate larger strategic planning around this initiative.

Action Plans Based on Assessments of Local Strengths and Needs (An Asset-Based Approach)*

This is the action plans that emerge from the community, based on the local strengths and needs of the community being targeted. In this scenario, some strategies as well as some planning needs will certainly be identified in the community. An asset-based approach to community mobilization presupposes that changes are present in communities.

Asset-based approach to community mobilization assumes that: (i.e. elevated literacy rates among adolescents) but also affirms that there are numerous unrecognized, untapped or underutilized assets in a community as well.

A school district, for instance, may have strong parent engagement and/or active community members who could possibly serve as literacy advocates in the school neighborhood. Local business groups may be willing to work together to allocate funds to provide students for students who participate in proposed literacy activities. Government officials may be willing to incorporate award ceremonies for students who demonstrate improved literacy, and religious leaders may be willing to stress the value of literacy through their sermons or in their congregation events. These ideas need to be identified and strategically planned through the dialogs of the stakeholders involved in the initiative.

Viable Implementation Strategies and Programmatic Structures

The action plans must be converted to viable implementation strategies and programmatic structures. This article coordinating and collaborating within and by various stakeholders with each other to meet the proposed action plans. Action plans must incorporate deliberate strategic planning and budgeting for a community mobilization for adolescent literacy initiative. Clearly defined outcomes and focused timelines, goal-driven programmatic structures, and effective documentation of activities create fertile ground for learning. More importantly, these strategies can help refine programmatic areas, as well as support funding efforts to sustain an initiative over the long term.

Restructuring and Leveraging Local Resources

Utilizing an asset-based approach to community mobilization for adolescent literacy requires identifying the assets in a community. These assets (i.e., human, social, educational, environmental, monetary, political, etc.) should be leveraged to support your initiative. For instance, the lead organization may discover that there are potential funds available through a local politician’s office to support a youth initiative that requires the collaboration with neighborhood schools. Other resources could be restructured and leveraged through neighboring colleges, such as college students serving as tutors for the initiative, or the use of classroom or meeting space on campus for activities. Local colleges and universities tend to have service learning options for students who require students to work directly with academic credit. Further, many are open to supporting community college collaborations. By bringing together various stakeholders, local resources can be discovered and used to impact adolescent literacy in a community.

Periodic Evaluation

Once an organization’s initiative gets off the ground, there need to be mechanisms for evaluating the efficacy and viability of your adolescent literacy initiative in a community. It is imperative that evaluation be included as a component of strategic planning and budgeting for a community mobilization for adolescent literacy initiatives. Clearly defined outcomes and focused timelines, goal-driven programmatic structures, and effective documentation of activities create fertile ground for learning. More importantly, these strategies can help refine programmatic areas, as well as support funding efforts to sustain an initiative over the long term.

For more information see: "Project Ready College Access Program User’s Guide"
In order to address the complexity of the adolescent literacy crisis and to understand the varied conditions in which families and children live, new systems need to be developed that will allow communities to create or enhance their own structures of support. The often used “one-size-fits-all” programmatic approach will not suffice. In fact, thoughtful coordination and collaboration among schools, businesses, community organizations, and families to mobilize across sectors, communities, agencies, and programs will promote positive change in young people’s lives and ensure greater sustainability of programming over the long term.

Traditional community mobilization strategies focus primarily on public awareness. In the guise of rallies, public awareness campaigns, etc. These are helpful in increasing public understanding on an issue, but are not equipped to address the identification and resolution of a community problem. Therefore, a useful comprehensive community mobilization model to address adolescent literacy entails both public awareness and clear mechanisms for the public engagement.

Pre-Requirements for Community/Organization Mobilization

The research on community mobilization highlights the components that are needed to implement and run a successful initiative. There must be sufficient capacity at the community level, the school district level and the lead organization level.

Community Capacity:
A targeted community for the adolescent literacy initiative should have some history of successful collaborative efforts – partnerships; coalitions and linkages among schools, businesses, community based agencies, faith-based organizations, families and individuals. The community should have a political climate and a level of social cohesion that is conducive for broad-based participation. Lastly, education reform and student achievement should be widely recognized as a collective concern and shared interest.

School District Capacity:
The school district should have a commitment to education reform and improved student achievement, with literacy as a priority focus, and have a clear plan for engaging and supporting community members in supporting student achievement. The superintendent should also have a productive relationship with the lead organization promoting the adolescent literacy initiative. Most importantly, there should be a literacy action plan for all grade levels that includes teacher professional development around literacy instruction.

Lead Organization Capacity:
As the Lead Organization, it is important that your organization has a mission that explicitly focuses on youth development and also has literacy development as a programmatic priority. It should be located in a particular community and a track record for “getting things done” in that community. Lastly, the organization’s leadership should have a view of a literacy vision and commitment to community development and mobilization in this area.

A community mobilization model must incorporate (see Anderson’s 8 do):
• A shared vision, a common set of goals, objectives and outcomes among stakeholders.
• A commitment to language strategy.
• Action plans based on assessments of local strengths and needs (as an asset model approach).
• Visible implementation strategies and programmatic models.
• Restructuring and leveraging local resources.
• Periodic evaluating the models’ effectiveness on communities.

A Shared Vision, a Common Set of Goals, Objectives and Outcomes

The National Urban League and the Urban League of Champagne County develop a Community Mobilization on Education Equity Framework that has been widely used in the Urban League movement.

1. Initial step to creating a shared vision, goals and outcomes among stakeholders in a community mobilization for adolescent literacy initiative is for an organization spearheading the project to have a clear vision about its own goals, objectives and outcomes as an organization. Before engaging in such a large effort to enhance adolescent literacy, all the organization’s Board of Directors, the CEO to the frontline staff must view the initiative as reflecting its organizational priorities, must be educated on the initiative and be willing to leverage organizational resources to that end.

A Commitment to Long-Range Strategic Planning Among Stakeholders

Once an organization is clear on its own goals, outcomes and objectives, it can launch into an effort to interact with other organizations, with children, and with schools to build awareness and “buy-in” to the initiative. This collaborative conversation with a meeting or an Education Summit of business leaders, principals, district administrators, school board members, and other key stakeholders to both inform about the adolescent literacy challenge in your community by providing data such as national test results, local, state and local comparisons of student performance in reading and writing, and subsequently promote an action by all by these one. Crucial step is generating some outcome targets for the initiative. Subsequently, a series of working groups can emerge from the summits or meetings that can set priorities, develop action plans, and facilitate larger strategic planning around this initiative.

Action Plans Based on Assessments of Local Strengths and Needs (An Asset-Based Approach)

The action plans that emerge from the community mobilization are the local strengths and needs of the community being targeted. In this end, some strengths as well as some promising needs will be clearly identified in the community. An asset-based approach to community mobilization presumes that challenges are present in communities.

The National Urban League of Community Study in Partnership with

“...It’s hard to imagine a mobilization for adolescent literacy – around.”

mobilization for Adolescent Literacy

Community/Organization Mobilization for Adolescent Literacy

*For more on asset-based see “Project Ready College Access Program User’s Guide”
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Community/Organization Mobilization for Adolescent Literacy (i.e. elevated literacy rates among adolescents) but also affirms that there are numerous unexploited, untapped or underutilized assets in a community as well. A school district, for instance, may have strong parent engagement and/or active community members who could possibly serve as literacy advocates in the school and neighborhood. Local business groups may be willing to work together to allocate funds to provide students for children who can participate in proposed literacy activities. Government officials may be willing to incorporate asset awards for youth who demonstrate improved literacy, and religious leaders may be willing to stress the value of literacy through their sermons or in their congregation events. These actions should be identified and strategically planned through the data-driven efforts of the stakeholders involved in the initiative.

Viable implementation strategies and Programmatic Structures

The action plans must be converted into viable implementation strategies and programmatic structures. This entails coordinating and collaborating efforts by various stakeholders with each other to meet the proposed assets and outcome targets. For instance, a local woman’s group seeks university faculty to seek with them on mother’s literacy development strategies is one example of aligning services. Another example is a local employee establishing a book club or sends employees to hangings at a local school. Here, employees, in turn, are required to serve as tutors for younger children in the community. Action plans must incorporate deliberate planning and strategic action!

Restructuring and Leveraging Local Resources

Utilizing an asset-based approach to community mobilization for adolescent literacy requires identifying the assets in a community. These assets (i.e. human, social, educational, environmental, monetary, political, etc) should be leveraged to support your initiative. For instance, the lead organization may discover that there are potential funds available through a local politician’s office to support a youth initiative that requires the collaboration with neighborhood businesses. Other resources could be misused and leveraged through neighboring colleges, such as college students serving as tutors for the initiative, or the use of classroom or meeting space on campus for activities. Local colleges and universities need to have service learning options for students who require students to take part in an initiative for credit or course groups. Further, may also open to supporting community-college collaborations. By bringing together various stakeholders, local resources can be discovered and used to impact adolescent literacy in a community.

Periodic Evaluation

Once an organization’s initiative gets off the ground, there need to be mechanisms for evaluating the efficacy and viability of your adolescent literacy initiative in a community. It is imperative that evaluation be included in their strategic planning and budgeting for a community mobilization for adolescent literacy initiatives. Clearly defined outcome targets, solid programmatic structures and effective documentation of activities create fertile ground for more meaningful analysis. More importantly, evaluation can help refine programs as well as support fundraising efforts to sustain an initiative over the long term.

Excerpt from NUL Mobilizing Communities to Support the Literacy Development of Urban Youth (p. 10)
Below is a check list of steps that a lead organization should take to develop a community-wide literacy initiative.

Check List

- As the lead organization, gather and disseminate data on the scope of the adolescent literacy problem.
- Meet one-on-one with community leaders, school officials and other stakeholders/organizations to identify shared interests and provide a vision for how literacy can be integrated with other community initiatives.
- Convene meetings, forums or summits to further build community awareness and develop partnerships around adolescent literacy.
- Develop key partnerships with community leaders, school officials and other stakeholders/organizations that incorporate strategic planning and programmatic outcome targets for an adolescent literacy initiative.
- Periodically evaluate the effectiveness of the community mobilization for adolescent literacy efforts.

See Mobilizing Communities to Support the Literacy Development of Urban Youth, pg. 31
Below is a check list of steps that a lead organization should take to develop a community-wide literacy initiative.

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