Schools Cannot Do It Alone Study Guide
*Designed for teams engaged in local Great Conversations
Based upon “Schools Cannot Do It Alone” by Dr. Jamie Vollmer ISBN: 978-0-982-75690-4

Purpose: to provide a guide for internalizing the key information and concepts from the book enabling local leadership teams to facilitate a dialogue culminating in a set of actions to engage their local community in the Great Conversation.

About Schools Cannot Do It Alone

Vollmer has written a highly readable book addressing both the need for systemic school transformation and a methodology for re-building strong public support for schools. If you have not yet had the opportunity to hear Dr. Vollmer, please watch these short YouTube videos:

Jamie tells his famous “Blueberry Story”:  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9TUrHMZMno

Jamie’s appeal to our moral sensibilities:  http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=tRMqQ4nlcZs

About This Study Guide

This Guide is designed to provide you and your leadership team with the following:
- Synopsis & Key Points of each Section
- Team Discussion Questions
- Connecting to Your Community
- Finding the Bright Spots
- Additional Resources

*This study guide is a key element in the Great Conversation Toolkit available at:
www.thegreat convo.com

INTRODUCTION

Synopsis & Key Points
The book opens with Jamie in his Dad’s study preparing to deliver his father’s eulogy. A photo of his Dad’s 4th grade teacher, Katherine Skelton, hangs prominently. Jamie’s Dad had not been a model student when he entered Ms. Skelton’s class but she saw in him unlimited potential. In the ensuing years Skelton encouraged, pushed, and followed Jamie’s father through his attainment of a Ph.D. In delivering Skelton’s eulogy, Jamie’s Dad stated, “In my life, Katherine Skelton was the difference.”

Public schools and the teachers in them do this for thousands of kids every day. Public schools made our democracy possible. It allowed many kids to step up and out of impossible situations to realize their potential. This book is unabashedly in support of public schools.
The problem: our schools were designed to meet Industrial Age demands, not the realities we face today. Our schools were built on the vision of Thomas Jefferson over 200 years ago “To rake the genius from the rubbish.” Vollmer argues this is no longer an appropriate or useful vision for our schools. Today’s context (and our moral imperative) is to create an educational system to “unfold the potential of every child.”

We face a system’s problem, not a people problem. Despite this, most school improvements are implicitly or explicitly based upon the assumption that we have a people problem. Because we face a systems problem, it does not matter how hard or how long our educators work to make every child successful because they cannot produce the outcomes we need for our children and country today in the system we ask them to operate in. The system simply isn’t designed to allow every child to succeed.

“Community” and not just “school” is the answer to transforming education because schools are shaped by and reflect their communities. If we want to move away from “rake the genius from the rubbish” systems and towards “unfolding the potential of every child” systems, we must do more than change school. We must change America itself - one community at a time. To do this, we must change the conversations happening in our communities and re-engage them in their schools. In short, we must build in each community, their:

- Understanding
- Trust
- Permission
- Support

While we face a daunting task, Vollmer’s message is one of hope:

“This is public education’s most hopeful time”

Team Discussion Questions

- Do we believe we have a responsibility to unfold the possibility of every child in our midst?
  - Why or why not?
  - What might the implications be for schools in this simple vision statement?
- Are we willing to consider that we must deal with the system rather than blame, cajole, threaten, or mandate the people in it?
  - Why or why not?
  - What do you need to know or learn about in order to help continue to build your understanding and ability to lead this work in your community?
Connecting to Your Community

- Does our community believe it has a responsibility to unfold the possibility of every child in our midst?
  - Why or why not? How do we know? What evidence do we have?
  - Does the community believe they are already doing it? Why or why not?
- Is our community willing to consider that we must deal with the system rather than blame, cajole, threaten, or mandate the people in it?
  - Why or why not?
  - What does this team need to know or learn about in order to help lead the community towards greater understanding, trust, permission and support?

*The introduction segment does not contain a “Finding the Bright Spots” and “Additional Resources” section.

PART 1: From Critic to Ally

Synopsis:

This section is organized into four chapters:
- Chapter 1: Run It Like a Business!
- Chapter 2: The Blueberry Story
- Chapter 3: An Aide for a Day
- Chapter 4: The Ever-Increasing Burden

Vollmer was a successful CEO at The Great Midwestern Ice Cream Company in Fairfield, Iowa when asked to join the “Iowa Business & Educational Roundtable” in the late 1980’s to help drive school improvement in Iowa. He arrived armed with interest, enthusiasm, and zero understanding of the issues.

Vollmer’s opinions were formed by stories of educational failure in business press and popular media where it was taken for granted that schools were failing:
  - Alarming gaps between what students knew and what they needed to know.
  - Business was not getting the kind of workers it needed.
  - We were failing behind our international competitors.
  - Our way of life was at risk.

The common view among the Roundtable business leaders was they were faced with a people problem. Unionized teachers and overpaid administrators were obstacles to progress; they were a protected monopoly and had no reason or incentive to change and work hard and therefore didn’t. The solution? Turn up the heat by:
  - imposing strict accountability measures from outside
  - punishing failure
  - raising standards
  - demanding rigor
- rejecting excuses
- introducing competition.

Vollmer became the Director of the roundtable and over the years, his views changed completely when he recognized his assumptions and perceptions were based upon: selective memory, misinformation, half-truths, and outright lies. Erroneous assumptions created cognitive illusions – distorted perceptions of reality – in him and most everyone else.

One seminal moment in his journey to public school champion happened when he was asked to present to a group of teachers. This story is related in Chapter 2: The Blueberry Story and Vollmer tells it to an audience here: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9TUrHMZMno](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9TUrHMZMno). As a result, Vollmer began to spend time in schools, walking for a time in the shoes of teachers and principals. This experience caused him to recognize most of his previous assumptions were erroneous and flat wrong.

His research uncovered a simple but powerful fact: we had, over the past century, asked schools to do more than just teach our children but to raise them. He compiled the now famous “Vollmer’s List” showing the massive volume of work society had handed over to schools to “fix.” His full list can be found in the Appendix of this document.

Despite this massive “dumping” of work onto schools while not adding a single minute to the school day, schools were doing surprisingly well:
- Many school measures were up:
  - attendance and drop-out rates improved
  - the number and difficulty of HS courses escalated
  - more students were going to college than ever before
  - standardized test scores improved – albeit slightly – despite growing childhood poverty and diversity.

Vollmer’s prior belief that the Quality movement - which produced top-down impositions of accountability measures emphasizing extrinsic rewards, sanctions, ridicule, and threats - were proving NOT to be the path to excellence. He began the search for the real “problems” our communities and schools faced.

**Team Discussion Questions**

- How many of us on this team hold/held assumptions and views similar to Vollmer?
- What have been the implications of demanding more and more of our teachers and schools while focusing and pointing out their inabilities and deficiencies?
- What are the implications if we do have a systems problem rather than a people problem?

**Connecting to Your Community**

- Does our community hold some or all of the assumptions and views held by Vollmer?
  - If so, what are the most prevalent ones?
How do you know? What do we hear the community saying and recommending that suggests they hold these assumptions?

- In what ways do the staff in the schools react to these assumptions and the recommendations and demands that come from them?
- Who in the community currently understands the problem as a systems problem?
- Given your community – what elements of Jamie’s story in this section would likely best resonate with them and cause them to question some of the debilitating assumptions?

Finding the Bright Spots

- Where are examples, right now, of our schools demonstrating amazing success despite the challenges and burdens they’ve been handed?
- What sort of experiences, stories, and data would best resonate with the community and begin to open them up to a different conversation about schools?
- Who are the most credible in sharing these stories and information to the community and school staff? Why?

Additional Resources:

Jamie tells his famous “Blueberry Story”: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9TUrhMzMno](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O9TUrhMzMno)


Many resources available at Iowa Futures website: [http://www.iowafuture.org/](http://www.iowafuture.org/)


PART II: WHY OUR SCHOOLS NEED TO CHANGE

Synopsis:

This section is organized into four chapters:
- Chapter 5: The Flaw in the System
- Chapter 6: The New Competitive Equation
- Chapter 7: The Smoking Gun
- Chapter 8: Challenging the Core Beliefs

Chapter 5: The Flaw in the System

- Millions of teachers and administrators struggle every year to deliver outcomes the system was never designed to produce.
Thomas Jefferson developed the vision for education our current system is founded upon yet today: “to rake the genius from the rubbish” meaning a “sort and select” system.

A rational vision at the time as we didn’t need a lot of “learned” people, we needed machine-like people to perform manual labor – thinking was reserved for the intellectual elite and owners.

American schools have never unfolded the potential of every child (nor have they been asked to). As we moved into the Industrial Age, our forefathers utilized the best organizational thinking of the day – the factory model - to design schools like factories based upon scientific management to produce a docile, compliant working class.

The Committee of Ten formulated the design for the Comprehensive High School effectively institutionalizing the sorting out the “academic” from the “terminal.” This was further enhanced by the Carnegie Foundation’s “Carnegie units” dictating courses and the time allotted to the teaching of these courses. The result: a rigid time-based structure assuring a consistent sort-and-select outcome.

“Graduating with your class” introduced the concept of failure – students not learning in the time allotted or not scoring well on tests determined who was going to the factories. The introduction of standardized tests dramatically advanced sorting efficiency. The rigid adherence to schedules, narrow and de-contextualized curriculum, and one-size-fits-all approaches to teaching and testing provided America with a ready work-force but resulted in a tremendous waste of human potential.

The selecting factory model system helped make America the greatest economic and military superpower in the history of the world. It’s success makes it all the more difficult to accept that it is no longer viable in the world we face.

Problem: we are no longer getting what we need to be economically competitive. Despite teaching more kids to higher levels than ever before, we still leave millions of kids with nowhere to go because we continue to operate a “sort and select” educational system.

Chapter 6: The New Competitive Equation

We no longer need a sort-and-select system to fill our factories with people – machines have made mindless, repetitive labor virtually obsolete.

The “learned-to-laboring” ratio has been turned on its head. 77% of all American jobs in 1967 were unskilled and semi-skilled positions. Today it is 13% and predicted to fall to 5% over the next decade. The “sorted out” simply have nowhere to go in today’s economy.

Front-line workers today function in self-directed, multi-ethnic teams where they set goals, develop budgets, control quality, and solve problems. Hardly the work of Industrial Age laborers.

A strong back and a willingness to work is no longer a vehicle to the American Dream.

Teachers are exhausted trying to teach all children to a high level in a system purposely designed to sort-and-select and only teach some. The deck is stacked against them.

This design flaw is painfully obvious in today’s schools.
Chapter 7: The Smoking Gun (or “The Battle of the Clock”)

- The smoking gun: we hold time constant and make learning variable as evidenced by:
  - All children go to school at the same time for the same number of hours and days.
  - While knowing not everyone learns at the same rate in the same way, the system assumes they all start at the same point and learn in the same way.
  - With time as the constant for teaching, learning, and testing, we sort out children not based on their intelligence but upon the speed with which they learn (and the background experiences they come to us with.)
  - Time-constant systems produce a bell-curve of student achievement – some will “get it quickly”, most will “get most of it” and others “won’t get it.”
- Acceptance of the status quo is based upon three core beliefs:
  - #1: Intelligence is genetic and immutable. People are born with a fixed level of intelligence.
  - #2: Intelligence is distributed across a bell curve. There is some genius, some rubbish, and a whole lot of average in every population.
  - #3: The bell curve of human intelligence and the bell curve for student achievement is the same curve. Smart kids get A’s, average kids get C’s, and dumb kids get F’s.
- If any of these core beliefs are groundless, then the selecting premise is indefensible and we face a systems problem of enormous proportions.
- Vollmer discovered that #1 and #3 were flat-out wrong and #2 was correct, but only in 3 dimensions, not 2.

Chapter 8: Challenging the Core Beliefs

- “Intelligence Grows.” Contrary to belief #1, intelligence is not fixed. People’s brains can grow neural connections over time and those connections can become more efficient. This is called “Neural plasticity”.
- The 3 dimensional view of intelligence demonstrates each of us has different intelligence and skill in different areas representing the full range of human intelligence. A single bell curve fails to appreciate this and is insensitive to the scope and breadth of human intelligence.
- This has revolutionary implications for transforming our schools.

Team Discussion Questions

- Can you identify the current structures, processes, procedures, attitudes, and beliefs in your school designed on the vision of “raking the genius from the rubbish.” Make a list.
- What has the system done to try to get more kids over the bar in a sort-and-select system? Make a list. Has it come at a cost? If so, what have been the financial, social, and human costs?
Connecting to Your Community

- Does your community have a firm grasp of this history of our educational system? If no, what elements don’t they understand or haven’t been exposed to?
- What are the greatest challenges in helping the community understand a new vision (unfolding the potential of every child) requires a transformation of the structures and processes schools employ?
- What are the “cultural norms,” assumptions, and “evidence to the contrary” that will make this message hard to hear and accept for your community?
- What traditions will need to be maintained in order for your community to move towards acceptance of a new vision for education? (e.g. one of the first things that often comes up are questions like: “what graduation year will a student put on their student ring?” “What happens to prom?” “How will sports work?”)

Finding the Bright Spots

- Where are examples in your school and community demonstrating movement towards “competency” rather than “clock” and that is working? (e.g. think boy scouts, sports, etc.)

Additional Resources

- Understanding the History of Education and Our Changing Context: [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVbRrV90ytA&context=C39f4300ADOEgsToPDskK RdHWlzBn87k38_OrvBEGh](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VVbRrV90ytA&context=C39f4300ADOEgsToPDskK RdHWlzBn87k38_OrvBEGh)

PART III: THE PUBLIC IS NOT READY

Synopsis:

This section is organized into six chapters:
- Chapter 9: Struggling to Be Heard
- Chapter 10: On the Brink of Progress
- Chapter 11: The Obstructive Power of “Real School”
- Chapter 12: Considering Community Involvement
- Chapter 13: The Terrible Twenty Trends
- Chapter 14: The Prerequisites of Progress
Chapter 9: Struggling to Be Heard

- We face an uphill battle.
  - The institution of school is big and culturally entrenched.
  - Educators are overburdened, highly insular, and speak their own language.
  - The controlling bureaucracy is highly prescriptive.
  - Little time is afforded educators to learn and work together.
  - Teachers not in the classroom are perceived to “not be working” and burdens parents for childcare.
  - Teachers finding little value in the structure and topics of their professional development further undermine the value by sharing their wish to “just be in the classroom” with the public.
  - The system reacts to change agents like our immune system reacts to a virus – it circles and kills it as quickly as it can – the system is designed to reject any form of variation.

- The “Axis of Chaos”: professors, politicians, and bureaucrats impose “solutions” increasing work and usually making things worse. New waves of “reform” wash over schools constantly, resulting in comments like “We’ve seen this before. Just ignore it and this too shall pass.”

- Many desire the opportunity to change but the system makes it nearly impossible for them to develop and sustain any meaningful change.

- When demanding “world-class schools” talk is cheap. Time constraints, the desire for quick results, and fragmented and prescriptive financing increases the difficulty.

- It is no surprise that educators are hesitant to act and embrace change. Dismissing this response as a result of obstinence, unions, tenure, or lack of competition isn’t only short-sighted but untrue.

- Plenty of intelligent and motivated administrators and teachers exist and have and do actively work to transform education, but they face seemingly insurmountable odds.

Chapter 10: On the Brink of Progress

- Despite the challenges, Vollmer saw change-agents everywhere he went and they were aggressively working on:
  - Curriculum. Answering the question: what do our graduates need to know and be able to do to be successful?
  - Student motivation. Understanding human passion and interest are the real drivers to learning and development, not a prescribed set of courses and subjects given when the adults believe they should get it.
  - Assessments focusing on the acquisition and demonstration of key competencies, skills, and knowledge sets.
  - The school calendar – established to feed an agrarian society’s needs.

- So what happened? Nothing. Wait, something happened. There was often one major change– the superintendent was fired – because “that’s not the way we do things around here.” The comfortable, but ineffective, status quo returned.
Chapter 11: The Obstructive Power of “Real School”

- There are few mental models of “how things should be” more entrenched in American society than the public’s model of school. (Peter Senge)
- Almost everyone shares the experience of public school. Most of us left to never return and with us went our model of what “school” is and should be.
- Our experience – 10, 20, 50 years ago – is still etched in our mind. However, over time many of us develop what Vollmer calls “Nostesia” – part nostalgia and part amnesia.
- Nostesia causes the public to romanticize their public school experience to such a degree that they openly believe that schools were better then and the solution is to “go back” to the way it used to be. The facts:
  - The dropout rates are better than they have ever been.
  - The level of complexity and depth of the subjects and content far surpass what most of us were required to learn and master.
  - Standardized tests are more difficult than ever before.
- We believe we learned more and did better in school than kids today while conveniently forgetting that most of what we learned we learned AFTER we left school.
- We ignore the fact we have forgotten most of what we were taught in school. (Can you recall the allegory that was presented in The Scarlet Letter? Can you explain the top five reasons for the Civil War? Can you name the U.S. Presidents in order? Can you solve a quadratic equation? Can you correctly identify the parts of a chicken egg?)
- Most importantly, people resist that which threatens to change their culture. To compound this, in a world of complex and frightening change, our schools represent the one place in our community still recognizable. There is a safety and comfort in that.
- The school is a living projection of the culture of the community – it’s collective attitudes, values and beliefs. School is the cultural DNA of the community.
- Only in the pursuit of a high school diploma do we hold time constant and leave a multitude of students behind to believe they are “less than” and “stupid.”
- YOU CANNOT TOUCH A SCHOOL WITHOUT TOUCHING THE CULTURE OF THE SURROUNDING COMMUNITY.
- In order to “unfold the potential of every child” we must do more than change schools – we must change the very community surrounding the school.
- The school cannot and will not change in the face of community resistance.

Chapter 12: Considering Community Involvement

- We cannot get from point A to point B without first going through C – Community.
- When it comes to education – everyone is a shareholder, everyone pays taxes, and everyone has an opinion. Thus, the community has the final word regarding the design of their schools.
- We must penetrate the community’s cultural core and create a whole new conversation in order for our schools to effectively change.
- At the very moment we need the public the most is the very moment when they are turning away from their schools.
Chapter 13: The Terrible Twenty Trends

Through Vollmer’s travels and research he identified twenty trends working against schools and communities in their effort to understand and change their schools:

1. Changing Demographics
2. Negative Media
3. Fear of School Violence
4. Culture War
5. The Clanning of America
6. The Rights Revolution
7. The Rise of Special Interests
8. The Plague of Regulations
9. Fear and Loathing of the Government
10. The Frenzy of Privatization
11. Anti-Tax Movement
12. Schools as Scapegoats
13. Union Bashing
14. Public Perceptions of Alternatives
15. Demand for Customization
16. International Comparisons
17. Standardized Testing
18. Changing Job Market
19. Ever-Expanding Expectations
20. The Biloski Dilemma – the difficulty the public has in successfully and easily engaging with their schools.

With the problems clearly identified and invalid assumptions refuted, we can begin to craft solutions and create the public schools we all want and which our children deserve.

Chapter 14: The Prerequisites of Progress

Community Understanding. Our community must understand what we are doing now, why we do it that way, and how we plan to change it. The public must understand school cannot continue to look like it did when they went there. They are tuned in to WIFM (what’s in it for me) and we must clearly share why transformation is in their best interest whether or not they have children in school. Vollmer says, “Self-interest may not always trump altruism, but that’s the way to bet.” In short, our communities must understand our current design of “school” and the “conventional wisdom” about how to improve them is producing:

- Depressed local economies
- Increasing health care costs and problems
- Reduced quality of life

Community Trust. Trust in our educators must be re-built. Schools are complex. Mistakes will be made. Money will be needed or shifted. Emotions will run hot. People must know educators are not trying to “feather their own nests” or “experiment” with their kids. They must begin to
again see their educators as partners working *for* the community, not aloof professionals working *in* the community. The beauty in this? Improved understanding creates and develops increased trust. There is not a shortage of talented, visionary, energetic educators in your community unless you choose to believe there is.

**Community Permission.** We must have community permission to move forward. It must be their idea and their desire. Permission is a by-product of understanding and trust.

**Community Support.** Schools cannot do it alone. The community must demonstrate patience, respect, appreciation, generosity, and active participation in the creation of a vibrant learning environment that unfolds the potential of every child in their midst.

**Team Discussion Questions**

- What elements of the argument cause you the most dissonance and discomfort? Why?
- What structures, attitudes and beliefs hold your educators from coming together with the community to create new schools and solve the problems you face?

**Connecting to Your Community**

- Do you believe your community has the assets – the talents, skills, and other resources to make this happen? Why or why not?
- Is “nostesia” present in your community? In what ways does it manifest itself?
- Are the “Terrible Twenty Trends” at work in your community? Which ones are most prevalent?
- How does a change of this magnitude challenge the existing culture of your community?
- Who are the various stakeholders in your community? Using the template in Appendix II, identify your community stakeholder groups and answer the following about them:
  - What do they expect from their school?
  - What assumptions – both valid and invalid – do they likely have about your school and what is needed?
  - What might be the best messages to share with them? What sort of things will resonate with that shareholder group? What might you be able to do to engage them in a discussion of the possibilities rather than the problems?
  - Based on your collective experience and understanding, rate your community’s current level of: understanding, trust, permission and support? Use a 4 point scale:
    - 1 – little or none
    - 2 – some but highly skeptical
    - 3 – quite a bit
    - 4 – full and ready to go

**Finding the Bright Spots**

- Where in your community are discussions and actions about possibilities for crafting a new future for education and the community alive?
• Where are examples of the community challenging old ideas and constructing new realities?
• Where in the school are truly transformational actions and results happening? Can you identify students who have been given the opportunity – in school or the community – to truly unfold their unique talents and potential?
• What groups in the community are looking for the opportunity to engage, connect, and work to improve the school?

Additional Resources


See Appendix II

PART IV: THE GREAT CONVERSATION

Synopsis:

This section is organized into twelve chapters explaining the “what” and “how” of the Great Conversation and which encompass the bulk of our work together. The Great Conversation is a positive, ongoing discussion between educators and the communities they serve. The goal is to take steps to go deep enough into the fabric of the community to challenge nostesia, reshape mental models, and counter the effects of the Terrible Twenty Trends.

Little additional money and other resources is necessary. Properly executed, your community can develop the understanding, trust, permission and support necessary to transform your schools and the outcomes for hundreds and thousands of children. Unfolding the potential of every child is no longer an impractical, utopian fantasy – it’s our nation’s greatest need (not to mention a moral imperative.) Without strategic, ongoing, structured processes and help, a community will not be – is not – ready. The Great Conversation is not a panacea but, done well, can break the cycle we now find ourselves in. Each step is designed to promote a meaningful flow of two-way conversation.

There are two tracks:
• The Formal Track – deliberate, organized, scripted, group action targeting the whole of the community.
• The Informal Track – hundreds of casual discussions conducted by individuals within the context of the daily life and routine of the community.
• Participation in either track is completely voluntary.

Who leads? In short – you do - in conjunction with the district’s leadership and governance team. You have legitimate power and authority. Senior administration, the Board, teacher-leaders, and key community leaders must, at a minimum, approve of and support the process.
Who presents to the public? NOT the superintendent or senior leaders but the teachers, custodians, secretaries, bus drivers, and other community members and leaders. Support? Yes. Provide resources and open doors? Yes. Be the face of the conversation? No. This will evolve into an organic discussion among adults within their networks of influence.

**FORMAL TRACK:**

- It must be done on the **community’s turf** at the **community’s convenience**. This means we must go to them. No more asking them into the school or holding special meetings. We must meet them where they are and where they engage with the community – in the clubs, organizations, businesses, and shops of the community. The Formal Track will provide six major benefits:
  - By going to them, we greatly expand the size of our audience.
  - By shifting the venue, we increase audience receptivity.
  - Audiences are better behaved on their own turf.
  - Time constraints posed by most meetings in the community force us to sharpen our message.
  - Moving the Conversation to the community’s turf slowly changes the perception of “us” and “them.”
  - Shifting the venue make it easy to precisely monitor the diffusion of our message throughout the community.

- **Mapping the Community:**
  - We must create a functional map of where our community meets, when, and who.
  - We must find the groups encompassing and fully representing our community and prepare to go to them.
  - We begin by hitting the most influential and largest groups in the community.
  - We use it to help identify the “connectors” – those in the community who connect people together; “mavens” – those in the community who expose people to new ideas and possibilities, and; “salesmen” – those in the community who others listen to and follow.
  - Our maps will evolve over time.
  - We use these maps to carefully monitor the implementation and reach of the Great Conversation.

- **Decide on the Message:**
  - We carefully build a series of messages and ensure they make sense and are something people can connect to and embrace.
  - Our goal is to move the community along a continuum to greater understanding, then trust, then permission, and finally support. The rate of speed will vary wildly across the community groups.
  - The messages should not be confrontational.
  - Victory over the nasty and ignorant is not our goal. Administering a good “beat-down” serves no useful or lasting purpose (despite making us feel better.)
  - We win by gaining public support based on cooperative relationships, shared interests, and mutual respect.
  - The message hits on four basic themes:
    - Concrete, practical reasons to feel good about their school
• Explaining the urgent need for change
• Helping every member of the community understand what they personally gain from the creation of great schools
• Demonstrating open, honest, ongoing exchange of information and ideas

• Developing Scripts:
  o Winging it is not an option.
  o It helps lots of people feel comfortable sharing the message and engaging others in the Conversation
  o They ensure we stay on point and do so in the time allotted
  o They must be flexible, precise, and clear
  o All of this work must be first done with the educators before the community – they can’t be left to find out later what has been happening.

• Building Teams:
  o You are the lead team.
  o No one goes alone
  o Expand your team continually, having the team represent and embody the entirety of your community
  o Alter the messengers – get teachers and staff involved, let the community see and interact with them directly. Doing so will allow the community to see their passion, expertise, and drive.
  o FAQ’s must allow team members to confidently deal with questions and objections and a mechanism must be in place to bring back questions the presenters don’t know the answers to so that answers get back to respondents quickly.

• Conducting a Communications Audit:
  o The school communicates in a myriad of ways already. These must be put together, understood, and then used to help drive the Conversation. Everything from the district newsletter to the superintendent’s newspaper column, to the billboard in front of the school, to the public spaces where messages can be presented must be fully and strategically utilized

• Creating a Comprehensive Schedule:
  o Using the map and the messages, you must manage and deploy a schedule that methodically and continually puts this in front of the community.

THE INFORMAL TRACK:
• This takes place privately within an individual’s personal social and professional networks.
• Based on the idea each individual has great power to influence those in their social networks.
• The Steps:
  o Shift your attention to the positive. What we focus on grows stronger. Our community gets what it celebrates. Celebrate and promote the positive.
  o Stop bad-mouthing one another in public.
  o Share something positive each week within your own network.
  o Monitor your progress.
Start today.

**Team Discussion and Questions**
- What are a few things you could do as a team – tomorrow – to initiate your own informal track? What can you commit to as a team?

**Connecting to Your Community and Finding the Bright Spots** will be conducted as part of your ongoing work as a team and in these sessions.
Appendix I:

The Ever Increasing Burden on America’s Public Schools
BY JAMIE ROBERT VOLLMER

America’s public schools can be traced back to the year 1640. The Massachusetts Puritans established schools to: 1) Teach basic reading, some writing and arithmetic skills, and 2) Cultivate values that serve a democratic society (some history and civics implied).

The founders of these schools assumed that families and churches bore the major responsibility for raising a child. Gradually, science and geography were added, but the curriculum was limited and remained focused for 260 years.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, however, politicians, academics, members of the clergy, and business leaders saw public schools as a logical site for the assimilation of immigrants and the social engineering of the citizens—and workers—of the new industrial age. They began to expand the curriculum and assign additional duties. That trend has accelerated ever since.

From 1900 to 1910, we shifted to our public schools responsibilities related to
• Nutrition
• Immunization
• Health (Activities in the health arena multiply every year.)

From 1910 to 1930, we added
• Physical education (including organized athletics)
• The Practical Arts/Domestic Science/Home economics (including sewing and cooking)
• Vocational education (including industrial and agricultural education)
• Mandated school transportation

In the 1940s, we added
• Business education (including typing, shorthand, and bookkeeping)
• Art and music
• Speech and drama
• Half-day kindergarten
• School lunch programs (We take this for granted today, but it was a huge step to shift to the schools the job of feeding America’s children one third of their daily meals.)

In the 1950s, we added
• Expanded science and math education
• Safety education
• Driver’s education
• Expanded music and art education
• Stronger foreign language requirements
• Sex education (Topics continue to escalate.)
In the 1960s, we added
- Advanced Placement programs
- Head Start
- Title I
- Adult education
- Consumer education (purchasing resources, rights and responsibilities)
- Career education (occupational options, entry level skill requirements)
- Peace, leisure, and recreation education [Loved those sixties.]

In the 1970s, the breakup of the American family accelerated, and we added
- Drug and alcohol abuse education
- Parenting education (techniques and tools for healthy parenting)
- Behavior adjustment classes (including classroom and communication skills)
- Character education
- Special education (mandated by federal government)
- Title IX programs (greatly expanded athletic programs for girls)
- Environmental education
- Women’s studies
- African-American heritage education
- School breakfast programs (Now some schools feed America’s children two-thirds of their daily meals throughout the school year and all summer. Sadly, these are the only decent meals some children receive.)

In the 1980s, the floodgates opened, and we added
- Keyboarding and computer education
- Global education
- Multicultural/Ethnic education
- Nonsexist education
- English-as-a-second-language and bilingual education
- Teen pregnancy awareness
- Hispanic heritage education
- Early childhood education
- Jump Start, Early Start, Even Start, and Prime Start
- Full-day kindergarten
- Preschool programs for children at risk
- After-school programs for children of working parents
- Alternative education in all its forms
- Stranger/danger education
- Antismoking education
- Sexual abuse prevention education
- Expanded health and psychological services
- Child abuse monitoring (a legal requirement for all teachers)
In the 1990s, we added

- Conflict resolution and peer mediation
- HIV/AIDS education
- CPR training
- Death education
- America 2000 initiatives (Republican)
- Inclusion
- Expanded computer and internet education
- Distance learning
- Tech Prep and School to Work programs
- Technical Adequacy
- Assessment
- Post-secondary enrollment options
- Concurrent enrollment options
- Goals 2000 initiatives (Democrat)
- Expanded Talented and Gifted opportunities
- At risk and dropout prevention
- Homeless education (including causes and effects on children)
- Gang education (urban centers)
- Service learning
- Bus safety, bicycle safety, gun safety, and water safety education

In the first decade of the twenty-first century, we have added

- No Child Left Behind (Republican)
- Bully prevention
- Anti-harassment policies (gender, race, religion, or national origin)
- Expanded early childcare and wrap around programs
- Elevator and escalator safety instruction
- Body Mass Index evaluation (obesity monitoring)
- Organ donor education and awareness programs
- Personal financial literacy
- Entrepreneurial and innovation skills development
- Media literacy development
- Contextual learning skill development
- Health and wellness programs
- Race to the Top (Democrat)

This list does not include the addition of multiple, specialized topics within each of the traditional subjects. It also does not include the explosion of standardized testing and test prep activities, or any of the onerous reporting requirements imposed by the federal government, such as four-year adjusted cohort graduation rates, parental notification of optional supplemental services, comprehensive restructuring plans, and reports of Adequate Yearly Progress.

It’s a ponderous list.

Each item has merit, and all have their ardent supporters, but the truth is that we have added these responsibilities without adding a single minute to the school calendar in six decades. No
generation of teachers and administrators in the history of the world has been told to fulfill this mandate: not just teach children, but raise them!
© 2011 Jamie Vollmer | To purchase this list in poster form or to invite Jamie to speak visit www.jamievollmer.com
## Appendix II:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Stakeholder Group</th>
<th>Expect</th>
<th>Assumptions Held</th>
<th>Best Message to Share</th>
<th>Current Level: 1 to 4 (1 none, 4 ready to go)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Understanding</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Copyright SourceMedia Group & Jamie Vollmer, Inc. All Rights Reserved. Do not copy without express written permission.