COMMUNITY EDUCATION
ANOTHER PERCEPTION
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As the idea of Community Education continues to grow and expand to more and more school districts across the country, the arguments about its nebulous nature and the lack of a precise definition continue to be heard. Both supporters and opponents of Community Education point out that there is great disagreement regarding the defining and meaning of Community Education. In general, they emphasize the fact that there is a vast difference between philosophical claims of Community Education and the actual programs, which are in operation. More specifically, they acknowledge that much of what is called Community Education is, in reality, programs in adult education or recreation, and as such, are neither unique nor capable of accomplishing all that community educators claim can be accomplished by means of the community education concept.

Whether Community Education is more guilty of a vast divergence between philosophy and practice than are other disciplines is questionable, but the fact that it is a new idea seeking acceptance makes it more susceptible to scrutiny and criticism than more established programs and practices. It is, therefore, the intent of this paper to explain some of the reasons for existing confusion related to Community Education and to place the concept in a different perspective in hopes that it will establish a clearer understanding of Community Education.

A Change in the Meaning

Part of the misunderstanding which has developed in Community Education can be traced directly to its historical development. Community Education did not begin at the stage that it now exists. It is an idea which has evolved over the years and has only recently taken on the aura of a philosophy of education. During its developmental stages, Community Education was at various times synonymous with extra activities for children, adult education, or recreation programs. Unless observers are either aware the developmental aspects of Community Education or the less observable components of Community Education, they will get a false sense of what is actually happening and consequently, will develop false perceptions of the ramifications of the community education concept.

To best describe the current status of Community Education, one must take into account the dramatic change in the concept over the past few years. Community Education has moved from programs which were added on to the regular school schedule to a philosophical concept that has changed the role of the public schools. Schools which were primarily responsible for the limited education of the children of our communities between the ages of five and sixteen have now perceived an additional responsibility of providing for the educational needs of all members of the community. In addition, these

community education oriented schools have addressed themselves to the problems of community service and community development. This does not mean that schools are to be "all things to all people." However, it does apply that community schools should provide a catalytic and coordinating role for the community, acknowledging a responsibility to see that community needs are identified and dealt with more effectively.

The Components

On the surface, such a responsibility seems awesome and to speak in generalities about the potential of Community Education tends to make the concept idealistic and suspect. Therefore, to more appropriately put Community Education in perspective, let us focus on the ingredients of Community Education. While the specifics of Community Education will vary by community according to the characteristics of that community, there are certain basic components necessary to all programs.

I. An Educational Program for School Age Children

This program is the traditional program offered by all school districts. It is frequently referred to as the K-12 (kindergarten through 12th grade) or day school program.

This is listed as an ingredient of Community Education for two reasons. First, it is a vital part of the educational program of any community and second, it is often left out when we describe Community Education, leaving the impression that Community Education is an add on to the regular program. The important point is that the regular program is a key part but not the only part of education, and it should be tied into the total community education program. It should also be mentioned that in Community Education, attention should be given to relevance, community involvement, and the use of the community to enhance classroom teaching.

II. Use of Community Facilities

It has long been a contention of community educators that school buildings are used only a fraction of the time that they could be used. Many communities build additional facilities such as recreation buildings, community centers, and boys clubs to be used while the school buildings stand idle. There is often an abundance of unused space in most communities in school buildings, fire halls, churches, city buildings, and recreation facilities and maximum use should be made of these facilities before new ones are constructed. School buildings, in particular, should become a focal point for community activities and services.

III. Additional Programs for School Age Children and Youth

This aspect of Community Education presumes that there is an ever increasing need for additional activities and education for youngsters. Despite the fantastic growth in the amount of recorded knowledge, students are receiving a decreasing amount of time exposed to the formal school day. Additional information, activities, and experiences can

be provided by expanding offerings to students before school, after school, weekends and summers. Enrichment, remedial and supplemental educational activities can be offered as well as recreational, cultural, and avocational programs. This dimension of Community Education offers a fine option for year-round schools since it makes maximum use of educational facilities on a voluntary basis and truly is "year-round" education rather than a rotating vacation period, which is typical of most year-round plans.

IV. Programs for Adults

This aspect of Community Education provides the same services to the adult population as offered to school age children and youth. Included would be such things as basic education, high school completion, recreational, avocational, cultural, and vocational education. The needs of the adults would be recognized as being as important as those of the school age student, and the student body would be perceived as being all of the people who reside in that community.

V. Delivery and Coordination of Community Services

In most communities it has been found that there is not a shortage of community services, but there is a woeful lack of coordination. As a result, a specific community agency's services are generally provided to fewer than 10% of those in the community who either need or qualify for such services. In addition to the lack of coordination, most community services are organized and delivered on a community wide basis rather than in the neighborhoods where people can avail themselves of such services. The school, by means of its school buildings and community school personnel, can help identify problems and resources and provide the coordination necessary to bring these two together. The key role of the school is catalytic, and the school would not provide programs or services, which are either already provided or capable of being provided by other agencies. Only when existing agencies are unable to provide services would the community education coordinator assist in the development of new programs. The coordinator actually acts as a broker, relating problems to resources and making referrals to the appropriate sources. By making existing resources aware of the many problems, agencies will tend to coordinate their efforts in order to more effectively provide the services needed.
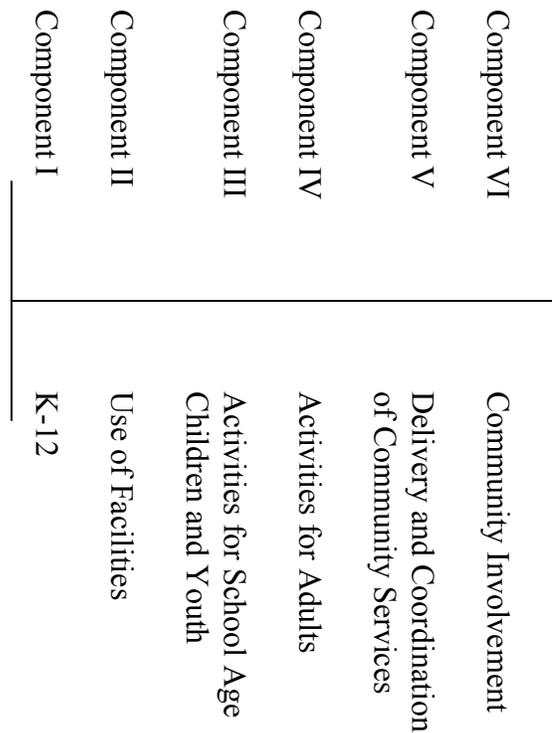
VI. Community Involvement

This phase of Community Education has often been described as the effort to return "participatory democracy." The idea is to help persons who live in a particular neighborhood participate in the identity of local problems and to develop the process for attempting to solve such problems. In areas the size of an elementary school attendance area, the school assists in the development of a community council whose membership is based on community representation and two-way communications. Community education personnel assist this council in its organization and development until the community councils are able to continue as viable organizations on their own.

To this point, much of what has been said has been discussed extensively among community educators without absolute agreement or acceptance of the ingredients mentioned. In order to provide a better understanding of the community education concept and the relationship of its components, the following models are presented. If one were to try to diagram the ingredients of Community Education they might look like this:

Figure 1 – The Ingredients in Community Education

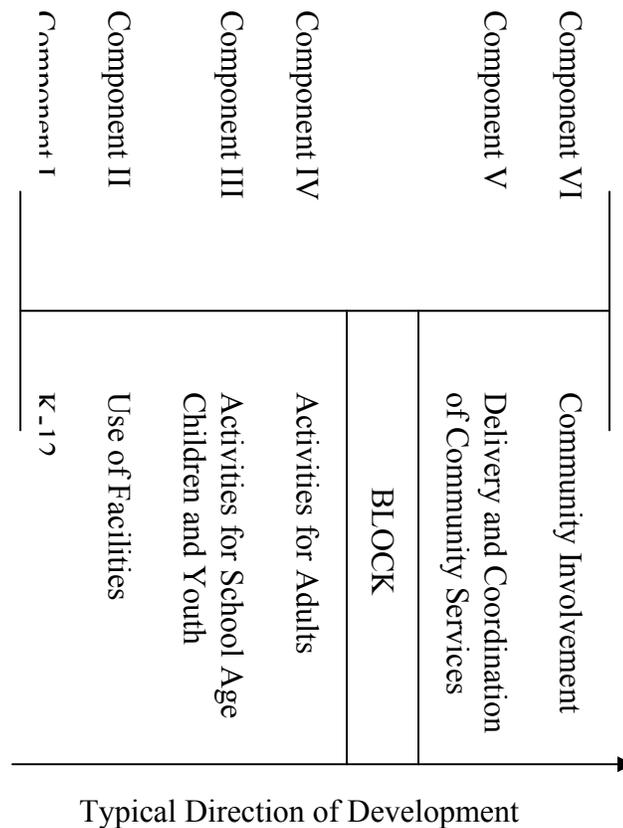| Component	Ingredient
Component I	K-12
Component II	Use of Facilities
Component III	Activities for School Age Children and Youth
Component IV	Activities for Adults
Component V	Delivery and Coordination of Community Services
Component VI	Community Involvement

Historically, the ingredients in Community Education have tended to develop on a continuum (from left to right as shown in Figure 1) and most school districts seem to follow the same pattern. This is probably true for several reasons. For one thing, those on the left represent the part of neophytes seeking information on Community Education are most exposed to these phases of Community Education. Secondly, components I through IV of Community Education are the most dramatic and traditional, and school boards and administrators are relatively comfortable in working in these areas. Components V and VI are threatening and consequently, are not often perceived as appropriate roles for the schools to play.

While not all school districts develop Community Education in the same manner, there does seem to be a similarity in the way that this majority of school districts implement the concept. This is true because, as mentioned before, the components of Community Education. In fact, in order to get beyond the fourth component, there is an extra effort

and commitment necessary to move on to the total concept of Community Education. After Community Education has been introduced into a school district, there seems to be an almost immediate and automatic development of Community Education up to a point and then the growth slows down and in some cases terminates.

Figure 2 – Blockage of Community Education Development

Component I	Component II	Component III	Component IV		Component V	Component VI
K-12	Use of Facilities	Activities for School Age Children and Youth	Activities for Adults	BLOCK	Delivery and Coordination of Community Services	Community Involvement

Typical Direction of Development

This blockage is the result of several things. In some instances, the school districts perceive Community Education as only dealing with the first four components and feel that these encompass Community Education in toto. In other cases, school districts would like to move on in their community education development, but they are unwilling or unable to commit the additional staff and money necessary for components V and VI. As a result, most community education programs stop somewhere short of the goals involved in true Community Education.
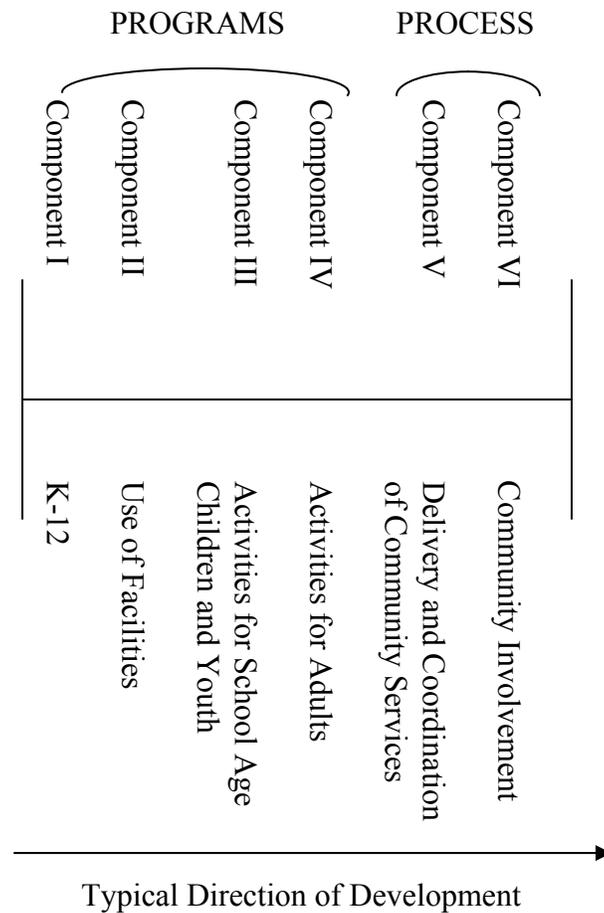
Program and Process

The development of the previous model is an outgrowth of an attempt to portray two aspects of Community Education-Program and Process. The parts of Community Education which are involved in components I through IV are primarily program oriented and tend to be comprised of those activities which are combinations of various programs for different clientele within the community. Components V and VI tend to be more

process oriented; that is they tend to provide a means for the involvement of community members toward positive change. The introduction of these terms, program and progress, has introduced a degree of controversy which has tended to confuse rather than clarify the relevance of these terms. As in most arguments, the discussion has tended to become an either/or confrontation in which community educators are asked to be either program community educators or process community educators.

The preceding models do present a continuum which appears to flow from program to process and leave the impression that if you have programs you do not have process and if you have process, you do not have programs. The model also implies that components on the left of the model are not as good as those on the right, and consequently, the reader is left with the impression that programs are less important than process.

Figure 3 – Program and Process

PROGRAMS				PROCESS	
Component I	Component II	Component III	Component IV	Component V	Component VI
K-12	Use of Facilities	Activities for School Age Children and Youth	Activities for Adults	Delivery and Coordination of Community Services	Community Involvement

Typical Direction of Development

The fact is that both programs and process are important to the total concept of Community Education. And while the development of Community Education does tend to be from program to process, it is possible for it to develop in a reverse fashion and in such cases, the process without the program aspect of Community Education would be as bad as programs without process. Also, all Community Education has some degree of development. In fact, most school districts have all aspects of Community Education to

some degree in their communities, and the implementation of Community Education is more one of identifying these aspects and fixing responsibility than of creating something new. This can best be shown if the preceding model is made bi-dimensional rather than uni-dimensional. Thus, a school district, even without subscribing to Community Education, might look like the following in respect to the ingredients of Community Education. (Figure 4)

Figure 4 – Community Education Components in a Typical Community
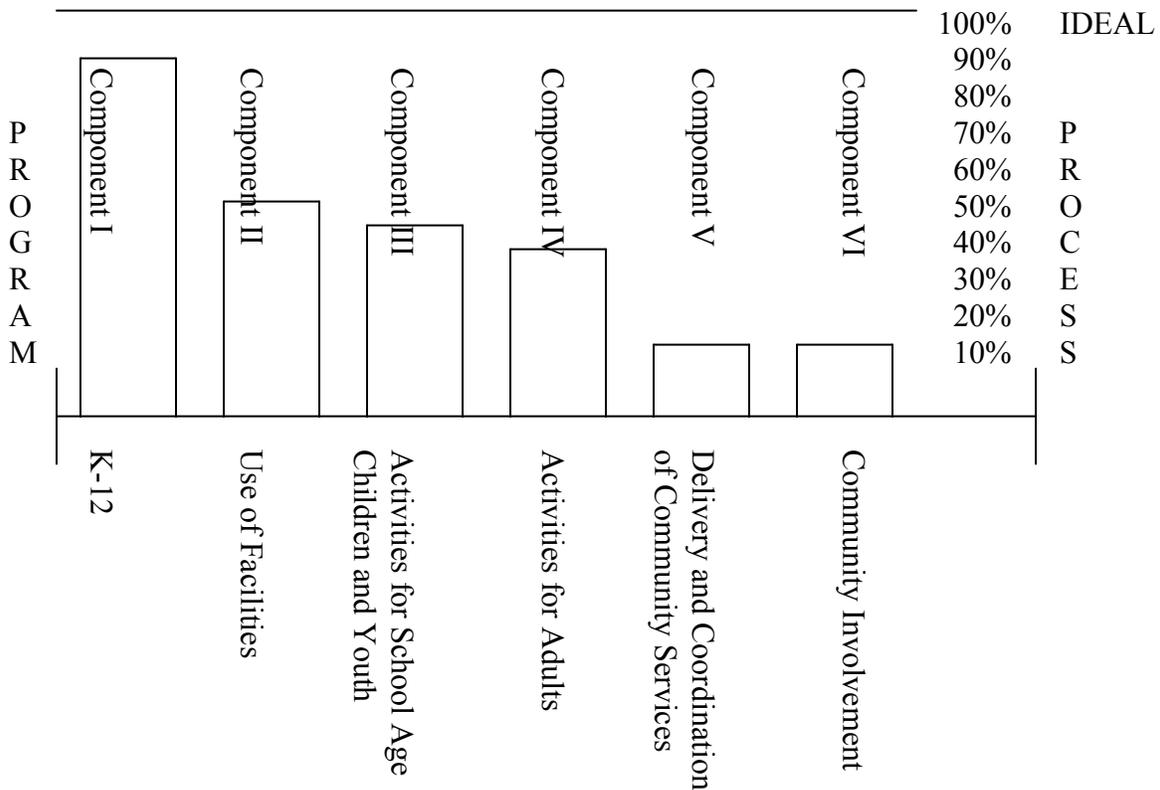
Under Component I (K-12) the district is probably doing more than in any other part of Community Education. They are also usually concentrating most of their efforts for improvement in this area even though this will be the most advanced and most highly developed component of Community Education.

Component II (Use of Facilities) will likely have had some degree of development. There will be at least limited use of school facilities by community groups under a policy developed by the school board. This policy will generally have a fee structure and traditional school activities will be given a high priority. There usually will have been little effort to make maximum use of school facilities or coordinate their use with other facilities and agencies in the community.

Component III (Activities for Children and Youth) will also show some development, but will be perceived as an extra which the school provides only if there are enough financial

and personal resources. This program will often be recreational in nature and will usually not be integrated with the traditional activities of the school.

Component IV (Activities for Adults) will also be perceived as an add on program. It will usually concentrate on traditional programs such as Adult Basic Education and high school completion and will provide other programs only if they are self-supporting. This program, too, will not be viewed as an integral part of the day program or an absolute responsibility of the schools.

Component V (Delivery and Coordination of Community Services) will probably be going on in he community, but not with any assistance from the schools. There will generally be some community wide attempts at coordinating services and some type of directory of services is usually available. However, any coordination is strictly voluntary and the degree of successful coordination is very limited. Generally, people are expected to come where services are offered rather than taking the services to where the people are. Success of service agencies are measured in terms of the busy schedule of the agency rather than community need.

Component VI (Community Involvement) is also an area that is not influenced to any degree by the schools. This component of Community Education is usually done on a larger basis than the neighborhood community, and the people involved are often representative of the status and power based people in the community. In general, such groups are neither representative nor attuned to the problems of the neighborhood.

While this profile has been described as typical, it is possible that many communities will vary extensively from the profile presented. In all communities, Component I (K-12) will be better developed than all other phases. However, it is possible to find other communities in which coordination of services is quite well developed, while use of facilities may be minimal. In a like fashion, different phases may be in different relative stages than those described in the model.

The point is that all communities have all dimensions of Community Education to some degree in their communities. In the implementation of Community Education, the school district must first be willing to accept responsibility for all dimensions of Community Education. They do not provide all programs or services to the community, but they do agree that they will provide the leadership necessary to coordinate, encourage, and sometimes initiate the various aspects of Community Education. This acceptance of responsibility is in essence the difference between a district with Community Education and one without it.
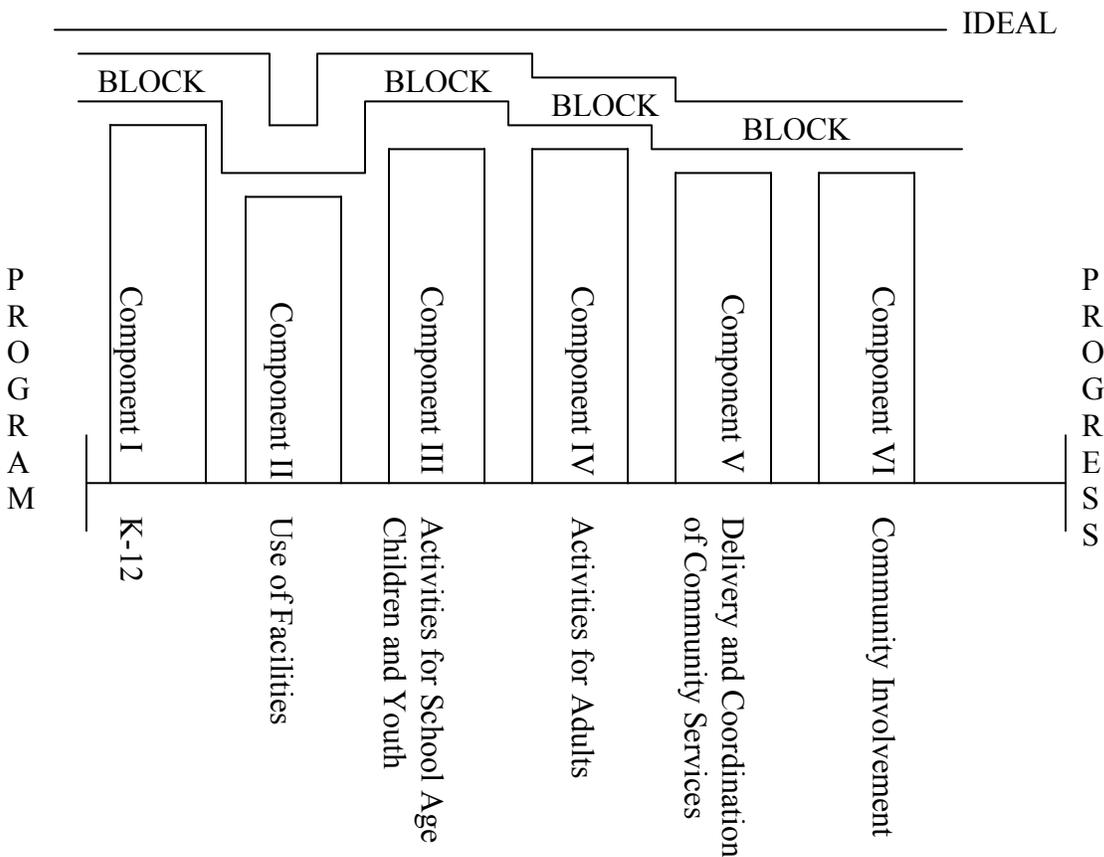
Implementing Community Education

If school boards do agree to accept Community Education as the under girding philosophy of their schools, then the data necessary to prepare their own profile must be collected in order to evaluate where their community is in the development of Community Education. The community education program then becomes one of

deciding what priorities will be established, what resources will be allocated, and what time line will be followed in the development of total Community Education in their community.

There is no one plan of development which is appropriate for all communities. Some communities may develop delivery and coordination of community services first and leave programs for adults and youth until later. The most frequently employed approach is to implement the use of facilities and adult and youth activities first (the program aspect), and leave the process components until later. In any event, two cautions should be considered. First, the same problem of program emphasis is still inherent with the bi-dimensional model; namely, that school districts tend to allow a blockage of their community education development in the form of a plateauing of their programs. (Figure 5)

Figure 5 – Plateauing of a Typical Community Education Program

Secondly, Community Education occurs in stages and the level of sophistication depends upon the direction of development and the time schedule in each community. Thus in a district just starting Community Education, use of facilities or programs for adults may be a very appropriate community education program deserving of credit and financing while in another community, which has been a community education district of long standing,

such a program dealing with only facilities and adult activities would not represent satisfactory community education development.

The point is that Community Education is a concept composed of various elements. The ultimate goal is to achieve the total concept by maximum development of all of the components. To have only one aspect of Community Education, such as adult education, is appropriate when this effort represents the first steps in Community Education. Thus, the definition of Community Education for one district may not be the same as for another district, depending on the stage of development. Real Community Education is a product of time and the development of community education components, and in order to measure successful growth, one must not only assess what the community has, but the direction in which the community is moving in the development of the concept.