



# THE Head's LETTER

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FROM YOUR COLLEAGUES

## School as Citizen Near and Far

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Often when I think of the world in which our schools exist, I am drawn to a memory of Chris Harth, president and founder of the Global Studies Foundation, illustrating local and global citizenship. Chris brandishes a set of custom-painted Russian nesting dolls and proceeds to place the school (the smallest of the dolls) inside its town, its state, the U.S., and the world. Since 2010, he's been making the case that we need to think of and teach about students' multiple levels of belongingness, about citizenship in a broader way.

My fervent hope is that our institutional self-images will evolve to include school as citizen—of its local community, its region, and the world. The model suggests something beyond community service or service learning. To engage in one's community in a responsible way, we must build reciprocal relationships in meaningful contexts. There are several benefits: doing the right and noble thing; modeling social responsibility for those in our care; giving students opportunities for authentic relationships outside of their usual sphere; building political capital with our neighbors and the public; and reinforcing our status as charitable organizations. Says Shanti Elliott, Director of Civic Engagement at Francis W. Parker School, a JK-12 school in Chicago: "Partnerships are vital for our commitment to democratic education. The more young people are exposed to people from different communities, cultures, and races, the wider their perspective, the sharper their questions, the deeper their analysis." A few examples:

At **Francis W. Parker School**, community partnership takes several forms. Students participate in *Louder than a Bomb*, the world's largest collaborative slam poetry event involving more than 600 students from more than 60 Chicago-area schools. They engage in conversation partnerships with immigrants and refugees participating in English language learning programs at three local nonprofit organizations. They tutor in communities and schools throughout the city.

Uptown Partnership, launched by **Latin School of Chicago**, a JK-12 independent school, focuses on the mutual benefits of connecting with a single, nearby neighborhood community. Partnerships with three Uptown public schools are currently in place; fourth-graders share a common book and discussion; Latin middle schoolers work in an after-school program; upper schoolers offer dance instruction. Looking to the future, Latin has purchased an Uptown storefront for youth programs to be offered by Latin students and faculty.

**The Prairie School**, a K-12 independent school in Racine,

Wisconsin, belongs to the Racine Area School-Community Alliance, a collaborative partnership between local private and public schools. The Alliance brings experts, research-based information, and resources to parents and students on health and learning issues.

**City Academy**, a PK-6 independent school in St. Louis, Missouri, pairs its recent alumni/ae with Washington University undergraduates. With 57 alumni/ae and 50 undergraduates participating, the partnership has had a profound impact on how scholars are served, with a 100% college placement rate for participants, many of whom are overcoming socio-economic or geographic barriers.

The North Star Collaborative (NSC) is a long-term partnership between two Cleveland-area girls' schools: **Laurel School**, K-12 and independent, and **Warner Girls' Leadership Academy**, PK-8 and public. NSC seeks to provide long-term access to the resources and academic support necessary for the North Stars, a cohort of 41 Cleveland girls, to obtain a four-year college degree. In turn, the program strives to develop socially conscious and action-oriented behavior in Laurel girls.

When starting a partnership, consider these seven principles for good practice, from The National Network of Schools in Partnership, now 120 members strong:

1. The fulfillment of an authentic community need or opportunity in which all partners both contribute to and benefit from shared learning experiences
2. Common goals and expectations for the partnership that are clearly articulated, preferably in writing, and communicated
3. Trusting relationships that are intentionally forged, with an awareness of each partner's historical role within the larger community
4. Team-based and shared leadership that fosters the sustainability of collaborations
5. Community-wide awareness and sponsorship of partnership activities, along with necessary resources and engaged leadership to enable effective, sustainable public-private collaborations
6. Transparent and regular communication among partnership organizations
7. A common framework for partners to assess the outcomes and activities relating to the partnership.

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