

The Future of Education in Manitoba?

Bill 12 – The Community Schools Act

K Y L E E M O N D *

It takes a village to raise a child.
- African proverb

I. INTRODUCTION

This well-known expression forms the basis for the ideology behind Bill 12 - *The Community Schools Act*.¹ The idea is simple: by leveraging community resources to enhance the social, emotional, and physical health and well-being of students, academic success will follow. With the hopes of improving poor academic performance of students in socio-economically disadvantaged communities, the Manitoba government passed Bill 12 in December 2013. This paper thoroughly examines the legislative process of Bill 12 and offers a critical view of the merits of this legislation. The first two sections describe Bill 12 and the overall concept of community schools. The next section reviews the inspiration for Bill 12, focusing primarily on American and Canadian community education models. The fourth section details the legislative debate surrounding the Bill. Finally, the last section examines the merits of both the community schools model and the key provisions of the legislation.

* B.Comm (Hons.), J.D. (2015).

¹ Bill 12, *The Community Schools Act*, 3rd Sess, 40th Leg, Manitoba, 2013 (assented to 5 December 2013) [Bill].

II. BILL 12 - *THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACT*

Bill 12 - *The Community Schools Act* was proposed in the Manitoba Legislature during the Second and Third Session of the Fortieth Legislature, and sponsored by the Hon. Nancy Allan (Minister of Education) and the Hon. James Allum (Minister of Education and Advanced Learning), respectively. The Bill was read for the first time on November 28, 2012, a second time on September 12, 2013, and read a third time and passed on November 28, 2013. It received Royal Assent on December 5, 2013.

Bill 12 recognizes and supports the implementation of the community school philosophy and model in Manitoba. This philosophy endorses and promotes the essential role of schools in the community, while the model facilitates the development of services, programs, and activities to support students, families, and the local community. The Community Schools Program is established with the purpose of assisting the public school system with improving the social, emotional, and physical health and well-being of students in socio-economically disadvantaged communities across Manitoba. The goal is to prepare students to engage in the learning process every day and take full advantage of educational opportunities available to them.²

As part of the Program, participating community schools will be assigned an employee of the school division or district to act as community liaison and coordinate programming within the school. The Community Schools Unit is within the Department of Education to assist and support community schools and maintain a network of such schools in Manitoba. Further, the Bill highlights funding and reporting requirements and establishes an advisory committee and a committee of deputy ministers.³ The deputy ministers' committee is responsible for ensuring that government departments involved in community education work collaboratively using a cross-departmental approach.⁴ Finally, the Minister is delegated the responsibility of making the regulations for the Act.⁵ Manitoba introduced this legislation to

² *The Community Schools Act*, SM 2013, c 29, CCSM c C168, s 2-5 [The Act].

³ *Ibid*, s 11-12.

⁴ The deputy ministers in question are those of the departments responsible for the administration of *The Public Schools Act*, *The Child and Family Services Act*, *The Health Child Manitoba Act*, *The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act* and any other deputy minister appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council, *ibid*, s 11(3).

⁵ *Ibid*, s 14.

enhance the successful Community Schools Partnership Initiative implemented in 2005.

III. WHAT ARE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS?

An evaluation of Bill 12 would not be complete without a proper understanding of the concept of community schools. Principally, community schools aim to help students learn and succeed while strengthening families and communities. A community school addresses multiple factors that significantly impede student achievement by incorporating services that provide needed academic and non-academic support for students at the school site.⁶ These schools "integrate the delivery of quality education with whatever health and social services are required in that community."⁷ Child development is holistically targeted by this educational model in order to overcome the barriers of poverty. The Coalition for Community Schools, an alliance of over 160 organizations dedicated to community schools, defines a community school as:

both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone – all day, every day, evenings and weekends.⁸

These schools are often referred to as community "hubs" as they become the focal points for the growth and strengthening of the communities within which they are based. The highly integrated approach of the hub model enables schools to:

knit together inventive, enduring relationships among educators, families, volunteers and community partners. Health and social service agencies, family support groups, youth development organizations, institutions of higher

⁶ Ricky Campbell-Allen et al, "Full-Service Schools: Policy Review and Recommendations" (2009) [unpublished, archived at Harvard Graduate School of Education] at 1.

⁷ JG Dryfoos, *Making it Through Adolescence in a Risky Society: What Parents, Schools and Communities can do* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998) at 73.

⁸ Martin J Blank, Atelia Melaville & Bela P Shah, "Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools" (2003) Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership at 2.

education, community organizations, businesses and civic and faith-based groups all play a part.⁹

As every school, family, and community is different and faces its own set of challenges, each community school will be unique in its own way. The structure of each school will reflect the realities of the local community by incorporating programming that addresses underlying needs.¹⁰ Examples of the type of services and programs offered at community schools include: health and mental health services, nutrition services, early childhood education programs, before and after school programs, mentoring and youth development services, cultural awareness activities, parent education activities, and crime prevention and rehabilitation services.¹¹

While none of the previously mentioned services are exclusive to community schools (as opposed to regular schools), there are a number of guiding principles that distinguish community schools from the traditional school framework. First, there exists a strong commitment by each participating stakeholder to engage in the planning process and collaborate to achieve the common goals that benefit the students and community. Second, all of the activities are part of a broader community school plan to "improve student learning, strengthen families and build a healthier community, where unique social and economic challenges have been identified."¹² Third, the school plan is developed and agreed upon by "a representative and inclusive group of decision-makers" that includes students, families, the principal, teachers, community partners, and residents. This group makes decisions as it relates to the learning program, school policies, facility use, community development, and community programming.¹³ The idea behind this form of shared decision-making is that the stakeholders most closely connected to the community will be in the best position to assess its needs, and will be more committed to the plan if they play an active role in its development.¹⁴

⁹ Susan M Phillips, "Forging Partnerships, Opening Doors" (2008) Society for the Advancement of Excellence in Education (SAEE) at 16.

¹⁰ Manitoba, Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, *Community Schools: A Support Document for Partners in the Community Schools Partnership Initiative* (Winnipeg: Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth, 2006) at 4 [Support Document].

¹¹ Act, *supra* note 2, s 4(c).

¹² Support Document, *supra* note 10.

¹³ *Ibid.*

¹⁴ Blank, *supra* note 8.

A. The Rationale Behind Community Schools

There are a number of compelling reasons for the implementation of the community school model in disadvantaged communities. As the central institution and most stabilizing influence in a child's life, the school is the logical site for the delivery of social supports for children living in poverty. When a child's family receives the support it needs, the child's capacity to learn increases — meeting the needs of families has positive spin-offs for academic success. Further, from a public policy standpoint, collaborative approaches and early interventions are cost-effective — society benefits as a decreasing school drop-out rate generates "powerful economic and social returns".¹⁵ Finally, community space and resources can be optimized through after-hours use of school facilities.¹⁶ The movement recognizes that children and youth are "profoundly influenced by their experiences outside the school."¹⁷ By addressing the root cause of destructive social issues and facilitating the optimal environment for learning, the community school takes a preventative, long-term approach to educating children.¹⁸

IV. INSPIRATION FOR BILL 12 - *THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACT*

A. The United States

Inspiration for the Bill cannot be said to have originated from one source in particular. Rather, community school initiatives have existed for a long time and can be found in a number of derivatives and forms. The concept first took root in the United States (US) during the late 19th century. Jane Addams', the second woman to win a Nobel Prize, founded the settlement house movement, offering recreational, health, and educational services to families struggling to attain necessary social services in working, immigrant neighbourhoods in Chicago. She believed that "social ills were interconnected and that they must be approached holistically."¹⁹ During this time, John Dewey embraced the concept of the 'school as a social center', arguing that the community played an important role in organizing the services needed most by its

¹⁵ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 16.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ *Ibid* at 16.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁹ Campbell-Allen, *supra* note 6 at 3.

members.²⁰ Dewey and Addams have come to be known as the founders of community schools, or full-service schools, as they are commonly referred to in the US.

The first community schools to be established in North America were fostered by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation in Flint, Michigan, and date back to the 1930s. The Foundation spurred a national movement promoting the use of schools as "social, education and recreational anchors of their communities."²¹

In the 1970s, Congress passed the *Community Schools Act*²² and the *Community Schools and Comprehensive Education Act of 1978*,²³ both of which funded the development of community schools nationally and allowed state governments to legislate for the creation of these schools.²⁴ Since that time, governments, educational leaders, service agencies, and community organizations have worked together to expand the movement across the US. A number of federal programs and grants finance current community school strategies.²⁵ In addition, various state and federal legislation further established and funded, whether directly or indirectly, the rapid expansion of the community schools model in the US. Beginning in 1991, Florida and California's governments passed the *Full-Service School Act*²⁶ and the *Healthy Start Support Services Act*,²⁷ respectively. Florida's legislation created "full-service schools to integrate education, medical, social and/or human services that are beneficial to meeting the needs of children, youth and their families",²⁸ while California's legislation established grants for

²⁰ *Ibid.* See also Blank, *supra* note 8 at 3.

²¹ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 13.

²² *An Act to Extend and Amend the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, and for Other Purposes*, Pub L No 93-380, §405, 88 Stat 484 at ???(1974) (This section is cited as *Community Schools Act*).

²³ *Community Schools and Comprehensive Education Act of 1978*, Pub L No 95-561, title VIII (added as Pub L 95-561, § 801(3)).

²⁴ Blank, *supra* note 8 at 3.

²⁵ For example, *Improving the Academic Achievement of the Disadvantaged*, 20 USC tit 20, c 70 §6301 et seq; for a more complete list see, Coalition for Community Schools, *Federal Funding*, online: Coalition for Community Schools <http://www.communityschools.org/policy_advocacy/federal_funding.aspx>.

²⁶ *Full Service Schools*, Fla Stat tit 29 c 402 §3026.

²⁷ *Healthy Start Support Services Act*, c 759, §1, 1991 Stats (codified at Cal Ed C §8801 (2014)).

²⁸ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 13.

schools to create "learning supports" for children, families, and communities in need.²⁹

In 2002, the federal *No Child Left Behind Act*³⁰ made a ground-breaking commitment to the educational success of disadvantaged students, while incorporating essential elements of community schooling into its funding scheme.³¹ A number of other bills that attempted to contribute to the cause died in Congress,³² while the *Supporting Community Schools Act*,³³ an important federal bill that amends the *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*³⁴ in order to further channel funds to community schools, has been read twice in Congress and is currently referred to Committee.³⁵ Currently, the Coalition for Community Schools estimates that there are 5,000 national and international community schools in operation.³⁶

B. Canada

In Canada, the community schools movement has spread at a somewhat slower pace. In the 1970s, school districts in British Columbia (BC) developed and funded community schools with the vision of being centrally located, offering safe and welcoming environments, and providing shared space. In 1992, the School Trustees Association in BC adopted policy in favour of integrated services. By 1994, the Ministry of Education initiated grants of \$75,000 per school and a number of related programs, and by 1996, 71 schools were in

²⁹ Campbell-Allen, *supra* note 6 at 6.

³⁰ *No Child Left Behind Act of 2001*, 20 USCA §§ 6301 et seq.

³¹ Blank, *supra* note 8 at 3.

³² US, Bill S 585, *Full-Service Community Schools Act*, 112th Cong, 2011, (this bill was introduced initially in 2001, then again in 2009, and 2011); US, Bill HR 2237 *Developing Innovative Partnerships and Learning Opportunities that Motivate Achievement (DIPLOMA) Act*, 113th Cong, 2013; US, Bill HR 2691, *Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged Act (Keeping PACE)*, 112th Cong, 2011; US, Bill HR1636, *Time for Innovation Matters in Education (TIME) Act*, 112th Cong, 2011; US, Bill S 1094, *Promise Neighborhoods Act*, 113th Cong, 2013.

³³ US, Bill S 844, *Supporting Community Schools Act of 2013*, 113th Cong, 2013.

³⁴ *Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965*, 20 USC §6301 (1965).

³⁵ US Congress, *S.844 - Supporting Community Schools Act of 2013*, online: <<http://beta.congress.gov/bill/113th-congress/senate-bill/844>>.

³⁶ Coalition for Community Schools, *FAQs*, online: Coalition for Community Schools <http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/faqs.aspx#_13>.

operation in the province.³⁷ Since then, funding and responsibility for community schools has been shared between the province and partner organizations like the United Way.³⁸

In Ontario, the Toronto District School Board has been in the process of implementing the "full service school" model in 15 schools, with a focus on integrated service delivery.³⁹ In 2007, New Brunswick unveiled the *When Kids Come First* plan and set a goal of establishing 75 community schools.⁴⁰ In Quebec, the Ministry of Education initiated the Community Learning Centres program that now operates 37 community schools in the province.⁴¹

Arguably, the most influential community schools model established in Canada originated in Saskatchewan. Dr. Michael Tymchak, a pioneer of community schools in Canada, developed a comprehensive education model titled School^{PLUS} in a report to Saskatchewan's Minister of Education.⁴² School^{PLUS} focuses on the "school as the centre of its community and the hub of services and supports for the neighbourhood it services," with an emphasis on addressing Aboriginal issues, notably First Nations and Métis poverty.⁴³ School divisions can apply for enhanced funding from the Ministry of Education for schools where there is a critical mass of students and families living in vulnerable circumstances.⁴⁴ The plan was implemented in 2006 across the province and as of 2008, there were 98

³⁷ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 14.

³⁸ Provincial programs include Children and Family Services, Ministry of Education, Community LINK Program, *ibid.*

³⁹ Dianna Graves, "Exploring Schools as Hubs: Investigating application of the community hub model in context of the closure of Athabasca School, Regina, Saskatchewan, Canada and other small schools" 2011 Community Research Unit, University of Regina at 17.

⁴⁰ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 15.

⁴¹ LEARN, Community Learning Centres, *About Us*, online: LEARN <<http://www.learnquebec.ca/en/content/clc/about.html>>.

⁴² Task Force and Public Dialogue on the Role of the School, *School^{PLUS} A Vision for Children and Youth: Toward a New School, Community and Human Service Partnership in Saskatchewan: Final Report to the Minister of Education*, (Saskatoon: Ministry of Education, 2001) (Dr Michael Tymchak).

⁴³ Kay Crinean, *Child and Youth Strategy: Evaluation of the SchoolsPlus Model Final Report (Year 3 Evaluation)* (Halifax: Collective Wisdom Solution, 2012) at 92.

⁴⁴ Loraine Thompson, "Community Schools in Saskatchewan: A Research Project" (2008) submitted to Saskatchewan Ministry of Education, LTISL at 12. In 2007/2008, the Ministry of Education expended \$12.58 million supporting the 98 community schools, Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 14.

designated community school sites serving approximately 20% of students in provincially funded schools.⁴⁵ Provincial government departments collaborate with provincial partners, Aboriginal organizations, community-based organizations, and families to operate community schools.⁴⁶ Saskatchewan's School^{PLUS} was adopted and adapted by Nova Scotia and Manitoba for their own community school programs, *SchoolsPlus* and the Community Schools Partnership Initiative, respectively.⁴⁷

C. Manitoba's Community Schools Partnership Initiative

Manitoba's Community Schools Partnership Initiative (CSPI) was launched in January 2005 under the jurisdiction of Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth's Aboriginal Education Directorate. Much like the other Canadian models, the CSPI was designed "to support schools in low socio-economic communities to enhance education outcomes by developing and strengthening partnerships."⁴⁸ Also, like Saskatchewan's School^{PLUS}, the CSPI had a particular focus on the education of school-aged children of Aboriginal ancestry.⁴⁹ The February 2007 issue of *Education Manitoba* had this to say about the program:

CSPI outcomes are expected to have an impact on issues of poverty, low academic achievement, poor student attendance, high migrancy/transiency rates, and diverse student populations—barriers that can have substantial effects on programming within schools. Many communities encounter chronic challenges such as families that lack parenting skills, students with behavioural issues, and communities overwhelmed by drug and alcohol abuse, domestic violence, vandalism, and a dependency on social welfare. There are also physical and geographical barriers to securing resources in a number of these communities. CSPI is a means to address the root-cause issues and provide grassroots solutions.⁵⁰

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ Community Resources and Employment; Corrections and Public Safety; Culture, Youth and Recreation; Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs; Health; Justice and Learning, Crinean, *supra* note 43 at 93.

⁴⁷ Dr Paul W Bennett, "Reclaiming At-Risk Children and Youth: A Review of Nova Scotia's SchoolsPlus (ISD) Initiative" (2013) Atlantic Institute for Market Studies at 4.

⁴⁸ Support Document, *supra* note 10 at 2. Manitoba Education, Citizenship and Youth is now simply known as Manitoba Education.

⁴⁹ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 24.

⁵⁰ *Ibid* at 22.

Funding for designated schools is provided by a basic CSPI grant of \$50,000 per school,⁵¹ and additional grants available for qualifying schools.⁵² In addition, the provincial government actively seeks funding partners to assist with the implementation of the CSPI.⁵³ As of 2012, there were 29 participating schools throughout Manitoba.⁵⁴ As previously mentioned, the success of the CSPI was the inspiration for Bill 12. In essence, the Bill bolsters the CSPI and its efforts to strengthen and expand community education across Manitoba.

V. LEGISLATIVE DEBATE

Bill 12 - *The Community Schools Act* was debated in the Manitoba legislature over the course of the second and third session of the Fortieth Legislature. The commentary was overwhelmingly positive and a number of MLA members spoke in favour of the legislation. The Minister of Education at the time, the Hon. Nancy Allan, supported the legislation and believed that the Bill would further strengthen community schools by "establishing an operational infrastructure" for the CSPI.⁵⁵ She highlighted the importance of key components of this "infrastructure": an outlined community school philosophy and model; the Community Schools Program focusing on socio-economically disadvantaged communities; the assignment of a community liaison for each school division/district; the establishment of the Community Schools Unit responsible for maintaining a community schools network as a resource centre for best practices; and, the establishment of the deputy minister and advisory committees responsible for providing overall direction and guidance to the program. She believed that this legislation and infrastructure would "better assist schools in forging partnerships, mobilizing and leveraging resources and accessing

⁵¹ During the 2007/2008 school year, *ibid* at 23.

⁵² Grants commonly accessed by community schools serving high numbers of Aboriginal children include Aboriginal Academic Achievement (AAA), Building Student Success with Aboriginal Parents (BSSAP), and Early Childhood Development Initiative (ECDI) *ibid*.

⁵³ *Ibid*.

⁵⁴ Government of Manitoba, News Release, "Province introduces legislation that would help strengthen community schools, make Manitoba an education leader", (28 November 2012), online: Government of Manitoba <<http://news.gov.mb.ca/news/index.html?item=15713>>.

⁵⁵ Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, *Official Report of Debates and Proceedings*, 2nd Leg, 40th Sess, No 10 (3 December 2012) at 325.

training, thereby giving every student the best possible chance to succeed."⁵⁶

Other MLAs lent their support for Bill 12. Ms. Melanie Wight, MLA for Burrows, spoke about seeing first-hand the positive impact of a community school in her area. She spoke of all the community activity originating from the school "hub," as well as the new level of trust created throughout community groups.⁵⁷ In a similar vein, the Hon. Kevin Chief, Minister of Children and Opportunities, spoke about his experience with community schools and how connecting students from a vulnerable background with an "enriched curriculum" has drastically improved the lives of young people involved in the program.⁵⁸ He witnessed marked improvements in students' self-confidence and self-esteem and noted that families truly felt a "strong sense of belonging" and involvement in their communities and children's education.⁵⁹

Mr. Matt Wiebe, MLA for Concordia, spoke about how the community school in his region offered some of the best programming and resources to youth and families that needed it the most, from adult financial literacy training to nurse practitioner services. He also highlighted how programs with an Aboriginal focus helped parents and students connect with teachers around their shared Aboriginal heritage and develop a sense of identity within their community. Further, he praised the legislation for improving the model by establishing both the community liaison and the supervisory structure.⁶⁰

Echoing the Hon. Nancy Allan's statement, the Hon. James Allum remarked that Bill 12

will enhance programming by helping schools forge partnerships, mobilize and leverage resources, and access training when needed. This Bill opens the community schools' network to any school to participate so that we can broaden the reach of the program.⁶¹

He talked about the positive impact of the 29 community schools operating throughout the province and how the Bill solidifies the province's ongoing work to expand the community school philosophy

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ *Ibid* at 326-327.

⁵⁸ *Ibid* at 327.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

⁶⁰ *Ibid* at 329-330.

⁶¹ Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, *Official Report of Debates and Proceedings*, 3rd Leg, 40th Sess, No 13B (28 November 2013) at 488 [Debates 28 Nov 13].

throughout Manitoba "to make our schools the best that they can be."⁶² Notably, Allum recited statements made by one of Canada's foremost experts on community education, Dr. Michael Tymchak. During a recent independent review of Manitoba's CSPI and Bill 12, Dr. Tymchak posited:

This legislative mandate and the plans to move forward even more strongly as suggested in this report will go some distance towards catapulting the province of Manitoba into the front ranks of the community school movement in Canada. ... Judging what we heard and saw there can be little doubt that the CSPI has made it possible for schools to be more effective and successful in working with children and youth as well as their families and caregivers.⁶³

The Hon. John Gerrard, MLA for River Heights, shared many of the opinions of his fellow MLA members and expressed his support for the legislation, stating that the recognition of the role of schools as "hubs" of their communities was "absolutely essential."⁶⁴ He did, however, attempt to score political points by indicating that before the NDP came to power in 1999, the Conservative government was laying the groundwork for community education through the Community Access Program and similar initiatives. Once the NDP gained control, he said, they "forgot to support and enhance the vital role of schools in the communities," and that, after 14 years, it was "interesting" to see the NDP refocusing on an initiative they "neglected considerably" over the years.

Gerrard continued his politicizing by making a few interesting observations about whether the legislation was indeed necessary in the first place. He said that the government activities contemplated in the legislation should already be something that is recognized and supported—something that should be happening day-to-day in our communities and province. To illustrate, he thought it was "extraordinary" that the NDP needed to mandate in Bill 12 that deputy ministers and their departments "must actually work together," that legislation was drafted telling deputy ministers to do the job they should have been doing all along.⁶⁵ In furthering his position, Gerrard analogized by reference to the many children in care under Child and Family Services (CFS), and how these situations reflected the failure of

⁶² *Ibid.*

⁶³ *Ibid.*

⁶⁴ Manitoba, Legislative Assembly, *Official Report of Debates and Proceedings*, 3rd Leg, 40th Sess, No 107A (12 September 2013) at 4989.

⁶⁵ Gerrard was referring to s. 11 of Bill 12—the establishment of the deputy ministers' committee, Debates 28 Nov 13, *supra* note 61 at 489.

the NDP to ensure CFS and various other government departments worked collaboratively to solve problems.⁶⁶ He even went so far as to refer to the Phoenix Sinclair inquiry,⁶⁷ noting that that unfortunate case was a result of the disconnect and lack of a healthy working relationship between CFS and other agencies in the community.⁶⁸ While not directly relevant to the merit of the legislation, it was nevertheless interesting to observe a member of an opposition party attempt to politicize Bill 12.

VI. THE MERITS OF BILL 12 - THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ACT

With a proper understanding of the Bill, community schools and their rationale, the inspiration for the legislation, and the legislative debate surrounding it, we now turn our attention to analyzing the merits of the Bill and determining whether it is, in fact, a good piece of public policy for Manitoba. This analysis will evaluate both the merits of community education and key legislative provisions of the Bill.

A. The Merits of Community Education

In this section, we will explore the positive effects of community schools, while equally considering the criticism and challenges of this educational model.

Positive Effects

A growing body of research demonstrates that community schools greatly benefit students, families, and their communities.⁶⁹ A major study by the Coalition of Community Schools evaluated 20 community

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶⁷ Manitoba, Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Phoenix Sinclair, *The Legacy of Phoenix Sinclair, Achieving the Best for All Our Children*, (Winnipeg: Commission of Inquiry into the Circumstances Surrounding the Death of Phoenix Sinclair, December 2013) (The Hon Ted Hughes, Commissioner).

⁶⁸ Debates 28 Nov 13, *supra* note 63 at 489.

⁶⁹ Blank, *supra* note 8; Joy Dryfoos & Sue Maguire, *Inside Full-Service Community Schools* (Thousand Oaks: Corwin Press, 2002) at 130 [Dryfoos & Maguire]; Joy Dryfoos, "Full-Service Community Schools: Creating New Institutions" (2002) 83 Phi Delta Kappan 393 [Dryfoos, Institutions]; Coalition for Community Schools, *Community Schools Results*, online: Coalition for Community Schools <www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/Community%20School%20Results%202013.pdf>.

school initiatives throughout the US and made significant findings on the effects of community education.⁷⁰ These positive effects can be categorized into four major areas: 1) Student learning; 2) Family engagement; 3) School effectiveness; and 4) Community vitality, and will be discussed in sequence below.

Community school students show significant and widely evident gains in academic achievement and non-academic development. For example, youth attending these schools have shown: improved grades in school courses and proficiency testing; improved attendance; reduced behavioural problems; improvements in personal or family situations; reduced dropout rates; increased attachment to the local community; and a decrease in self-destructive behaviours.⁷¹

Families of community school students show increased stability, communication with teachers and school involvement. Specific examples of the impact on families include: improved communication with schools and teachers; parents demonstrating greater responsibility for their children's success; improved stability related to housing, food, transportation, and employment needs; and increased confidence for parents in their role as their child's educator.⁷²

Community schools themselves display stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment, and greater community support. Specific evaluation findings highlight the following examples: increased parent participation in children's learning; staff affirmation of on-site services as an important resource; growth for public education and increased resources through partnerships; safer and more orderly school environments; increased emphasis on creative, project-based learning connected to the community; and teacher recognition of parent participation as an asset.⁷³

Community schools promote better use of school buildings, and neighbourhoods enjoy increased security, community pride, and a better

⁷⁰ Blank, *supra* note 8 at 33. These initiatives encompassed over 4,500 individual schools across the United States. Note that for the purpose of this paper, this particular American study is referenced. While multiple studies about the effects of community schools in Canada are available, it is generally accepted that Making the Difference is the most authoritative, substantive, and comprehensive study on the topic of community school effects. It should be noted that these findings are consistent with those of Canadian studies.

⁷¹ *Ibid* at 40-41.

⁷² *Ibid* at 41-42.

⁷³ *Ibid* at 42-43.

relationship between students and residents. Findings related to community impact include: improved security and safety in surrounding area; increased use of school buildings, more family awareness of community agencies, and greater access to facilities previously unknown or unaffordable; strengthened community pride and identity; and engagement of citizens and students in school and community service.⁷⁴

It is also worth mentioning that in the Canadian context, in addition to the above mentioned benefits, "community schools have been successful in helping to address circumstances in higher needs communities which are experiencing growth in urban Aboriginal poverty."⁷⁵ This result is achieved by offering students a learning environment that meets diverse learning needs, is academically challenging, as well as "culturally affirming in respectful and reflective ways."⁷⁶ Consideration is given to the history of Aboriginal children and youth, along with cultural and socio-economic life experiences.⁷⁷

Another noteworthy benefit of community schools is its strong economic return on investment. A social return on investment study undertaken by the Children's Aid Society (CAS) found that every dollar spent returns between \$10.30 and \$14.80 of social value.⁷⁸ A similar

⁷⁴ *Ibid* at 43-44.

⁷⁵ Graves, *supra* note 39 at 13; See also Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 20.

⁷⁶ Graves, *supra* note 39.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*

⁷⁸ This study used a cost-benefit analysis to determine the social and economic return on investment. The cost data consisted of program costs (all staffing, costs, materials, and supplies providing the direct services), overhead/administrative costs (payroll and benefits, oversight and management, operating cost), and in-kind costs. Benefit data consisted of measuring 40 social, educational, environmental, and health-related outcomes and indicators. This data was collected over the span of three years. From there, using research literature, financial values and/or proxies were identified and assigned to the indicators so as to "monetize" the outcomes.

After reviewing the study, I noted a few important issues affecting its credibility. Longitudinal data, that is, data that tracks individual student outcomes over time was not available. For example, the graduation rate of students who have attended CAS elementary or middle schools was unknown, with estimates used in its place. There were also incomplete data in the study. While elementary and middle schools were considered, no evaluation of high schools had been completed for the purposes of the study.

A further concern involved the size of the study—only two of the CAS school sites (800 students) were chosen to be a part of the study. It was noted in the

cost-benefit analysis conducted by Communities in Schools (CIS) found that every dollar spent returns \$11.60 of social value, while the annual average return to society of Communities in Schools' \$2.6 billion investment in 113 affiliates is 18.6%.⁷⁹

concluding remarks that the study should be expanded to generate more accurate results. It was also noted that some of the outcomes were not easily quantifiable and required rough estimates of their "monetization." Lastly, although five peer groups were used as comparison groups for the study, it was conceded that research staff encountered challenges when analyzing the comparators. The challenges arose because the comparator schools outnumbered the enrollment numbers at the Children's Aid sites, which skewed cost and benefit data, Laura Martinez & Cheryl D Hayes, "Measuring Social Return on Investment for Community Schools" (2013) Children's Aid Society, Finance Project at 25, online: Children's Aid Society <www.childrengaidsociety.org/files/CASE%20STUDY%20final.pdf>.

⁷⁹ The CIS study took a slightly different approach than the CAS study to determine the social and economic return on investment. Although it used a cost-benefit calculation in its analysis, the study methodology differed. The cost component of the data used for the analysis consisted of direct CIS investment dollars (national and state office operations and network support costs, program costs, and school operating costs) as well as the opportunity costs of labour and capital. The opportunity costs are those incurred by the schools for their continued efforts, and the students for staying out of the labour market. Benefit data used for the analysis consisted of measuring higher lifetime earnings for high school graduates, higher tax revenues, and higher market consumption rates by those with increased levels of education. Further, social or taxpayer savings resulting from increased academic achievement were considered. One of the major assumptions made in the study was that the more academic achievement a student attains, the higher the average benefits will be over the student's working life.

In my opinion, this study appeared more credible than the CAS study for a few reasons. Its sample size was much larger—113 sites across the US— and was limited to sites that serve high school students. By limiting the analysis to high schools, the results were more rigorous and defensible. It is easier to predict the economic outcome from data involving high school students who have graduated (or are nearing graduation) than students who are still in elementary or middle school. Also, the study spanned a period of five years, as compared to three with the CAS study.

On the other hand, one of the noteworthy shortcomings of both the CIS and CAS studies was that social benefit data and estimates presented cannot be viewed as exact. Quantifying these impacts requires a number of assumptions, leading to a level of uncertainty that overshadows the analyses. The multi-correlated factors in social statistics can lead to some benefits being "double-counted," so to speak, which has the potential of distorting the true figure representing social return on investment. Communities In Schools, "The Economic Impact of Communities In Schools" (2012) Economic Modeling Specialists Inc at 2, online: Communities In Schools <www.communitiesinschools.org/media/uploads/attachment/CIS_2.pdf>

Criticism and Challenges

There is no question that the benefits of community schools are well documented. Yet, the concept of community schools has not been free from criticism. One of the main reasons for this criticism is that scholars and policymakers do not agree on the causes of poor school performance in low-income communities.⁸⁰ Many argue that funding is better spent on school facilities and teachers rather than social services, believing that poor facilities and under-qualified teachers are the "chief culprits of academic underachievement of low-income children."⁸¹ Schools would best be improved and outside inequalities overcome, they contend, with a focus on its instructional core of teaching and learning, doing away with the political and monetary distraction of community schools.⁸² In response, community school advocates make the argument that this view of education reform is simplistic and ignores the complex needs of disadvantaged children.⁸³ Excellent teaching and community services are necessary for sustainable solutions on a system-wide level. As noted earlier, improving the overall health of young people and their communities can effectively influence a child's readiness and capacity to learn.⁸⁴

A second point of contention surrounding community schools is the excessive investment in time and money required to generate any substantial improvements in student achievement. It is argued that immediate solutions that will assist students in schools today should be pursued.⁸⁵ It is widely accepted that community schools are not a short-term solution, and expecting positive changes after three to five years is often premature.⁸⁶ Also, an American expert estimates that operating costs can be in the area of \$100,000 to \$200,000 per school — not an insignificant sum.⁸⁷ It is true that costs are always a major concern with these types of initiatives; however, it should be recognized that the

⁸⁰ Ronald Lee, "A Helping Hand: Full-Service Community Schools as a Model for Educating Low-Income Children" (2005) 12 Geo J on Poverty L & Pol'y 135 at 140.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*

⁸² Campbell-Allen, *supra* note 6 at 22.

⁸³ Lee, *supra* note 80 at 141.

⁸⁴ Campbell-Allen, *supra* note 6 at 22.

⁸⁵ *Ibid* at 23.

⁸⁶ Blank, *supra* note 8 at 47.

⁸⁷ Lee, *supra* note 80 at 141, also see Dryfoos, Institutions, *supra* note 69 at 399.

financial costs are not as significant as they may at first appear. Since a number of services are already provided by various government agencies or private groups, school reliance on education funding may be reduced.⁸⁸ The more efficient delivery of social services and the consolidation of funds already allocated to agencies, services, and programs open the door to potential cost savings. The efficient use of limited funds and resources can go a long way to minimizing the financial impact of community education initiatives.⁸⁹ In addition, although the financial and time commitment may be substantial, community schools should be contemplated as a long-term investment. Eventually, these investments will bring reduced dependence on welfare, lower burdens on the corrections system, and increased employment.⁹⁰ When juxtaposed against the estimated \$11 billion in annual lost earnings and unrealized tax revenue from Canadian high school dropouts, community school spending appears more sensible than once thought, and is likely to be cost-effective.⁹¹

Aside from the policy and economic arguments against community education, the process of transitioning to a community school can be wrought with challenges and barriers to success:

In order to realize their immense potential, community programs will require a great deal of theoretical and practical support, helping them to overcome barriers and identify the best strategies for development.⁹²

One of the more common barriers experienced is known as "turf warfare." Despite pre-existing agreements on gaps in services, the powerful politics of agency budgets and authority can lead to lost opportunities.⁹³ Organizational change specialists have identified the main structural impediments of "turf warfare" involved in limiting

⁸⁸ Lee, *supra* note 80 at 141.

⁸⁹ Campbell-Allen, *supra* note 6 at 23.

⁹⁰ Lee, *supra* note 80 at 141.

⁹¹ Olena Hankivsky, "Cost Estimates of Dropping Out of High School in Canada" (2008) Canadian Council on Learning at 7, online: Canadian Council on Learning <<http://www.ccl-cca.ca/pdfs/OtherReports/CostofdroppingoutHankivskyFinalReport.pdf>>.

⁹² Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 18, citing G Noam, G, G Biancarosa & N Dechausay "Learning Beyond School: Developing the Field of Afterschool Education: A white paper" (2002) at online: <http://www.gse.harvard.edu/~afterschool/publications/pdf/Learning_Paper_1.3.pdf>.

⁹³ Joy Dryfoos & Dorothy Knauer, "The Evidence and Lessons Learned from Full-service Community Schools" (2002) at 41, online: <<http://albany.edu/aire/urban/dryfoos-knauer.html>>.

success of community education implementation: hierarchical structure, established rules, norms and protocols, legal directives, risk-averse accountabilities, departmental silos, and limited, institution-bound networks.⁹⁴

In addition, lack of training has been cited as a problem because few school leaders receive adequate guidance from colleges and universities on how to administer after-school programs and manage the "new reality" they will encounter in these schools.⁹⁵ School administrators may encounter difficulties when forced to collaborate and coordinate with a multitude of outside organizations.

Teacher support should also be considered a barrier to success. Many teachers, already overburdened by the increasing demands of their profession, are understandably concerned about assuming further responsibilities in their role as educators. To address this, considerable government support for the professional growth required to work in a community school environment is needed.⁹⁶

Another issue surrounds partnership capacity. The community must partner with a sufficient number of agencies to offer needed programming. Inadequate partnership would restrict the potential to offer this programming, particularly in small and remote communities. Agency partners must be committed to establishing collaborative relationships and supporting school improvement efforts.

Similarly, parental involvement must be redefined and students' families must be valued as partners in planning, implementation, services, and resources.⁹⁷ This is especially true for Aboriginal students and families in Manitoba. A 2008 Manitoba education report stated thus:

The effects of residential schooling linger with many of the parents and grandparents of these children. Along with a distrust of schools, residential schooling has led to a loss of parenting skills among its victims, as generations of children were removed from their parents for extended periods of time. Aboriginal identity and culture was at best not valued and in many cases was consciously and deliberately eradicated. As a result, families served by these community schools frequently lack the capacity to be involved in their

⁹⁴ Bennett, *supra* note 47 at 10.

⁹⁵ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 18.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Dryfoos & Knauer, *supra* note 93.

children's learning, and require extended efforts on the part of the school to build trusting relationships.⁹⁸

Finally, and most obviously, program funding is a major challenge for community school initiatives. Many alternative sources of funding must be accessed to support these initiatives. Schools face the ongoing challenge of generating funds from a variety of agencies, government, foundations, the corporate sector, and the local community.⁹⁹ As previously mentioned, the Manitoba government earmarks only \$50,000 a year for qualifying community schools.¹⁰⁰

To better understand education funding in Manitoba, it is worth mentioning that the provincial government directly funds 65% of the operating budget of public education, while most of the remainder is covered by property taxes levied by local school boards.¹⁰¹ This funding scheme has generated much public debate about the appropriate funding balance. Many argue that the provincial government should be funding most, if not all, of public education to ensure equity across the province (it used to fund upwards of 80% in the early 1980s).¹⁰² It is said that an increased reliance on local tax resources "undermined province-wide equality of educational opportunity."¹⁰³ This is so because large differences in the tax base of school divisions can lead to drastic variances in per pupil expenditures between the wealthiest and poorest divisions.¹⁰⁴

Recently, the government has fuelled the debate by controversially discouraging boards from raising levies.¹⁰⁵ The government believes that if current levels of funding are allocated efficiently, the school system is well-funded. On the contrary, school boards, particularly in rural areas, argue that rural divisions "must spend money on quality teachers and administrators" to compete with better-funded urban

⁹⁸ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 120.

⁹⁹ *Ibid* at 19.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid* at 23.

¹⁰¹ Dick Henley & Jon Young, "School Boards and Education Finance in Manitoba: The Politics of Equity, Access and Local Autonomy" (2008) 72 CJEAP at 8.

¹⁰² The key principles of equity can be summarized as follows: i) all Manitoba public school students should have equal access to the education program and services they require, and ii) all Manitoba taxpayers should contribute an equitable share of revenue in support of public schooling, *ibid* at 13.

¹⁰³ *Ibid*.

¹⁰⁴ "School taxes outdated", Editorial, *Winnipeg Free Press* A8 (18 March 2014).

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid*.

divisions.¹⁰⁶ Ultimately, it is extremely important to the well-being of Manitoba that public schools are adequately and fairly funded, while ensuring that funds are spent as wisely and effectively as possible.¹⁰⁷ This is a complex problem that directly impacts community school initiatives.

B. The Legislative Provisions of Bill 12

In this section, the evaluation of Bill 12 continues with an assessment of its key provisions. After canvassing the relevant literature on the topic, it became apparent that a number of the Bill's provisions are critical to ensuring the success of the community schools program in Manitoba.

Section 8(1) of the Bill establishes the Community Schools Unit (within the Department of Education) to implement the Community Schools Program. This is an important advancement for Manitoba's CSPI. A centralized supervisory framework will now be responsible for overseeing the whole of the project and working with all schools, community liaisons, government agencies, partners and other stakeholders.¹⁰⁸ From my research, successful community schools have the organizational arrangements to manage the efforts of schools and partners to reach their shared goals.¹⁰⁹ A leading Canadian report on the topic states that

[A]ppropriate governance structures must be in place, as the community school requires the development of joint action plans and coordination and monitoring of many separate program components...¹¹⁰

The Community Schools Unit is a necessary component of the legislation as it enables the conditions for the program to thrive.

Section 7 of the Bill assigns an employee of the school division or district to act as community liaison and coordinate the delivery of services, programs, and activities to the school. The literature overwhelmingly emphasizes the importance of this position and has made it clear that the most successful sites have this type of coordinator

¹⁰⁶ Nick Martin, "Class warfare: Divisions flout NDP's edict to hold line on school taxes", *Winnipeg Free Press* (17 March 2014) A4.

¹⁰⁷ Jon Young & Brian O'Leary, "School Taxes critical to local control", *Winnipeg Free Press* (24 March 2014) A9.

¹⁰⁸ Act, *supra* note 2, s 8(1).

¹⁰⁹ Blank, *supra* note 8 at 54.

¹¹⁰ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 17.

as part of the school management team.¹¹¹ The community liaison can improve the range and quality of community school programming while increasing the time other school staff can dedicate to teaching and learning. A permanent community liaison contributes greatly to the effectiveness and long-term viability of the program and is "a defining characteristic of the community school model."¹¹²

Section 9(1)(d) of the Bill directs the Community School Unit to maintain a community schools network. The network serves as a venue for community schools to share best practices in implementing the community school model and provides information, professional development, and training to community liaisons and school staff.¹¹³ It is self-evident that legislation enabling this collaboration is beneficial to the program. Having a structure in place that allows for participants in the schools to share learning, and to compare and gain understanding of their experience is crucial. Manitoba's training programs can draw on the expertise and experience of successful and established community school sites, as well as the current body of research and evaluation of these schools.¹¹⁴

Section 11(1) of the Bill establishes the deputy ministers' committee. This committee is responsible for ensuring government departments work together using a cross-departmental approach to address community schools issues that may arise.¹¹⁵ As explained in the previous section, coordinating and collaborating effectively across government agencies and departments can be a difficult process. Ministries must agree conceptually and model "implementation of strategies and structures" to ensure successful joint delivery of programming in the school.¹¹⁶ Understandably, having the deputy minister of each relevant department on one committee sharing the same goals would facilitate the implementation of the program. A commentary on proposed revisions to Saskatchewan's education legislation supports this view by stating that:

[r]evisions to the Education Act should be designed to accommodate the interface between education and the legislation governing other School^{PLUS}

¹¹¹ *Ibid* at 17; Campbell-Allen, *supra* note 6 at 15, 22.

¹¹² W Rod Dolmage & Paul T Clarke, "Revisioning Saskatchewan's Education Act, 1995: A Perspective" (2006) 15 Educ & LJ 173 at 182.

¹¹³ *Act, supra* note 2, s 9(1)(d).

¹¹⁴ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 132-133.

¹¹⁵ *Act, supra* note 2 at s 11(1).

¹¹⁶ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 122.

partners. The new legislation should lay the groundwork for an interagency communications infrastructure that will permit the unimpeded flow of information among the various departments working collaboratively to create the School^{PLUS} environment.¹¹⁷

The commentary goes a step further, suggesting that "systemic actions" are needed for these initiatives to realize their full potential, and that these actions include the synchronization of the legislation governing the various departments in Saskatchewan that provide community school services. The strategic configuration of the Acts would remove barriers to collaborative program delivery. If contemplated in Manitoba, this "alignment" would apply to *The Public Schools Act*, *The Child and Family Services Act*, *The Health Child Manitoba Act*, and *The Poverty Reduction Strategy Act*.¹¹⁸ The *Community Schools Act* does not contain an equivalent provision nor does it contemplate any type of "synchronization" between the legislation governing participating agencies. In my opinion, this recommendation has merit and is a legislative measure the Manitoba government may want to explore at some point in the future.

Section 12(1) of the Bill establishes the advisory committee for the initiative. As its name suggests, the committee will advise the minister, the deputy ministers' committee, and the coordinator of the unit about any matter relating to the community schools program and network in order to achieve the overarching objectives of the community school philosophy and model.¹¹⁹ It has been documented that to be effective, schools need a clear, well-articulated mandate and vision.¹²⁰ With the establishment of this committee, community schools can look to this group to offer overall strategic direction and guidance to the program on a long-term basis.

Sections 9(1)(g), 10(b), and 11(2)(c) of the Bill require: 1) the unit to establish performance measures for the program; 2) the school division or district to submit satisfactory annual progress reports to the minister so as to ensure continued funding; and 3) the deputy ministers' committee to assist the unit in establishing performance measures for the program.¹²¹ These are important provisions for the legislation as "[e]vidence driven decision-making ensures that resources are being

¹¹⁷ Dolmage, *supra* note 112 at 188.

¹¹⁸ *Act*, *supra* note 2, s 11(3).

¹¹⁹ *Ibid*, s 12(1)-(2).

¹²⁰ Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 17.

¹²¹ *Act*, *supra* note 2, s 9(1)(g), 10(b), 11(2)(c).

used in the most effective manner to support student achievement and community engagement."¹²² Programming must be monitored for accessibility, balance between program components, feedback from participants and providers, systems of accountability, and must include a formal process for review and revisions of goals.¹²³ Researching the effectiveness of community schools and their outcomes using performance indicators is critical to assessing the efficacy of these programs and, if needed, redirect their future course.¹²⁴

Finally, in a general sense, the passing of the Bill and the establishment of a legislative framework for community schools in Manitoba will serve to "legitimize the role of full-service community schools within the educational landscape."¹²⁵ It has been argued that for a community schools initiative to be successful and grow, the strategy must be defined in provincial policy and supported by legislation, regulation, and guidelines.¹²⁶

VII. CONCLUSION

After a thorough review of relevant literature, research, commentary, and legislative debate, I strongly believe in the value of Bill 12 - *The Community Schools Act*. The evidence highlighting the positive benefits of community schools on youth, their families, and the community is overwhelming. Schools across North America following this model have shown improvements in student learning, family engagement, school effectiveness, and community vitality. In spite of genuine concerns raised by critics of the movement, as well as the challenges and barriers to success schools must confront, the potential for success is difficult to ignore. The meaningful impact that could be made in the lives of Manitoba children makes the program a worthwhile endeavour.

Furthermore, the Bill itself contains numerous provisions that are consistent with recommendations and principles of best practice

¹²² Phillips, *supra* note 9 at 127.

¹²³ *Ibid* at 19.

¹²⁴ Campbell-Allen, *supra* note 6 at 21.

¹²⁵ *Ibid* at 15.

¹²⁶ Martin J Blank et al, "Financing Community Schools: Leveraging Resources to Support Student Success" (2010) Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership at 19-20, online: Coalition for Community Schools <<http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/assetmanager/finance-paper.pdf>>.

enunciated in the most current, authoritative literature respecting successful community education initiatives. That said, it will be interesting to see what effect the legislative framework will have on existing and future initiatives in Manitoba once the infrastructure of the Bill is implemented. Theory is different than practice — the success of the legislation is by no means assured. With that in mind, it will be important for Manitoba educators, politicians, and stakeholders to remain vigilant and continue the pursuit of effective education strategies. Regardless of the outcome of Bill 12 - *The Community Schools Act*, I think we can all agree that the betterment of education of our province's youth is a cause worth fighting for.

