

To: The Texas Senate Education Committee  
From: Steve Swanson  
May 19, 2011  
Reference: SB 1386 Youth Suicide  
Testimony *HS*

**Community-Based Leadership First**  
*Existing In the Texas Education Code*

Good morning my name is Steve Swanson and I am here today as a citizen. My wife Lonni and I have raised our two sons in Texas.

My background includes architectural and structural engineering; ownership in a business that designed and built buildings, including many schools and higher education facilities; serving on school and district committees, workforce development, and with elected officials on community boards; and serving in communities (rural, suburban, and urban) with at risk youth and schools.

This experience has clearly revealed we lose efficiency, effectiveness, lives (suicide, dropouts), money, and the ability to compete in the global economy when people in our communities do not talk and work with one another and truly solve problems together as a community.

The success and lives of all our children is critical and urgent for the success of Texas

**Leadership must come first.**

Leadership:

- Focused on the success and life of every child, our future workforce, businesses, and economy.

Leadership:

- That is committed to, encourages, and helps people in our communities seek ways and processes to truly work with one another to efficiently and effectively use our resources, human and financial.

Today, everyday, we all have leadership opportunities and responsibilities to help our communities imagine and create the possibilities for the future of our children and economy.

## **This Requires Action – An Opportunity for Leadership Today**

**To all Texas legislators:**

**Please call people in the school districts you represent to:**

- **Let them know you are committed to helping them truly work with one another**
- **You are going to visit with them soon to help them**
  - **Come together,**
  - **Seek ways and processes to establish working relationships and improve,**
  - **Make efficient and effective use of community resources,**
  - **Serve the needs of all students,**
  - **Meet the needs for a competitive workforce, businesses, and economy.**

**Please ask other legislators to do the same.**

**In June of 2011 call each other to share what you have learned about people working together for their children in the school districts you represent.**

**Start the State of Texas Learning Community for Youth**

**Ask the TEA to help you.**

**Each community shares with each other their youth suicide stories and change that has impacted their lives.**

**This is not a new idea.**

**Support and encouragement for your calls, visits, and action is included in the Texas Education Code, as well as many other references. See attached.**

**In the midst of crisis,**

**For the sake of our children's future and liberty,**

**We must not and will not retreat.**

**Thank you for your courage, commitment, and leadership with and for our communities and the future lives of our children – the future of Texas.**

**Steve Swanson**

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**Reference the Texas Education Code (TEC) including:**

**STATE LEADERSHIP for COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP for YOUTH**

Sec. 11.254. STATE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. (a) The commissioner shall oversee the provision of training and technical support to all districts and campuses in respect to planning and site-based decision-making...

**STATE of TEXAS LEARNING COMMUNITY for YOUTH**

Sec. 11.254. STATE RESPONSIBILITIES FOR THE PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS. (b) The agency shall conduct an annual statewide survey of the types of district- and campus-level decision-making and planning structures that exist, ...

**COMMUNITY-BASED LEADERSHIP for YOUTH**

Sec. 11.1511. SPECIFIC POWERS AND DUTIES OF BOARD. (b) The board shall:  
(1) seek to establish working relationships with other public entities to make effective use of community resources and to serve the needs of public school students in the community; ...  
(5) adopt a policy to establish a district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process

**COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP for YOUTH**

Sec. 11.1512. COLLABORATION BETWEEN BOARD AND SUPERINTENDENT. (b) (2)The board of trustees and the superintendent shall work together to create and support connections with community organizations to provide community-wide support for the high achievement of all district students

**STATE LEADERSHIP for COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP for YOUTH**

Sec. 39.103. INTERVENTIONS AND SANCTIONS FOR CAMPUSES. (a) If a campus performance is below any standard ...(2) establish a school community partnership team...

**COMMUNITY LEADERSHIP AND LOCAL LEARNING COMMUNITY for YOUTH**

Sec. 11.251. PLANNING AND DECISION-MAKING PROCESS.  
(a) The board of trustees of each independent school district shall ensure that a district improvement plan and improvement plans for each campus are developed, reviewed, and revised annually for the purpose of improving the performance of all students.

**Refer to the attached for additional support:**

- **Community-Based Leadership and Action – Quotes**
- **Community-Based Leadership and Action – References**

# Community-Based Leadership and Action

## Relevant Quotes

### Education and Community – Working Together

***“The deep purpose of Public Education is learning to work together”***

Robert Sylwester, Emeritus Professor of Education, University of Oregon

***Council’s Report to the Governor – June 2008***

State of Texas - Governor’s Competitive Council

“In order to improve Texas talent development outcomes, the Texas system should transform to **remove bureaucratic policies** that prevent all parts of the system from **working seamlessly together** to meet workforce demand: ensure that all students graduate with the skills required to be college and workforce ready...”

“Institutions of higher education must make **partnering** with private entities easier.”

***Texas Education Code (TEC)***

“...The commissioner shall oversee the provision of training and technical support to all districts and campuses in respect to planning and site-based decision-making...The agency shall conduct an annual statewide survey of the types of district- and campus-level decision-making and planning structures that exist, ...” Sec. 11.254

“The board shall:...seek to establish working relationships with other public entities to make effective use of community resources and to serve the needs of public school students in the community; ...adopt a policy to establish a district- and campus-level planning and decision-making process...” Sec. 11.1511

“The board of trustees and the superintendent shall work together to create and support connections with community organizations to provide community-wide support for the high achievement of all district students...” Sec. 11.1512.

“... establish a school community partnership team...” Sec. 39.103.

***Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy – 2006***

David Mathews – By the Charles F. Kettering Foundation

- “Citizens joined with citizens are able to accomplish what no school board, superintendent, *principal or cadre of teachers can do alone.*”
- “... public work creates the public... public building is done through public work”
- “I am simply referring back to “the Public” that is implied in the phrase, “We, the People.”

***Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas- May 2008***

TASA – Texas Association of School Administrators/Texas Leadership Center

- “The schools we need are community-owned institutions”
- “This work can be used to create a **community-based, bottom-up movement** capitalizing on new and existing alliances with professional organizations, local business leaders, and similar groups. To quote author Margaret Wheatly, *‘All great things begin with a conversation between two people.’...*”
- “Why a New direction and Why Now....The core business of schools is to provide engaging, appropriate experiences for students so that they learn and are able to apply their knowledge in

ways that enrich their lives and **ensure their well-being.** Unfortunately, the present bureaucratic structure has taken away that focus and replaced it with a system based upon compliance, coercion, and fear. If proper focus is to be restored, the system **must be transformed into one based upon trust, shared values, creativity, innovation, and respect.**”

- “Transforming our Schools from Bureaucracies to Learning Organizations. Bureaucracies value power and authority, while learning organizations are driven by beliefs and values... Learning organizations maintain a clear sense of doing the right thing and doing it well, shared commitments and beliefs, common purpose and vision, trust, accountability, and use of standards to inspire. Bureaucracies discourage and are disruptive to innovation...”
- “Saying No to Remote Control. The shift in power in setting education policy from the local to community to the state and federal government has resulted in a system where schools feel more accountable to the Legislature than to their students and their communities.”
- “In this context we see...
  - Schools that foster a sense of community, where local citizens know that the schools belong to them and they are responsible for the quality of education and creating the community conditions in which great schools can flourish...
  - Acceptance of the fact by schools and communities that the lack of success of many students today is less a problem of the students than of the systems that define current schools and the communities in which they function.
  - Schools that embrace their (school board members, in particular) fundamental role in building the communities needed for great schools”
- “A Moral Imperative: Why We as Public Education Leaders Must Speak and Act Now...Our collective experiences and our intensive study of what is happening in our schools and communities lead us to conclude that the future of public education is at risk and will not survive if the present direction continues. It is time to redirect the concern, energy, effort, and support for improvement to create a positive commitment to the education of our youth by transforming systems that better meet the needs of 21<sup>st</sup> century learners.”
- “Organizational Transformation...Excellence emanates from a shared commitment to values and standards, high levels of engagement, and strong leadership at levels functioning with and accountability system that inspires.”
- “Schools reflect the problems in the society from which their students come, therefore, it is essential that community/school partnerships be developed and supported that coordinate services to student and families.”

***The Mystery of Good Teaching*** – 2002 Quote from CAN Education Assessment Overview, Austin - Travis County Texas, based upon Goldhaber, D. (2002) *The Mystery of Good Teaching*

“In fact, some studies have concluded that only 40% of educational achievement can be attributed to factors within the education system the remainder is a function of other individual, family, and community conditions.”

### **Imagine**

What would happen if all our youth saw and experienced all adults truly seeking and establishing working relationships with one another to make effective use of community resources and serving the needs of all students for their success, future workforce and businesses, and a vibrant economy?

People together, overcoming the loss of life and money which results when we separate from one another, do not communicate, and are divisive.

Saving our liberty as a nation – Not a new idea

# Community-Based Leadership and Action

## Relevant Quotes Education for Our Future

### *America's Perfect Storm* – February 5, 2007

EDUCATIONAL TESTING SERVICE

Communications & Public Affairs - Princeton, New Jersey

- **Three Forces Changing Our Nation's Future**
- **"... if unaddressed... further dividing us socially and economically,"**
- **"The American dream could turn into an American tragedy for many."**
- **"... a looming question is whether we will continue to grow apart or, as a nation, we will invest in policies that will help us to grow together? We strongly believe the latter is the better course of action over the long term."**
- **"FORCE 1 – wide disparity in literacy and numeracy skills among our school-age and adult populations"**
  - US High School graduation rate average 70 % minorities 50 %
  - US High School graduation rank 16th out of 21 OECD countries - Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
  - 1984-2004 achievement gap remained large and stable
- **"FORCE 2 – seismic changes in our economy"**
  - 1984 to 2000 20 Million of 30 Million new jobs associated with college-level education
  - 1979 expected lifetime earnings BA degree 51% higher than peers with only a high school diploma. By 2004 this difference widened to 96%.
- **"FORCE 3 – sweeping demographic changes"**
  - U.S. population nearly 300M in 2005 will grow to more than 360M in 2030, will be increasingly older and more diverse
  - None of the labor force growth is predicted to come from native-born workers of prime working age (25 to 54).

### *Tough Choices Tough Times* – 2007

National Center on Education and the Economy

- **"a world...in which creativity and innovation are the key to the good life, in which high levels of education - a very different kind of education than most of us have had - are going to be the only security there is."**

### *Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas* – May 2008

TASA – Texas Association of School Administrators/Texas Leadership Center

- **"Engaging the Digital Generation"**
- **"New Learning Standards... A transformed system that meets the diverse needs of students.....focus on the development of the whole person...providing opportunities for all talents to be cultivated, nurtured, and valued."**

### *Washington Post* – 2009

**"Obesity, poor education make many younger people unfit for military."  
Our national security is at risk.**

### *McKinsey & Company Social Sector Office* – 2009

**"Educational gaps impose on the United States  
the economic equivalent of a permanent national recession"**

***Dr. Nolan Estes***

Professor Emeritus, College of Education, University of Texas

- “All education ought to be career education... help students be successful at the next stage regardless of what that is.”
- “Currently “We have a cage for every age”
- “Teachers must become guides on the side vs. a sage on the stage... work with and relate to vs. lecture and cover the book.”
- “We must eliminate the 2 X 4 X 6 curriculum i.e. what is between the two covers of the textbook... the 4 walls of the traditional classroom and the 6 periods of the traditional class day and move to real world experiences.”

## **Education and Economy for Our Future**

***Council’s Report to the Governor – June 2008***

State of Texas - Governor’s Competitive Council

- “Ensuring the state has a high-quality education and workforce system is essential to state’s future prosperity.”
- “Texas is expected to experience critical workforce deficits in both higher education graduates as well as graduates from quality training and certification programs in nearly every industry cluster. Stakeholders across the state warned that if the state’s talent development system” (education and workforce development system) “...does not make critical changes at every level to ensure a dependable workforce is available, Texas will not remain a high-quality place for doing business.”

# Community-Based Leadership and Action

## Relevant Quotes

### Community – Working Together

#### National

- “Your union and brotherly affection may be perpetual.”
- “The unity of Government, which constitutes you, one people, is also now dear to you”
- “Your Union ought to be considered as a main prop of your liberty”
- “The love of the one ought to endear to you the preservation of the other”  
**GEORGE WASHINGTON**
- “We must hang (stick) together ...else we shall most assuredly hang (fall) separately”  
**BEN FRANKLIN**
- “ask not what your country can do for you; ask what you can do for your country.
- “When written in Chinese, the word "crisis" is composed of two characters-one represents danger, and the other represents opportunity.”  
**JOHN F. KENNEDY**
- “If we love our country, we should also love our countrymen.  
**RONALD REAGAN**
- “Dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.”
- “That we here highly resolve that these dead shall not have died in vain”
- “That this nation, under God, shall have a new birth of freedom”
- “That government of the people, by the people, for the people, shall not perish from the earth.”  
**ABRAHAM LINCOLN**
- “We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”
- “**I have a dream** that one day this nation will rise up and live out the true meaning of its creed: "We hold these truths to be self-evident: that all men are created equal."  
**MARTIN LUTHER KING, JR.**
- “We cannot seek achievement for ourselves and forget about progress and prosperity for our community ... Our ambitions must be broad enough to include the aspirations and needs of others, for their sakes and for our own.”
- ”You are never strong enough that you don't need help.”
- “The end of all education should surely be service to others.”  
**CESAR CHAVEZ**
- “Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world. Indeed, it is the only thing that ever has.” **MARGARET MEAD**
- **ALBERT EINSTEIN**
  1. “No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness (mindset) that created it.”
  2. “Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results.”
  3. “It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity.”
  4. “Love is a better teacher than duty.”
  5. “Most people say that it is the intellect which makes a great scientist. They are wrong: it is character.”



# Community-Based Leadership and Action

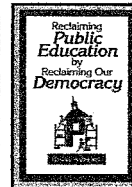
## References

- Education and Community – Working Together

**Reclaiming Public Education by Reclaiming Our Democracy – 2006**

David Mathews – Kettering Foundation Press

- Create authentic Public by doing Public Works



**Visioning – Creating a New Vision for Public Education in Texas – May 2008**

The Public Education Visioning Institute - 35 ISD Superintendents in Texas



- “Community-based, bottom-up movement” - “All great things begin with a conversation between two people”
- “System must be transformed into one based upon trust, shared values, creativity, innovation and respect.”
- “Learning organizations are driven by beliefs and values.”

<http://www.tasanet.org/files/visioning/visioningfinal.pdf>

### Alexis de Tocqueville



Frenchman who came to the U.S. in 1831 when he was only 25 years old wrote *Democracy in America*

“found Americans - When citizens saw a problem that needed to be solved, *they relied on each other, not just on government, making them the most unusual people in the world,*”  
 When something needed to be done, *he marveled,*  
*people would go across the street and discuss the matter with their neighbors, they converse, they listen to each other...*”

### Great Schools

by Design



- Involve entire community from the outset including students and quiet voices. (Community Engagement)
- Provide honest and transparent information about cost and financing. “Freedom of Information”- “But, it is a road we must follow if we want to protect the ideal of an open, vibrant democracy.”  
3-11-07 Alasdair Roberts Syracuse University
- Build trust between schools and community.

## References (Continued)

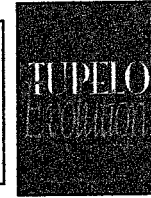
### • Community – Working Together

TUPELO – The Evolution of a Community - 1999

The Kettering Foundation Press

Common Sense – getting along to be productive – Farmers and Bankers

Transformation from poverty to prosperity – Decades of effort -The spirit of Tupelo



HOPE UNRAVELD – The People’ Retreat and OUR WAY BACK - 2005

Richard C. Harwood – Charles F. Kettering Foundation

- Hope is real – it is a choice. From knowing there is care for one another



### • Education, Workforce, and Economy

Tough Choices OR Tough Times – 2007

National Center on Education and the Economy

“A Nation at Risk for the next generation, a brave clear call for top-to-bottom reforms in U.S. education... Chester E. Finn Jr.”

[http://www.skillscommission.org/pdf/exec\\_sum/ToughChoices\\_EXECSUM.pdf](http://www.skillscommission.org/pdf/exec_sum/ToughChoices_EXECSUM.pdf)



America’s Perfect Storm – Three Forces Changing Our Nation’s Future – 2007

ETS – Educational Testing Service

Insufficient literacy and numeracy skills - Seismic changes in our economy - Sweeping demographic changes

[http://www.ets.org/Media/Education\\_Topics/pdf/AmericasPerfectStorm.pdf](http://www.ets.org/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/AmericasPerfectStorm.pdf)



Governor’s Competitiveness Council Report – Texas – July 2008

[http://governor.state.tx.us/files/gcc/Councils\\_Report\\_to\\_the\\_Governor.pdf](http://governor.state.tx.us/files/gcc/Councils_Report_to_the_Governor.pdf)

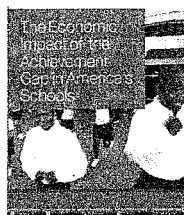
E3 Alliance – Central Texas

<http://www.e3alliance.org>



The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America’s Schools

<http://www.mckinsey.com>



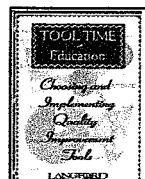
## References (Continued)

### • Processes and Tools for Community Action

**PARTNERING – Changing Attitudes** – 1995  
The Associated General Contractors of America  
Common Sense – getting along to be productive



**Tool Time for Education** – 2005  
*Langford International Inc.*  
Choosing and Implementing Quality Improvement Tools



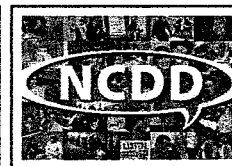
**Baldrige National Quality Program**  
<http://www.quality.nist.gov/>



**The Little Book of Restorative Justice** – 2002  
*The Little Books of Justice and Peacebuilding*  
Good Books - Howard Zehr



**Dialogue & Deliberation for Engagement**  
Conversation Café, Charrettes, Intergroup Dialogue, Wisdom Circles,  
Open Space, Appreciative Inquiry, Socrates Café, Community of Inquiry  
National Issues Forums, Citizens Jury, Deliberative Polling, Study Circles,  
<http://www.thataway.org/>



**HOPE UNRAVELD – The People' Retreat and OUR WAY BACK** - 2005  
Richard C. Harwood – Charles F. Kettering Foundation

- Hope is real – it is a choice. From knowing there is care for one another



**Creating Connections** – 2004  
Council of Educational Facility Planners International  
CEFPI Guide for Educational Facility Planning

