

National Parks and Education Partners: Six Case Studies **Six Lange Lange Lange Incomparison**

Edited by Peter S. O'Connell and Elizabeth F. Hoermann with Brenda Jochums Slez



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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface	V
Introduction	I
Case Study: Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center	8
Beginnings of the Partnership	13
Early Implementation: Idea into Reality	16
Blossoming Stage	20
Reinvention Stage	23
Impact of Partnership	25
Future Plans	25
Advice for Others	26
Case Study: Crissy Field Center	28
Introduction	29
The Partners, the Place, the Project	30
Setting the Stage	32
The Crissy Field Center	34
Lessons Learned: From Negotiation to Collaboration	44
Final Note	49
Case Study: Parks as Classrooms	50
Introduction	
Who Are We? A Description of the Partnership	52
In the Beginning: 1990 – 1994	53
Early Success Stories and Potential Obstacles	57
Transition from Development to Refinement: 1994 – 1997	59
Money Matters	59
Managing Transitions and Sustainability	60
The Role of Evaluation and Assessment	62
Benefits of the Project to the Park	
Looking to the Future	66
Threats, Obstacles, Bumps in the Road	67
Experience Is the Best Teacher	-
Case Study: Tsongas Industrial History Center	70
1978 – 1987: Seedbed for a Partnership	-
	, 75
1991 – 1996: From Vision to Realities	79
1996 – 2001: Adjusting to Reform and Resolving Partner Issues	82
The Future: Financial Stability and Center Integration	85
Conclusion	86

Case Study: Portraits of a Port Teacher Institute	88
Overview: The Park and The Museum	89
A Concept Within Its Larger Context: The City of New Bedford	90
Strategic Choices for Strategic Advantages	94
Shared Visions and Stumbling Blocks	102
Looking into the Future	
Most Important Advice	105
Conclusion	107
Case Study: Bridging the Watershed	108
Overview	109
The Setting and the Vision	109
Phase I: Bridging the Watershed	112
Preparing for Phase 2: Program Sustainability	114
Phase 2: Implementation and Expansion (2001 – 2003)	116
Phase 3: Strategic Planning for the Future (2003 – 2004)	117
Money Matters	119
Strategic Choices for Strategic Advantages	120
Most Important Advice	121
Lessons Learned	122
Unanticipated Benefits of Educational Partnerships	123
Creating a Foundation for Successful Partnerships	126
Starting-Up	130
Recurring Issues in Educational Partnerships	138
Conclusion	

PREFACE

Dear Colleagues,

I am pleased to share with you the results of this case study project. Educational partnerships play an important role in making our national parks accessible to a wide variety of audiences, especially school-age children, tomorrow's leaders. Sharing best practices and developing strategic partnerships are two key goals in *Renewing Our Education Mission Report and the Director's Legacy Initiative and Four Year Plan: Doing Business in the 21st Century.* While partnerships are not new to the National Park Service, we must continue to share best practices to help us develop more collaborative relationships that can be sustained over time.

Recognizing the importance of collaboration in its groundbreaking report, *Rethinking the National Parks for the 21st Century*, the National Park System Advisory Board stated that "Collaboration with organizations and scholars is essential to develop and expand the Service's educational capacity." Today's challenges require innovative approaches with respect to financial and administrative issues, involvement of stakeholders, program development, and communication. The educational case studies profiled in this project address each of these issues and provide a wonderful and candid narrative on the ups and downs of the collaborative process from the partners' and Park Service's perspectives.

This publication is the first of its kind to focus on educational partnerships across the National Park Service. The rich mix of case studies not only highlights different types of partners but also a range of new to long-term relationships. The fact that several of these partnerships have been in existence for some time underscores the need to do a better job of sharing across regions and organizations. We have much to learn from each other and much to gain by taking the time to understand how successful partnerships have taken hold and withstood the test of time. No two partnerships are exactly the same; however looking through the lens of another partnership can inform our thinking about the possibilities and the process of working together to achieve mutual goals.

(Continued on next page)

I want to congratulate the partners and Park Service staff involved with this effort and thank you for your dedication of time and commitment to excellence throughout the phases of this project. I especially want to thank Elizabeth Hoermann, Education Specialist at the Northeast Center for Education Services, and Peter O'Connell, Director of the Tsongas Industrial History Center, for their leadership in coordinating this endeavor. These case studies will stimulate dialogue on connecting with students and teachers and seed new strategies for establishing deeper partnerships with our schools and communities.

Mary A. Bomar Acting Regional Director Northeast Region

Educational Partnerships in the National Park Service

"The National Park Service has unparalleled content made unique by its inextricable link to the actual places that shaped the natural and human history of this land... To become a premier national education resource, we must share this content with the broadest possible audiences by enhancing our existing partnerships and developing new strategic alliances with those who have professional expertise in creating and distributing content to mass and targeted audiences." **Renewing our Education Mission**

The twenty-first century heralded a new age in information and communication, which is transforming society as we know it today. These new technological advances offer countless opportunities for individuals to connect with one another, visit places that were once out of reach, and engage more directly in the future of their communities. They also come at a time when we face incredible challenges in how to preserve and protect the nation's cultural and natural resources for future generations. The National Park System Advisory Board Report, *Rethinking the National Park System for the 21st Century*, called for the National Park Service to re-examine practices and priorities in a number of key areas and challenged the agency to fulfill its education potential and to play a more active role in the educational life of the nation.

The Park Service responded to this call by renewing its commitment to education and articulating three main goals: build capacity within the agency, create new opportunities for learning with an emphasis on children, and expand partnerships and outreach. This renewal acknowledged the importance of working with schools and the need for strategic alliances with educational organizations. For school-age populations, the interaction with real places, primary sources, and subject matter experts make the abstract real. Through education, youth and life-long learners can connect with their heritage, grasp difficult-to-understand concepts, and nurture their civic participation.

Partnerships are essential to realizing this vision. Neither parks nor their educational partners can fulfill their educational missions as well alone as they can by working together. By teaming with one another, partners add complementary skills, achieve economies of scale, tap new sources of funding, and reach new audiences. Each of the six case studies presented in the following chapters describes these types of successes. However, each case study also outlines the challenges each partnership experienced in forming and transforming the partnership to adjust to changes in the local or national educational climate, organizational changes within the respective organizations, changes in staffing, and changes in financial circumstances.

The purpose of this publication is two-fold. One aim is to help parks and their potential partners form educational partnerships; the other is to provide examples to those parks and their partners trying to sustain an already-established partnership. While readers will note some similarities in the successes and in the issues described, this publication is not a "Ten Steps to a Successful Educational Partnership" advice manual. No two partnerships are exactly the same. As a result, no two case studies are identical. In fact, we have left the case studies in the voices of the writers as

much as possible to reflect the individual approaches. While there is no quick template to follow, we can learn from the strategies and approaches used by others. The final chapter, Chapter 7—Lessons Learned, identifies some common conclusions that emerge from the narratives. Park and nonpark partners embarking on new partnerships can apply these lessons to their own plans, considering their own goals, environments, staff, and circumstances.

In any educational partnership, the partners find themselves grappling with terminology. The very phrase "educational partnership" in reference to the relationship between a park and a nonpark partner needs to be defined. In this publication, "education" refers to those experiences a park and/or a partner offers to teachers and students that are designed to help them meet national, state, or local curriculum objectives. "Partnership" is defined as "a mutually beneficial and well-defined relationship entered into by two or more organizations that includes: a commitment to mutual relationships and goals; a jointly developed structure of governance and staffing; mutual authority and accountability for success; and sharing of resources and rewards^I. Thus, a partnership is more than simple cooperation among organizations to achieve a short-term educational project, more than an intention to keep working together. Rather, it is a more formal agreement usually governed by a Cooperative Agreement or a Memorandum of Understanding or Agreement.

in the **National**

Educational The concept of initiating and developing partnerships in the NPS has Partnerships evolved over the years. Today there is a greater understanding of the collaborative nature of partnerships, the need to understand each other's culture, and the skills required to initiate and sustain these **Park Service** relationships.

> Educational partnerships are immensely productive and rewarding but also time consuming to develop and sustain. The creation and implementation of these partnerships is all-absorbing for the staff and organizations involved. It takes time and reflection to create an understanding of partnerships and the value of sharing processes. Partnerships would leave more time for evaluation, reflection, and analysis if they thought about them as a priority. What little time is spent on evaluation is focused mostly on the programs created by the partners—the activities, the staffing, the budget, and other operational issues. And it is information about these kinds of issues that provides the underlying structure of presentations made by the staff at conferences or through articles written for professional periodicals. Even in the conference hallways where people talk frankly and personally about "how things are going," the anecdotes they share do not lead to larger lessons for the profession.

> It is rare for organizations to step back and think about their own history of partnership structure, roles, planning processes, and methods of assessment for their own organization; and rarer still for the staff of several organizations to come together to discuss issues of organizational change.

^I adapted from a definition of "collaboration" in Collaboration: What Makes It Work by Paul W. Mattessich, Marta Murray-Close, and Barbara R. Monsey, (2000)

"Park-based learning is powerful—and transformative. People more readily retain information, grasp meanings, and adopt new behaviors and values when directly involved with cultural and natural heritage resources and sites. Park Service education informs uniquely about the civic experience of our country and the complex, diverse ecology of our world. It encourages respect for our experience, as a nation, and invites stewardship...."

Fran Mainella, Director National Park Service Renewing Our Education Mission Report to the National Leadership Council June 2003 Until they do, and until they share the lessons they have learned, their colleagues are forced to reinvent the wheels of partnerships and to get mired in some of the same swamps from which their colleagues have recently extricated themselves.

As the National Park Service leadership was developing its historic education mission, it called upon parks to create and expand educational partnerships. NPS leaders realized that they had little documentation of the types and scope of educational programming for schools and other audiences in which parks were already engaged, nor of the history of educational partnerships parks had formed. The National Park Service rightly prides itself on the professional development it provides for its staff in providing interpretive and educational programming on the front lines. However, much of that career development has focused on the development and presentation of specific education programs and related curricula for students. More advanced training in the area of education, and more particularly in strategic education planning and educational partnerships, is needed. A first step in offering such programs is for staff to identify issues, best practices, theoretical frameworks, and case studies as the basis for the professional development curriculum. During this same time period, Northeast Regional Director Marie Rust, and Deputy Regional Director Chrysandra Walter, recognized a need for examples of best practices in the area of partnerships, which led to the development of this case studies project.

The staff of the NPS Northeast Center for Education Services (NCES) began conversations with the staff of the Tsongas Industrial History Center about hosting a workshop focusing on Educational Partnerships in the National Park Service and producing a publication of case studies and lessons learned. The Tsongas Industrial History Center, a partnership between the UMass Lowell Graduate School of Education and Lowell National Historical Park, was a logical partner in this initiative since it has been in existence for nearly two decades and has a strong history and credibility in education programming. Since the Tsongas Center was reflecting on its own history as the basis for developing its strategic vision for the next five years, the Director embraced the opportunity to participate in a conversation with five other partnerships.

The Selection Process

The process of nominating Park-Educational partnerships to describe and analyze was extremely difficult. NCES staff developed the following criteria to guide the selection process:

- · Large, medium, and small budget parks and partners;
- Different types of park partners (University, Friends Group, Conservancy, Museum, School, Foundation);
- Partnerships spread along a continuum of new to long-term relationships;
- Parks and partners throughout the NP System;
- Environmental and cultural programming;
- A range of issues the partners confronted and a range of responses to them;

"True collaborative programs that involve partnerships blessed at the highest levels of both educational institutions are beginning to emerge everywhere... As directors and board members view education as a core principle of a museum, they endorse and actively support the formation of long-term relationships with schools ...There will be moments of hesitation and questioning about the value of these partnerships, but the successes will so outweigh the concerns that we can look forward to many more fruitful

Diane B. Frankel, True Needs, True Partners – Museums and Schools Transforming Education

collaborations between these

two different but compatible educational institutions."

 Curriculum-based educational programs along a continuum from highly intensive educational experiences for a smaller number of students to less intensive educational programs involving larger numbers of students;

• Programs that had a system of program evaluation in place and a method of using the results to improve program practice.

Using these criteria, the NCES staff selected five park-partnership teams in addition to the Tsongas Industrial History Center. The six partnership teams welcomed the opportunity to participate in the project, partly because they wished to document their own histories and partly because they felt they could benefit from the experiences of others. Each of the six partnerships is in a different phase of partnership evolution; together they illustrate fundamental principles, questions, and issues in forming and sustaining educational partnerships.

New Bedford Whaling Museum and New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park in New Bedford, Massachusetts, are in the early phase of their partnership. Unlike several of the other partnerships, the partner, the Whaling Museum, is the older, better-established, larger organization, and it played a significant role in demonstrating to Congress the need for the National Park. Together these two partners developed a teacher institute as a first major partnership project.

The **Great Smoky Mountains National Park—Pi Beta Phi Elementary School** in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, partnership is an intensive partnership between a large park and one K-8 school that is located near the entrance to the park. This project offers students and teachers at every grade level an opportunity to participate in multiple interdisciplinary educational experiences.

The San Francisco, California, partnership between **Golden Gate National Recreation Area and the Golden Gate National Park Conservancy** is a successful environmental preservation partnership in the NPS, but their work to restore Crissy Field and build the community-oriented Crissy Field Education Center is very recent and quite different from other partnership activities.

In Washington, D.C., the Rock Creek Park—Alice Ferguson
Foundation partnership is an ambitious effort to broker educational relationships among several school districts and several national parks in the Washington, D.C., area. Funded initially by a grant from the Toyota USA Foundation through the National Park Foundation, the Bridging the Watershed partnership developed five curriculum modules that introduce urban high school students to the study of national parks as environmental laboratories and as places of beauty that need careful stewardship.

A long-standing educational partnership in the NPS, Cuyahoga Valley National Park and its Friends Group partner, Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association, provides readers an opportunity to see both the evolution of a highly successful environmental education program in Brecksville, Ohio, that includes residential and day programs and the evolution of the role and function of a Friends Group as an educational partner.

"Behaviors, beliefs, attitudes, and aspirations are changed by allowing students to interact directly with park resources."

Kathy Dimont
Chief, Education Services, Yosemite
National Park

From the 2002 article "Hands-On Science Brings Student Researchers to Yosemite National Park," in the NPS publication Natural Resource Year in Review, pg. 18.

The Lowell National Historical Park—University of Massachusetts Lowell partnership extends over nearly two decades and provides readers

insight into the organization of the Tsongas Industrial History Center—a hands-on education center that offers day programs, summer camps, and teacher institutes.

Partnership projects evolve and change over time. The six partnerships described in this publication will continue to add new elements beyond the documentation presented in these case studies.

Developing the Framework **Template**

The "Educational Partnerships in the NPS" workshop for park-partner teams was held in Lowell from May 27-29, 2003. The teams described their partnerships, identified issues they had faced, and discussed a conceptual or Analytical framework that would be most helpful to others attempting to initiate or sustain educational partnerships. The participants were surprised, even comforted, to see that other teams had grappled or were currently grappling with similar issues. More important, they began the process of learning from one another.

> The teams debated whether a "developmental" framework describing stages of growth (implying that partnerships evolved to higher forms over time) or a "recurring issues" framework would be best. The group settled on the latter, leaving it to time and others to decide whether partnerships develop in stages. Teams were paired during the discussions to allow for more in-depth and personal communication. The benefits of the exchange among the participants far exceeded the initial expectations. In the process of the exchange, the participants not only learned from each other, but also viewed aspects of their partnerships differently as a result of the discussions.

> Based on the discussions in the workshop, each park and partner team agreed to address some common elements, though they were free to organize their case studies as they wished and to use whatever narrative voice they felt would be most effective. The following categories were identified as the backbone and ribs of the case studies.

Brief Overview

Describe the partnership as it exists today. Who are the partnering organizations, what is the mission/vision, what are the major programs and products? How does the work of the partnership support the mission of both the NPS and the partner organization?

Beginnings

Who were the key initiators and what were their roles in the organizations? What was the big idea—the vision? What conditions made it possible or essential to form a partnership? What was the initial organizing structure and how were issues of communication, participation, leadership, and visibility handled? What advice was sought from clients and experts? What successes were achieved and what problems did the partners experience? What financial resources (cash, staff, in-kind) were needed?

Organizational Cultures, Organizational Changes

How did partners learn about and address differences in their organizational cultures—dress, values, ways of doing things, pace, language and philosophies about teaching and learning, professional development, pay and personnel policies?

Strategic Educational Choices—Educational Needs and Niches

How did the partners decide what programs to develop, what kind of educational experience to offer, how long and expensive programs should be, how to staff programs and train staff, and what kinds of pre/post field materials to produce? To what degree were these decisions affected by the state or regional education standards and testing environment?

Evolutions—Choices, Transitions, Recurring Problems, Successes

We asked teams to discuss such topics as the cultures of the parent organizations; divisions of staff roles and functions; power, parity, trust, and respect between partners; decision-making and conflict resolution processes; the allocation and use of space; the required staff skills at different points; and important transitions early in the partnership and later on.

Money Matters—and Division of Revenue and Expenses

Once the programs were initiated, how did the partners decide who would pay for what, how much money would be raised, and whether fees would be charged for educational programs? Did the sources of support change over time?

Evaluation and Impact

How do the partners assess the educational impact of their collaboration? To what extent do the partners evaluate the condition of their partnership? How has the partnership affected the quantity and quality of educational programs delivered? To what extent have these effects been adequately publicized and recognized?

Looking into the Future

What are some immediate issues that the partnership will be facing in the near future? What successes are anticipated? What are the lessons learned that will be applied to this new direction/project, etc.?

Most Important Advice

What are the most critical pieces of advice you would give to other educational partnerships, new and existing?

Meltdown Moments

In any partnership story, issues arise that sometimes seem to threaten the survival of the partnership. Rather than separate out the meltdown moments, the case studies incorporated challenging issues into the narratives. The reader will be able to identify those challenging issues and points that could have threatened or did threaten the success and sustainability of the partnership.

Those reading this publication already have an interest in forming or sustaining an educational partnership. Readers might benefit from identifying their ideas, questions, and concerns about partnerships before continuing on to other chapters. The Lessons Learned section looks across the examples and identifies some universal concepts and ideas. Hopefully, these case studies will provide an opportunity for a fruitful "conversation" with the authors and will lead to further discussions with colleagues and potential partners.

Elizabeth Hoermann, Northeast Center for Education Services Peter O'Connell, Tsongas Industrial History Center Patti Reilly, Northeast Center for Education Services



Partnership Workshop, May 27-29, 2003, Tsongas Industrial History Center, Lowell, Massachusetts

Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association (CVNPA)

Dave Irvine (CVNPA) Jennie Vasarhelyi (CVNP) Deb Yandala (CVNPA)





Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center

Since 1993, the National Park Service (NPS) at Cuyahoga Valley National Park (CVNP) has been involved in an education partnership to deliver quality, innovative environmental programs to students and adults in northeastern Ohio. This article focuses on the beginnings of the partnership with the Park's Friends Group, the evolution to its current form as Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association (CVNPA), and lessons it offers to others involved in partnership programs.

The partnership has matured over time by responding to issues and through successful growth. Today, the partnership is poised to expand into new educational arenas. Since 1994, it has operated a 128-bed residential Environmental Education Center (EEC) located on 500 acres of the park. Its facilities consist of an administrative building and two campuses developed from rehabilitated farm structures. Each campus has a dormitory, dining hall, kitchen, science lab, and meeting room. In 1999, November Lodge opened, adding a large multipurpose room, computer lab, and art room.

While EEC's facilities are excellent, its programs are the most exciting products of the partnership. The center's standards-based curriculum integrates science, arts, environmental issues, and history. The programs incorporate the latest technology, including computers, digital cameras, and global positioning instruments. Problem-based learning approaches lie at the center of student experiences.

Today, CVNPA leads the daily operations at the EEC, but there is a sense of shared responsibility for the program and site that promotes excellence. Partner and park staff work side-by-side on a daily basis to deliver the outstanding programs. CVNPA hires and supervises most of the professional, support, and seasonal staff needed to provide programs, offer food service, and conduct daily business at the EEC, but the NPS owns the facilities and most of the major equipment, provides significant interpretive staffing, and carries out much of the grounds work and facility maintenance. The NPS contributes five full-time staff to the CVNPA through the Division of Interpretation, Education & Visitor Services, including a supervisory park ranger who conducts special projects, provides NPS leadership, and serves as liaison with other divisions on site issues. The NPS also contributes an education specialist and three education technicians, the only permanent staff providing instruction at the site. Their experience provides continuity from year to year to complement the partner's seasonal teaching staff.

Because the NPS supplements the operating staff for the EEC, the partner has directed significant staff time to curriculum development and program innovation not normally afforded by nonprofits. Current roles are elaborated in Figure 1.

Figure 1.
2003
Partnership
Structure
Environmental
Education
Center of
Cuyahoga
Valley
National Park
Association

Responsibilities

National Park Service

- Financial support
- · Space and equipment, including staff housing
- Program development and instruction assistance
- · On-site supervision of NPS teaching staff
- Emergency response

Roles

NPS Management

Park Superintendent – key to determining level of NPS support to education activities of CVNPA

Management Assistant – became primary liaison to CVNPA when its role expanded beyond education

Deputy Superintendent – important role in EEC operations leadership since multiple park divisions have roles at center; member of Development Committee and attends board meetings

Chief of Interpretation – provides NPS planning leadership for park educational programming; participates on board Education Committee and attends board meetings; supervises the Education Operations Manager; served as COR on the cooperative agreement prior to expansion of CVNPA role

Other Division Chiefs – hold lead responsibility for their disciplines relative to EEC; interface often coordinated through the Education Operations Manager

Program Leadership Staff

Education Operations Manager – serves as the NPS member of the EEC management team; acts as primary day-to-day liaison with the CVNPA staff at EEC in all issues relating to the site including education, visitor services, buildings and grounds maintenance, science and resource management, safety, emergency response, and NPS property management, coordinating with appropriate park divisions; supervises NPS teaching staff at EEC; participates on board Education Committee; coordinates NPS involvement in educational program development and curriculum revision, often leading specific projects

Teaching Staff

Education Specialists – Spends at least 40% of time teaching; develops curriculum and special projects under lead of CVNPA Education Director or Education Operations Manager; conducts teachers workshops; serves as master teacher mentoring CVNPA seasonal staff

Education Technicians – Spends at least 50% of time teaching; modifies existing curriculum to develop educational activities; manages NPS property; trains CVNPA seasonal staff in curriculum units

Responsibilities

Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association

- EEC program management
- Administrative leadership of EEC
- Staffing program instruction
- Food Service
- · Housekeeping
- Fee collection

Roles

CVNPA Management

CEO – provides staff leadership for CVNPA

Board of Directors + board committees – most policy development initiated at committee level; NPS staff represented on each committee; NPS senior management attend board meetings; NPS staff participated on board strategic planning committee

Chief Education Officer/EEC Director – Leads the administration of the EEC and education program initiatives for CVNPA; has the lead role in planning for program expansion, currently focused on an adult seminar institute

Program Leadership Staff

Education Director – leads curriculum development

Director of School Programs – leads school program operations and related planning

Summer Camp & Arts Director – leads summer, weekend, and arts-related programs operations and related planning

Food Service Director

Head Custodian

Technology and Office Director

Teaching Staff

Field-Instructor Interns – 9-month interns who provide instruction during the school year

Program Assistant Interns – usually second-year interns who do teaching and help operate school programming

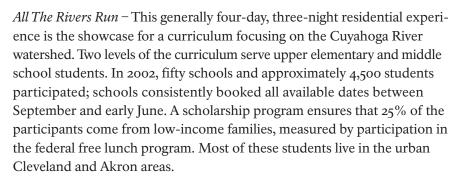
Summer camp counselors and teaching staff – seasonal employees for summer programming

The funding model for the annual operations has also been a shared responsibility. Because both the NPS and partner own responsibility for funding, the partnership has been able to tap a broader pool of external funding sources, use each other's funding to leverage additional funds, and have money available for innovation.

In addition to providing staff and facility support, the NPS transfers operating funding each year to the partner through a cooperative agreement. In fiscal year 2003, the subsidy was \$150,000, representing nine percent of the partner budget for the EEC. The long-term goal is for the subsidy to end, and while the amount of the subsidy has slowly decreased to half the original amount, it has provided important stability to partner funding. The NPS does plan to continue staff and facility support. However, the impact of tightening federal budgets led to holding open vacant positions. The partner's growing fundraising capacity is also expected to allow some facility and equipment funding responsibilities to shift to CVNPA.

Program fees comprise the majority of the EEC's operating budget, with the balance from soft funding sources, especially project grants. The CVNPA attempts to maximize fee income by renting facilities to other groups. Currently, the residential program is filled on weekdays during the school year, but the CVNPA seeks to expand programming for other audiences in summer and on weekends to generate additional earned income.

Major programs of the EEC are briefly summarized below:



Day Programs – The EEC offers a wide variety of day field trip opportunities for local schools. In 2002, seventy-five schools and approximately 6,500 students participated.

Weekend Conferences – The EEC is available as a rental facility for other nonprofit, educational, and church-related groups on weekends. Groups seeking an experience compatible with the purpose of the EEC have priority. Limited program assistance is offered. On occasion, CVNPA opens the EEC to the public through special events for adults, families, and children. In 2002, these functions served 44 groups and approximately 3,000 participants.

Summer Camp & Jr. Ranger Programs – CVNPA offers seven week-long residential summer camp sessions that integrate the arts and the environment in fun, active experiences. CVNPA also assists CVNP in a Junior



Ranger program for urban youth and the general public. In 2002, approximately 2,000 children participated in these programs.

Teacher Training - Because of the time and staff expertise of partners, the EEC has the capacity to engage additional community organizations in the center. The result has been a wide variety of professional development opportunities for area educators.

The next sections of the case study chronicle the evolution of the partnership. A timeline of the partnership chronology is shown in Figure 2. The case study concludes with advice to others based on lessons learned.

Figure 2. Education Partnership Timeline

1988	Plan for Environmental Education completed
1989	University of Akron agrees to operate EEC
1992	University of Akron pulls away from the partnership
1993	Cuyahoga Valley Association agrees to operate EEC
1993	A joint coordinating committee with NPS and CVA leadership
	forms to guide EEC policy
1994	EEC opens
1996	CVA forms a standing committee of its board for EEC
2000	Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center spins off as
	a separate nonprofit organization from CVA
2002	CVA merges into CVEEC to form Cuyahoga Valley
	National Park Association

Beginnings of the Partnership

Since Congress authorized the establishment of Cuyahoga Valley National Park, education has been closely linked to the park's primary purpose. Congress enacted P.L. 93-555 in 1974 to establish the park for the purpose of utilizing its resources "in a manner which will preserve its scenic, natural, and historic setting while providing for the recreational and educational needs of the visiting public."

This focus on education makes sense. Located in northeast Ohio, the park preserves 33,000 acres of pastoral landscape along the Cuyahoga River between the cities of Akron and Cleveland. For generations, the valley has offered a contrast and antidote to urban life. It serves millions of visitors annually with a national park experience without their traveling long distances or incurring major expenses. Because of its relatively large size for an urban park, the park protects a plethora of natural and cultural features. Visitors to the valley can discover and learn in an authentic "classroom" where subject matter can be directly experienced.

The concept for a residential environmental education facility at CVNP was introduced in the 1977 General Management Plan (GMP). The GMP identified the Jaite complex, now park headquarters, as the location for such a center, but did not elaborate further. Indicating that partnering is not a new idea for CVNP, the GMP emphasized the role of partners in providing interpretation: "The philosophy should be for the National Park Service to provide space, active encouragement, and assistance to interested groups as often as possible, rather than trying to produce the programs alone" (p. 54).

In 1981, the park hired its first education specialist, who began to operate school programming from a single building on Oak Hill Road, a location that became known as Earthlore Environmental Education Center. Following a typical NPS model, the extent of school programming was defined by the number of programs one person could coordinate with assistance from general park rangers and volunteers. Offerings included overnight stays where students slept in sleeping bags on the floor of the building. Groups were expected to provide much of their own programming, as well as prepare their own meals using available kitchen facilities.

Meanwhile, planning for expanded environmental education began, led be the Division of Interpretation, Education & Visitor Services and predating

Meanwhile, planning for expanded environmental education began, led by the Division of Interpretation, Education & Visitor Services and predating major partner involvement. In 1988, John P. Debo, Jr. became park superintendent, and this leadership change played a key role in shifting the concept of residential environmental education to a park priority.

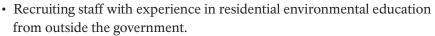
Completed in 1988, the Plan for Environmental Education provided a conceptual framework for residential environmental education as it exists today, and it addressed day trip programs as well. The plan abandoned Jaite as a location for the residential center, instead choosing to expand the Oak Hill location by developing two adjacent historic farm properties. In this model, the original Earthlore building became the administration building for the EEC. The location stood, even in the face of protest by some nearby Oak Hill Road residents, because the superintendent stood behind it, valuing it as the largest roadless area in the park that allowed an extensive trail system to be part of the campus.

In implementing the Plan for Environmental Education, Superintendent Debo gave higher priority to residential environmental education than to the expansion of day programming, despite much higher costs and lower number of students served.

Identifying the Need for a Partner

While some of the early discussions considered an NPS-operated center, the Plan reflects Debo's belief that an operating partner would be essential to make the center financially feasible. The plan cites tight federal budget constraints and the era of "new federalism," requiring increased private sector and local government support for federal projects that primarily benefit regional populations. The Plan broadly lays out the partnership, assigning the lead role in managing day-use programs to the NPS and the residential program to the partner, with advice and support from the broader educational community. It also notes, "Whoever plays the lead role in specific aspects of the program, all efforts will be cooperative, with NPS establishing mission, objectives, and guidelines."

The need for an operating partner is further defined in capital funding requests, which presented a partner, along with on-going NPS support, as the solution for making the project self-sustaining. An operating partner was also valued for facilitating operations that are complex or impossible for the federal government, including:



- Compensating residential environmental education staff, such as interns, who traditionally work over 40-hour weeks.
- Handling fee income from programs.
- · Operating food service.
- · Fundraising.



It is important to recognize that the concept for the EEC was not developed collaboratively with a partner. Instead, the NPS identified the program and then sought a partner to make it happen. This should be empowering to parks with a partnership vision, but without an identified partner: the vision can help spawn new partnerships.

Beginning in 1988, park interpretive staff began courting the University of Akron through its Department of Physical and Health Education to serve as its educational partner. The university seemed promising due to its degree programs in outdoor education and past history of partnering with the park on environmental studies and interpretive projects. In 1989, after a feasibility study, the University of Akron agreed to enter into a partnership. For the next few years, it participated actively and enthusiastically in planning for the EEC and environmental education programs. By late 1992, the project seemed to be falling into place. However, two impediments to university participation suddenly arose: drastic budget cuts and turnover of the university president. The university pulled away from the project, concerned about the financial risk. Today, its role is limited to sponsoring the graduate course for field instructor interns through the Department of Biology.

The park needed to quickly find a new operating partner. Superintendent Debo approached the park's friends group, Cuyahoga Valley Association (CVA), to take on the role. CVA had already taken on an education role in the park through its support of a summer recreation program for urban groups, the Cuyahoga Valley Heritage Festival, and other activities. It had also participated in the EEC project by submitting grant proposals that had been written by park interpretive staff. The resulting funding allowed CVA to hire a contractor to begin curriculum development.

In 1993, CVA accepted the challenge to operate the EEC, but not without debate. Some within CVA argued that CVA would be overwhelmed by the business of the EEC. Other concerns included maintaining other functions, financial liability, insurance, and lack of expertise in residential environmental education. In the end, CVA accepted the role because it helped fulfill its education mission. In June 1993, the first cooperative agreement for the EEC was signed. By March 8, 1994, EEC construction was complete enough for the pilot program to begin with school children.

Initial Capital Funding

The initial capital campaign for the EEC began in 1990. In accepting the role of partner, the University of Akron had asked to be excused from the campaign, not wanting it to compete with on-campus development projects.



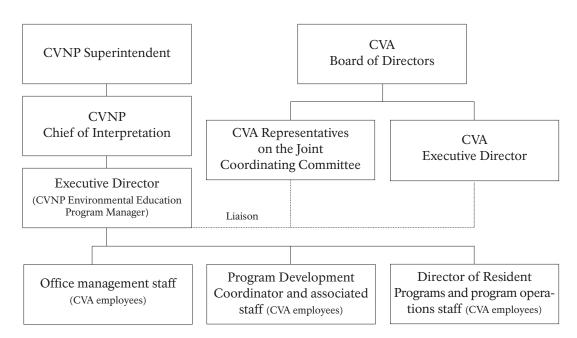
Thus, the NPS independently led the campaign, with the university expressing its support and partnering intentions. CVA, as the park's friends group, assisted a separate campaign for curriculum development prior to being identified as the operating partner for the center. The campaign raised \$285,000 and started the EEC on its trend of heavy investment in curriculum.

The park sought capital funding for building renovation and construction. Federal budget requests through the formal NPS process did not go anywhere. However, CVNP has long been in the enviable position of being well-supported by Congressman Ralph Regula, who has held a powerful position on the House Appropriations Committee for the Department of the Interior. Although Congressman Regula supported the EEC idea, he felt that he could best make a case for federal funding once local fundraising efforts demonstrated strong community support. After \$1.113 million was contributed by local foundations, Regula was able to garner \$3.7 million in federal capital funds.

Early Implementation: Idea Into Reality Once the Cuyahoga Valley Association accepted Superintendent Debo's request to serve as the park's educational partner, the two organizations organized a planning team consisting of three NPS representatives (the superintendent, administrative officer, and chief of interpretation), two CVA board members, and CVA's executive director. This team provided broad policy direction for EEC program development. Within the first year, this planning team was formalized into the Joint Coordinating Committee (JCC) to provide operational guidance and policy directions on items such as booking policies, fees, and scholarships.

As established in the start-up of the partnership, the NPS environmental education program manager was the lead person charged with putting EEC together. He was expected to implement center operations and policy in consultation with his supervisor, the chief of interpretation. The executive director of CVA worked with him to provide needed support. Figure 3 shows the first organizational chart for the center.

Figure 3.
Original
Partnership
Structure



It would be several years before a successful partnership staff structure was achieved. The early days were filled with tension, due, in part, to an incredible number of decisions that had to be made quickly. The lead NPS staff member, a strong decision-maker, exercised rigid authority over the project and provided clear and uncompromising direction to the planning of the EEC. The partnership structure supported NPS control. The NPS supervisor used the title "executive director" of the center, which is not typical practice for an NPS employee. The organization chart developed for the center showed CVA staff reporting to him. The cooperative agreement included language that let the NPS "exercise final authority in any instance of disagreement between Service and Association...relating to the operation of the Center."

The CVA's highly skilled leaders felt stifled and frustrated by the NPS manager's top-down management style. The CVA hired a center director to supervise the intern program, day-to-day operations, food service, and custodial staff, but this director remained in the position for only a year, in part because of his frustration with the limits of his authority. Tension at the highest levels of the partnership impacted morale throughout both organizations. Some NPS staff expressed negative feelings about the EEC. The CVA interns who served in teaching roles for the EEC experienced morale problems in the early days because of unrealistic expectations and the tension that permeated the partnership. The situation grew serious enough to prompt the chief of interpretation and executive director of CVA to hire a consultant to try to resolve the conflicts. Ultimately, the NPS changed the NPS EEC supervisor's job description to remove him from the day-to-day operation of the EEC. He eventually left employment with the NPS.

The next director of EEC hired by the partner was given the title "executive director." She reported to the executive director of CVA and attended meetings of its board of directors. By this point, CVA's executive director and CVNP's superintendent recognized that the authority for running the EEC best belonged to the nonprofit partner. This decision recognized that the partner needed to be able to raise funds and interface with the community at the highest level in order to be effective. It also valued the partner's greater flexibility for adding staff and creating new programs. This was a shift in vision for CVA's role in the partnership: Rather than serving as the facilitator of an NPS-operated center, the partner became the organization relied upon by the NPS to lead the center.

The NPS maintained a strong presence at EEC by providing funding, supervisory and uniformed teaching staff, and program direction. The NPS Arrowhead was displayed prominently at the center and on publications. In revisions of the cooperative agreement, the NPS retained the right to approve the hiring of the EEC Executive Director and to veto major policy decisions but dropped language giving the NPS final authority over every decision. By participating on the leadership committees for the EEC, top park staff stayed involved in the decision-making structure for the center. The partners recognized that an organizational structure appropriate for the planning phase of a project may not be effective in the operational phase. Moreover, at any point in time, the structure should not vest too

much authority in any one partner, but should give room for all partners to contribute fully and creatively to the project.

While the structure between the NPS and CVA functioned better, internal problems surfaced within the CVA itself. The CVA structure now had two executive directors. The association's executive director played a nominal role in running the environmental center and provided only administrative support. The EEC's executive director supervised 22 staff members, oversaw a budget significantly larger than the rest of the CVA budget combined, and had fundraising responsibilities, but had only limited access to the association's board of directors. The EEC Executive Director left after only one year as a result of the management concerns.

The person originally hired to develop the curriculum for the EEC, who had previous experience as executive director of a camping program, served as interim director after the departure of each EEC director. After the departure of the second EEC executive director, she was named director of the EEC, remaining in the position until the reinvention phase described below, when she became the Chief Executive Officer of CVNPA.

Curriculum Development

The Plan for Environmental Education defined the curriculum perspective for the partnership, focusing on environmental education as defined at the time. The Plan notes the following:

> Environmental Education is an educational process of bringing people to a greater awareness, understanding, and appreciation of total environment—what it is and how it functions—leading ultimately to a sane, healthy, natural and cultural environmentally conscious citizenry fully committed to a sane, healthy, natural and cultural environment on a global and long-range basis (Chapter II, page 3).

In the late 1980s, NPS management continued to make strategic choices to emphasize curriculum development. Significant fundraising allowed the CVA to hire curriculum specialists, obtain adequate curriculum resources, pay teachers to be advisors, and pilot-test all EEC program materials. Despite this partner involvement, the philosophy of the chief of interpretation and the environmental education program manager towards environmental education and program management dominated decisions about the curriculum philosophy and program design. It was not always clear who had the final say on the curriculum—the NPS leadership who provided the overall vision or the CVA/EEC staff implementing that direction. Because of a lack of trust between the NPS leadership and staff, consensus was difficult to reach. At one point there were two versions of the curriculum, each approved by one of the partners.

Despite these difficulties, the EEC was highly successful. The NPS supervisor was forward-thinking, the CVA/EEC staff were innovative, and teachers provided valuable input. The result was a state-of-the-art interdisciplinary watershed program that integrated the arts, had global themes, and



addressed the curriculum needs of schools. The curriculum won several awards, is carried by a national environmental education distributor, and has been a key reason why the EEC's residential school program quickly filled to capacity. Its success is testimony to the commitment of area teachers to be involved in its development, the vision of the original NPS staff leadership, and the talent of CVA's first employees. Perhaps it suggests to other parks and partners that if they understand that conflict in the development of curricula and programs is part of the creative process, they can prepare themselves to manage the conflict productively.

Strategic Choices

A remarkable early policy decision agreed to by both partners was to reserve 25% of the space in the residential program for low-income children, primarily from the urban schools of Cleveland and Akron. It would have been easy, especially from a financial perspective, to fill the EEC with any school willing to pay the fee. Early board and staff leaders agreed that an environmental education center in a national park should be available to all children, regardless of their families' ability to pay. This commitment seemed especially important in a park established specifically to be accessible to urban, often low-income, audiences.

The policy had two significant ramifications. First, the CVA and more especially the EEC staff needed the capability to aggressively raise \$100,000-\$180,000 in scholarships annually. The CVA had been slow to develop its capability to raise operating funds for the EEC. The early planning for the EEC envisioned that school fees and the operating subsidy from the NPS would be sufficient to operate the Center; consequently CVA's board lacked a fundraising focus and relied heavily on EEC staff to raise funds through grant writing. At the time of the transition of EEC leadership from the NPS to the CVA, the new EEC Director initiated a development program and hired an intern, who, upon her graduation in 1997, moved into an entry-level position. The scholarship program became the first focus of development. Today, children on scholarship pay \$45 for the week, with the remainder raised by the nonprofit partner.

Second, the 25% scholarship policy enabled the CVA and the Park to reach out to more diverse audiences in nearby urban communities. EEC programming, first for schools and later for community groups, became the Park's most important means of fulfilling its overall mission to bring low-income urban audiences to the park.

The transition from NPS to CVA leadership brought additional best practices in nonprofit management to the center, including strategic planning. By this time, the 1988 Plan for Environmental Education had served its purpose and was out-of-date. The process of creating a new plan was led by the nonprofit and involved consultants to focus on planning, governance, and environmental education programming. When the executive director of the EEC left midway through the process, the governance consultant provided options for a board and staff structure. In addition, two Ohiobased experts in environmental education worked with NPS and CVA leadership to create a strategic plan for the EEC's program.

Blossoming Stage

After experiencing tensions and questions of authority in the early years, CVA and NPS staff developed a healthy relationship that allowed the partners to develop trust, create a new staff structure based on trust, tap new financial resources, strengthen EEC programs, and serve more students. The partnership and the EEC blossomed. Park leadership, including the superintendent, deputy superintendent, administrative officer, and chief of interpretation, participated on CVA board committees and/or attended board of directors meetings to stay involved in center policy-making. The park superintendent remained ready to represent the EEC to the community when it was appropriate and to resolve issues that required broad park resources. The EEC director was given more autonomy for fundraising and interactions with the community.

The nonprofit EEC director and the NPS environmental education supervisor developed mutual respect and trust, making decision-making relatively easy. This sense of trust permeated the cultures of both organizations. Both supervisors, along with other senior CVA staff, worked very hard to regain trust from NPS employees not at the EEC, especially in the maintenance division. This trust and respect continues into the present, even with personnel changes in both organizations.



In the new staff leadership structure within the EEC, the park and the CVA each had its own parallel staff chart and set of responsibilities, each critical and complementary to the other. NPS and partner staff worked side-by-side, and most projects included representation from both organizations. Decisions were made mutually.

At the beginning of the blossoming phase, the NPS staff still led portions of the operation. An NPS ranger at the EEC was promoted to a supervisory position, education operations manager. This NPS supervisor coordinated day programs and had a good understanding of partnership and mutual decision-making. Gradually, as trust deepened, CVA staff took the lead role in nearly all program operations, with park staff playing a strong supporting role.

Roles

Roles became more comfortable and better defined as well. Managers from both organizations communicated regularly, held monthly meetings including supervisors from both organizations, and held joint staff events periodically. NPS and CVA EEC staff also held separate meetings. The NPS team attended interpretation division meetings and met on their own about assignments. CVA/EEC staff met to discuss personnel and planning issues unique to CVA staff.

Special events at the EEC were led sometimes by CVA staff and sometimes by NPS staff. Program planning included staff from both organizations. This ebb and flow of working together at times and separately at other times functioned well in an environment of trust and commitment to a common mission.

Each organization supervised its own employees. Yet, the two groups shared office space and resources. Supplies and equipment were purchased by whichever organization could make the purchase for the least amount of money. Staff members were assigned to programs based on availability and expertise, not on which organization they worked for. Although staff tried to ensure that every child would have a park ranger as a teacher once during their stay, it was not always possible.

Within the EEC, Park and CVA supervisors gradually resolved issues surrounding the integration of rangers into the overall operation. One of the challenges was the tendency to define NPS staff as the "uniform presence," a vague description that conveyed a sense of lower status. The lack of clearly defined roles frustrated the NPS staff and lowered morale. This issue has been overcome as the NPS staff consciously worked to more clearly define their goals and feel empowered to collaborate with partner staff at all levels.

The EEC became more sophisticated in its approaches to education programs as well. NPS support of the EEC allowed the CVA/EEC staff to focus attention on curriculum development and refinement of teaching approaches. The EEC Executive Director hired an education director who led a shift to learner-centered, inquiry-based curriculum development. The residential program curriculum was reviewed by national leaders in education and revised to include an up-to-date educational philosophy to underpin curriculum design.

Program Growth

Within three years, the resident program was filled to capacity. An advanced "level two" program was developed to serve older students. Weekend programs were developed. Area nonprofit organizations rented the facilities for educational programs and retreats.

Programming expanded into the summer. A living history museum used the EEC for a summer camp on local history; another organization developed an arts camp on environmental issues. When the latter's funding declined, the EEC took over operation of the arts camp, hiring its own camp counselors. When the museum discontinued its summer camp, the EEC developed a second summer program focusing on general environmental education. The EEC took under its umbrella other park programs for children, including the summer Junior Ranger recreation program for urban youth groups and the general public.

Money Matters

During this blossoming stage of partnership development, the CVA more generally and the EEC staff more specifically were making significant financial contributions beyond basic operations. The EEC outgrew its indoor teaching space, and it identified new needs, including a large multi-purpose room and technology lab, which could be met only by the construction of a new building, which in turn required a \$1,000,000 capital campaign to construct what would become known as "November Lodge." While most of the funding was raised from foundations, the lead gift came from a private individual introduced to the partner by a teacher who participated in the program. This lead gift enabled the CVA/EEC staff to obtain the remaining funding from foundations. No federal capital funding was sought.



CVA contribution to the November Lodge went beyond fundraising and demonstrates one of the great values of partnering—deepening the pool of people dedicated to a park. A CVA board member had construction planning and management experience. The CVA—through volunteers—took the lead on the project, with the NPS staff contributing as necessary. When the building was completed in 1999, the CVA donated it to the NPS.

During this blossoming period of expansion and fundraising, the EEC outgrew its parent organization. Change occurred in two stages. First, in 1996, CVA established a standing committee of its board to address EEC issues, replacing the joint coordinating committee.

As the EEC grew in scope and accomplishments, the standing EEC committee began to function like a board of directors, taking more responsibility for fundraising, policy decisions, and, with the EEC's director, creating vision and direction for the EEC. While the standing committee had several CVA board members on it, it also included community representatives and educational leaders who had little or no other involvement with CVA.

In 2000, a decision was made to spin the EEC off from the CVA as an independent nonprofit organization, Cuyahoga Valley Environmental Education Center (CVEEC). The split between CVEEC and CVA allowed the CVEEC's board to add a development committee to facilitate fundraising. Staff turnover allowed restructuring of the EEC staff to hire a development director. This new position addressed a variety of pressing needs—to seek foundation grants and individual gifts to provide scholarships for 25 percent of students in the resident program, to begin building a small endowment fund, to organize an annual fundraising event, and to expand capacity to write grant proposals.

Grant funds were needed for launching innovative programs, enabling staff to revise curriculum materials to keep up with trends in education, purchasing technological equipment, and hiring talented staff. For example, in 2000, the staff wrote and received a National Endowment for the Arts grant for an Artist-in-Residence program with matching funding provided by local foundations. The artists developed arts-based activities as part of curriculum revision. The program has continued due to the benefits of having professional artists lead arts activities.

Park staff have continued to seek supplemental funding for the EEC through NPS sources. For example, the Challenge Cost Share program has helped support the Artist-in-Residence Program. NPS Parks as Classrooms grants funded projects initiated by the EEC, as well as projects led by NPS staff. National Park Foundation (NPF) grants have also benefited the partnership. For example, in 2002, the Kodak Digital Imaging Product Donation Program provided digital cameras so all students in a trail group can photo-document their experiences. When NPS/NPF funding is obtained for EEC programs, the funds are transferred to CVA/EEC through the cooperative agreement.

More locally, the CVA and Park leadership each play an active role by maintaining relationships with funders and other community leadership. Funders need to see the strong, collaborative relationship if they are to fund a project.

Reinvention Stage

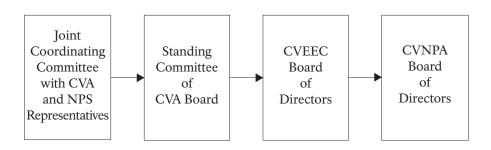
CVNP has long benefited from a well-placed Congressional delegation that actively supported the park with major funding. Realizing that this favored position would not last indefinitely, the park superintendent began conversations about alternative ways that the CVA, CVEEC or other partners could generate community-based financial support for the park. A delegation of NPS, CVA, and CVEEC representatives considered many models at the In-Park Partnership Seminar at Golden Gate National Recreation Area. Realizing that their model had to be tailored to the particular environment of CVNP, they sought the advice of the National Park Foundation (NPF).

In visiting the park and studying its partner environment, the NPF advisor noted that CVNP had a number of partners, each of which sought funding from the same foundations. They noted that the partners duplicated infrastructure and tended to rely too much on foundation funding and too little on corporate sponsorship and had failed to build a base of individual donors. Finally, they pointed out that of all the park partners, the CVEEC had built staff leadership and fundraising capacity, and it was willing and interested in taking on a larger role. The Park and the partners arrived at a novel solution—the CVA would be integrated into the CVEEC, and the CVEEC would take on functions beyond the operation of the EEC. The merger would take advantage of existing resources and narrow the pool of competing partners.

Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association

Effective July 1, 2002, a new organization, the Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association (CVNPA), was created from the CVA and the CVEEC board and staff. The two organizations merged their already compatible missions. The new board and committees drew members from the boards of both organizations. A key staff person from CVA had resigned before the merger, and its other staff person left during the merger. The staff of CVEEC transferred to the new organization. CVEEC's Executive Director was promoted to the Chief Executive Officer of CVNPA; CVEEC's Associate Director, to Chief Operating Officer. Both relocated their offices to remove themselves from the daily business of the EEC to focus on the broader mission of CVNPA. The former CVEEC development and marketing staff moved as well, and broadened their roles. Foundations granted \$335,000 over two years for start-up funding. This enabled hiring another full-time development director and a membership/volunteer director. Funding from a lapsed position allowed CVNPA to hire a Chief Education Officer for the EEC. With the merger, the CVNPA board became the governing policy and oversight body for the EEC. Figure 4 shows the evolution of EEC governance over its history.

Figure 4.
Evolution of Policy/
Oversight
Body for the EEC.



Functionally, the relationship between the friends group and its education program is different from that of the CVA era. When the EEC was part of CVA, the two acted as parallel organizations. There was a sense that CVA as the parent organization should somehow be "over" the EEC, but the EEC's growth tipped the balance over time. In the new structure, the EEC is a program with a clear place in the CVNPA hierarchy. In NPS parlance, it is equivalent to a division of the park. The broader functions of CVNPA support the EEC while they promote and develop other programs on behalf of the Park.

The first year of the CVNPA-NPS partnership has been positive and productive, showing tremendous promise for the future. However, a few issues have emerged, as to be expected with change. Because CVNPA has a broader role in the park, its interface with park staff has necessarily broadened. New key players from the park staff have been introduced to the partnership, sometimes replacing comfortable pre-existing relationships. Although most other park partners have responded favorably to the merger because they see CVNPA's potential to assist with their needs, CVNPA's elevated status as primary park partner has felt threatening to one partner. The time-consuming work of establishing a new organization has tried the patience of some staff. A few products were developed too hurriedly to be done as well as desired. Finally, the shift to a larger, more professional organization has meant that the character of the friends group has altered from its small grassroots style, a change some friends have mourned.

The creation of the CVNPA and a larger, more centralized development office has allowed the new CVNPA leadership and the park to create a more diversified fundraising strategy that will decrease the park/partners' reliance on foundation giving. The fundraising strategy included (1) building a broad membership base and creating a corporate volunteer program as strategies to increase the base of potential donors, (2) expanding the effort to identify and court individual philanthropists and corporate donors, (3) giving greater attention to board development, (4) placing greater emphasis on the generation of earned income and (5) conducting strategic planning to identify the park's most urgent fundraising priorities.

Significant Choices

Within its overall strategic planning, the Park and the CVNPA recognized that it needed to develop a third strategic plan because the organizations had achieved most of the objectives of the previous plan. The process began prior to the creation of the CVNPA and was broadened after the merger occurred. A consultant from the Mandel Center at Case Western Reserve University led the strategic planning process.

In addition to strategic planning, two recent collaborative efforts have given the partnership common language. The first process, development of an Education Philosophy Statement, was led by CVNPA as an offshoot of its curriculum redesign. A consultant with expertise in educational reform facilitated the process. Participants included managers and field-level staff from both organizations. It was a well-run, dynamic process enthusiastically embraced by both partners. The Education Philosophy Statement outlines

the approach taken to education at the EEC and serves as a mutually-agreed-upon guideline for program design. Key components include the following: (I) importance of creating a special "sense of place," (2) shared responsibility for park stewardship, (3) learner-centered, active education, (4) multi-disciplinary approaches and creative expression through the arts, and (5) focus on critical-thinking skills.

The second effort is the park's Long-Range Interpretive Plan (LRIP), completed in 2003. Developed concurrently with CVNPA's strategic planning process, the LRIP provided guidance for education program content by developing the first set of park-wide themes with strong ties to park significance and a strong sense of place. These themes have provided a tool to tie EEC curriculum to park purpose, resources, and significance.

The value of the strategic documents described here cannot be overstated. The process used in developing these documents is the process by which partners chart their futures together. Well-managed processes allow open discussion and alternate views to be shared and understood. They also mean that each organization has a reference point to understand the other's decisions and priorities.

Impact of Partnership

The result of this partnership is a high-quality, nationally recognized environmental education program at a superior facility. A recent quantitative evaluation shows that the program has significant impact on young people's long-term understanding of national parks and commitment to the environment.

The EEC is recognized in northeast Ohio as a tremendous asset to the community. The partnership has been recognized through awards nationally by the NPS and locally by Summit Education Initiative. Two of the EEC's senior staff have served as president of the statewide environmental education organization. The Artist-in-Residence program has been recognized with *Northern Ohio Live's* Award of Achievement nomination. Most important, in ECC's nine years of existence, literally thousands of individuals have been impacted by ECC programs. Over 15,000 young people annually have participated in residential school programs, day programs, summer camps, and retreats. The EEC is known and respected for its commitment to high-quality educational experiences and viewed as one of the leading educational programs in the region. By working together, the partners have created something neither could have accomplished alone.

Future Plans

The education partnership at CVNP is at an exciting place in its history. The reinvention of the CVNPA will strengthen its fundraising capacity, which, in turn, will benefit the EEC and other park activities. CVNPA's larger marketing capacity will help to address the lack of EEC visibility in the community since the campus is closed to the public for the security of children. The organization is positioned to expand into new roles. Possibilities under consideration include an adult seminar institute, expansion of the park's cultural arts program, and a second residential campus.

The CVNPA can help create multi-partner education initiatives such as a farm-based education program in cooperation with the Cuyahoga Valley Countryside Conservancy. The Conservancy is working with the NPS to help preserve the park's pastoral landscapes through leasing of historic farmsteads. CVNPA is also laying the groundwork for an initiative that would coordinate school day trips to allow schools to visit thematically related valley venues to create a cumulative education experience tied to school curricula.

Advice for Others

We hope others will have learned as much from reading this case study as we have learned in writing it. We wanted to identify some of the most important pieces of advice we would give others.

Learn the Skills of Collaboration

Partners who work side-by-side and make a myriad of joint decisions make better decisions if they understand how to make those decisions collaboratively. Collaboration implies that win-win solutions can be found to meet the needs of all the parties. It differs from compromising, which implies that both parties give something up. Processes in which staff from different organizations define goals and objectives in an open environment—such as strategic planning and the Long-Range Interpretive Plan process—aid the collaborative environment. Openly empowering staff at all levels of both organizations to collaborate in their daily work helps as well. The latter was particularly helpful for the NPS staff based at the EEC. Because a partner led EEC operations, NPS staff needed help in giving voice in decisionmaking so they did not feel that they were just taking orders from the partner. Taking the time to define a clearer understanding of each organization's role in the partnership and providing communication frameworks for open sharing have created a healthy and balanced working relationship between the staff of the two organizations.



Hire Well

Hiring well seems like an obvious piece of advice, but what does "hiring well" mean in a partnership environment? Traits needed by successful partnership leaders include the ability to share control, manage inclusive decision-making processes, and articulate and help others rally around a shared vision and think outside the usual ways of doing things.

Accept Organizational Limitations

Recognizing and working within organizational limitations is necessary to build partnerships. It is easy for those unfamiliar with the government to become critical of policies and procedures. CVA/CVNPA staff had to establish a climate in which staff spoke positively about the NPS and did not dwell on shortcomings. The same can be said for understanding the culture of nonprofit organizations. Different employment practices, safety regulations, bureaucratic requirements, etc. can lead to tension if viewed negatively.

Two examples of potential sources of frustration from the government perspective are the nonprofit focus on maximizing earned income and the funding of permanent positions with soft money. In working with a

partner, it is important to recognize and support these constraints. The NPS can use its networks to open doors for opportunities for the partner to meet its fiscal needs.

Accepting organizational differences can also smooth potential sources of conflict. At the EEC, fees for programs conducted by NPS staff are collected by CVNPA, and the NPS staff can feel pressure to teach to certain levels. Understanding and appreciating the partner decision-making environment eases tensions. The chief of interpretation and education operations manager participate as advisors to the board committee that makes fee decisions. As a result the NPS staff clarifies its confusion and concern about fees, and understands the larger strategy to raise funds to operate the EEC.

Share Decision-Making and Authority

The early tensions in this partnership shed light on an important lesson. Those forming a partnership must consciously create a process by which the partners share decision-making and authority. In the beginning, the NPS wanted control, and CVA was very willing to relinquish it. Ultimately, this did not prove to be successful, in part because of personalities, but also in part because a more democratic model was needed for the nonprofit partner to be successful. In the current structure, CVNPA has the greatest formal decision-making authority, but NPS leaders serve as advisors to every committee and to the board of directors. They share in the important decisions about program direction and policy.

Develop a Culture of Trust

A partnership is most successful when both partners see it as the best way to achieve their missions. This is most effective when staff and volunteers at all levels of the organizations trust each other.

Trust cannot be enforced, but an organization can engender a culture of trust. This happens when leaders at the highest level speak openly and often about their respect for their partners. Partners can support and celebrate each other so that internally and externally it is obvious that the partnership is rooted in trust. An understanding that people are making the best decisions they can and are working towards a shared purpose should permeate the partnership. This positive reinforcement maintains a culture where both partners are highly valued for what they bring to the partnership.

Go for the Big Vision

Partnering is enabling. The synergy of organizations working together brings a bigger pool of talent, ideas, and resources to a project. It also adds flexibility, giving more alternatives for getting work accomplished. As the project progresses, partnering increases the momentum and community buy-in. The Environmental Education Center at Cuyahoga Valley National Park was a big vision in itself. Not only has partnering helped this program thrive, it has built an energy that has let the vision grow and offers promise of an even more exciting future.

Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy

Nancy Caplan (GGNRA) Lynn Fonfa (GGNRA) Christy Rocca (Parks Conservancy)



Crissy Field Center

On one of those famous San Francisco days, when the fog virtually blankets the Golden Gate Bridge, rendering it invisible to the park visitor, a group of educators gathered to learn how Crissy Field was being transformed from an industrial dumping ground to a restored, vibrant ecosystem. Huddled together at the edge of Crissy's windswept shoreline with a park historian, a park ecologist, and a member of the Ohlone tribe, the group was engaged in an animated discussion about the project. How could urban students find relevance in a salt marsh and historical gathering ground for the Ohlone people? How could educators link authentic field experiences with authentic assessment of student achievement? How would educators express their own experience of the wetland's renewal? How would programs at the new Crissy Field Center help people make connections between the urban and natural environments?

Introduction The Crissy Field Center (the center) is the first education and public program facility jointly operated by the Golden Gate National Recreation Area (GGNRA) and the Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy (Parks Conservancy) It is part of a larger restoration project that transformed barren army land into a wild expanse of shoreline at the city's edge. No period in the 22-year history of the partnership of the park and Parks Conservancy was more influential in redefining their relationship than the years devoted to the public campaign for the restoration of Crissy Field, and to the founding of the Crissy Field Center, an urban environmental center.

"Crissy Field is a national model of community stewardship and volunteerism. Our urban national parks are unique in that they serve broadly diverse communities. By working with the Bay Area community to transform Crissy Field, we've helped create a park for the people." Brian O'Neill, Superintendent, **Golden Gate NRA**

This case study follows the partnership from uncertainty to negotiation to collaboration. Along the way, we look at how the two organizations created a mission, a staffing plan, program themes and content, and an implementation timeline for the center. We explain how the Crissy Field project aligned the organizations more closely, generated a new, team-based planning structure, and fundamentally altered the ways in which decisions are made. Finally, we examine six key issues that shaped the programmatic direction of the center during its initial stages of growth: cooperative agreements, resource protection vs. accessibility, work cultures, decision-making, the relationship of funding to the mission, and shifts in organizational cultures.

Central to the story is the emerging relationship to diverse communities that previously had found national parks to be of little relevance in their lives. The partners established new relationships with individuals, neighborhood organizations, and community groups who were able to give voice to the environmental concerns and interests of youth, persons with low income, the elderly, and communities of color. The partners articulated the center's commitment to putting community first, infusing it into every

element of the center's work—its staff, programs, partnerships, communications, and evaluations. They found themselves reassessing both the interpretive messages and public impact of other community and public programs in the park. In fact, the center sent the partners on an unexpected journey of transformation. This is the story of that transformation.

The Partners, the Place, the Project The following section describes the primary partners, the location for the partnership, and the major project of the Crissy Field restoration.

The Partners

GGNRA is the largest urban national park in the world. Over the years, the lands managed by the park doubled, then tripled, as the U.S. Army began to close its coastal defenses, and military sites became part of the park. Its 75,500 acres include ancient redwood canyons, a dramatic coastal preserve and wetlands, historic landmarks, and fragile indigenous habitats. Adjacent to a vast urban area, the park provides unparalleled learning opportunities for thousands of students. For over two decades, the park has served as one of the nation's most exciting outdoor classrooms.

The Parks Conservancy's mission is to "preserve the Golden Gate National Parks, enhance the experiences of park visitors, and build a community dedicated to conserving the parks for the future." Founded in 1981, the Parks Conservancy is nationally recognized as one of the preeminent National Park Service's Cooperating Associations, having raised millions of dollars for major capital projects, visitor services and education programs.

With the largest volunteer program in any national park, GGNRA offers an impressive array of opportunities that engage volunteers in the stewardship of parklands and resources. The Golden Gate Raptor Observatory transports volunteers to the top of Hawk Hill to record the annual flight of thousands of migrating raptors. The Site Stewardship Program enlists the help of volunteers to restore habitats, especially where plant and animal species are threatened. The Conservancy's five native plant nurseries grow the thousands of indigenous plants necessary for the restoration.

Over the last ten years, the partners have collaborated extensively on the design and delivery of K through 12 issue-oriented urban education programs. The park participated in two NPS-sponsored national education endeavors—*National Park Labs* and *Parks As Resources for Knowledge*—in which Parks Conservancy's native plant nurseries played an essential role. The NPS Education Specialist and NPS Presidio Education Coordinator wrote the grant proposals. Staff from both partners worked as an integrated team in the design of the curricula. The NPS staff brought expertise in K through 12 pedagogy, while the Conservancy staff contributed extensive knowledge of ecological principles.

The NPS Education Specialist and Conservancy's development team jointly plan and produce grant proposals for the park's education programs. Funds raised by the Parks Conservancy led to the development of the award-winning *Legacy! Buffalo Soldiers at the Presidio*, the nationally

recognized *Unlocking Alcatraz* high school program, and *Rocks on the Move*, a highly popular middle school program about plate tectonics.

The partners also have jointly sponsored teacher institutes that highlight park resources and the ways in which outdoor learning can complement classroom learning. Interdisciplinary and interactive, these workshops suggested ways that teachers could link park restoration or research projects with similar community-based projects.

The Parks Conservancy has paid for internships by young adults and high school students. AmeriCorps and the Student Conservation Association interns receive training and experience in the delivery and evaluation of both classroom and park education programs. Dozens of high school students have worked in habitat restoration and plant propagation, while others have studied the history of Alcatraz and provided public programs about the facility. Students are introduced to careers in environmental advocacy, including opportunities with the National Park Service.

The Place

The Presidio of San Francisco, located on the peninsula's northwestern tip where the bay meets the Pacific Ocean, has an extensive cultural history. Its earliest human inhabitants were the Ohlone; the Spanish arrived in 1776 to establish an outpost of their New World empire. The Presidio remained under Mexican rule until 1846, when the U.S. Army took control. Over 148 years, the army transformed the Presidio from sweeping dunes and scrub to a verdant military post.

Between the beach and the bluffs lies Crissy Field, one of the earliest army air bases on the West Coast. Named in honor of Major Dana Crissy, a young aviator who died in 1919, the airfield played an important role in the early years of aviation. The landscape underwent fundamental changes with the building of barracks and paving of the landing field. Ultimately Crissy Field became the industrial backyard of the Presidio. Hazardous waste lay beneath the surface and asphalt and chain-link fences dominated the landscape. In 1994, when the National Park Service assumed responsibility for the Presidio, only remnants of the impressive natural heritage were evident.

The Project

As the partners looked at this degraded landscape, they envisioned something that others did not: an ecosystem returned to its natural state; an airfield restored to its historic make-up; and a sweeping, beautiful shoreline that linked the natural and urban environments.

Guided by NPS and Parks Conservancy staff, the physical conversion of Crissy Field was accomplished in four phases. First, hazardous materials were removed. Next, landscape restoration engaged the public in stewardship activities such as helping to restore indigenous plants to the 20-acre tidal marsh, sand dunes, and 37 acres of rubble-strewn shoreline. At the same time, the 28-acre historic airfield meadow was replanted. Finally, Crissy Field was renewed as a public open space with improvements in the facilities and programs.



"When you bring people to Crissy Field, it takes their breath away, and when you invite the public into the vision, people help you to fulfill it—in a volunteer capacity, a financial capacity, and an advocacy capacity. The Center, as an active forum for education and community voice, will continue to draw new generations into that vision."

Greg Moore, Director, National Parks Conservancy A project of this scope required top managers of both partners to establish reliable communication and mutual understanding of the responsibilities of each organization. The Crissy Field Core Team included the project manager for the Crissy Field construction and renovation, who worked with the general contractors. The NPS representatives were the superintendent, chief of public affairs, chief of interpretation, architects, and members of the park's project review team, which assessed environmental impact. The Conservancy's executive director, deputy director for government and public relations, director of community programs, and architects all participated on the team. The group's composition shifted as various elements of the project were planned and implemented. Its primary function was to troubleshoot problems and to revise the project timeline as needed. The NPS public affairs division worked closely with the team to highlight interesting stories, such as archeological discoveries made during excavation.

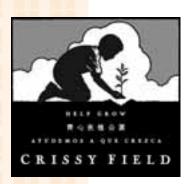
No one, not even NPS managers and Parks Conservancy leadership, anticipated the enormous impact the Crissy Field project would have on the future of the partnership, or the park's relationship with the multicultural metropolitan area.

Setting the Stage

Three significant events during the Crissy Field restoration set in motion the dynamic new direction for the partnership between the NPS and the Parks Conservancy, and the center's commitment to diversity: the *Help Grow Crissy Field* campaign, a funder's vision, and the Ohlone shellmound.

Help Grow Crissy Field

The Crissy Field renewal was by far the most ambitious part of the project, with the greatest amount at stake. Building on the park's successful volunteer and education programs, the partners designed a special *Help Grow Crissy Field* campaign in which youth, families, neighborhood organizations, and nonprofit and corporate volunteers removed invasive species and replaced them with over 120,000 indigenous plants.



Buoyed by a media campaign that included advertisements on buses, at bus stops, and in newspapers, as well as on clothing, magnets, and billboards, the campaign successfully drew volunteers from all areas of the city, including those located in low-income or racially and ethnically diverse neighborhoods. The printed media, including billboards throughout San Francisco, an 800-number, and a web site, provided information in three languages: English, Chinese, and Spanish.

The staff made personal outreach efforts to diverse populations. They explained the campaign, invited individuals and organizations to participate, and then worked closely with volunteer groups to make certain the park programs fit the interests and needs of participants.

National Park Labs, the park's signature high school science program, relocated its field sessions to Crissy Field as part of the campaign; hundreds of high school students took part in the restoration of the dunes. Thousands of middle school students, participating in *Here's the Dirt: Science*

"The Park Service Parks Association

"The Park Service and the Parks Association (Conservancy) have shown outstanding leadership and cooperation in the planning and design of the project."

Ira Hirschfield, President, Walter and Evelyn Haas, Jr. Fund

Education at the Native Plant Nursery, knew that the plants they transplanted from seedbed to pot eventually would find their way to the Crissy Field marsh. Students could point to Crissy Field and see the contribution that they had made to a national park in their community.

The park and Parks Conservancy had never before collaborated with each other and the broader community on an outreach effort of this size and visibility. Insights gained contributed to the philosophical foundations of the center, including the understanding of why sustained personal relationships are the key to successful outreach efforts. The staff also began to experiment with public programs that connected the park message directly with community issues and concerns.

A Funder's Vision

The Walter Haas, Jr. Fund and the Colleen and Robert Haas Fund contributed the lead gift of \$18 million. The Haas family envisioned the restored Crissy Field as a new opportunity for the park to establish enduring relationships with communities of color who had not visited or seen themselves as constituents of the park. They pledged funding for an environmental center that they, the NPS, and the Parks Conservancy hoped would become a place of learning, exchange, and inspiration for people from all San Francisco communities. Thus the Crissy Field Center was born.

The Bernard Osher Foundation enthusiastically followed suit, establishing an endowment through a challenge grant of \$2 million. The grant was matched and ultimately reached over \$4 million, providing the base of support for a range of endeavors.

These visible lead gifts supplied the critical momentum in a campaign that ultimately raised over \$34 million—the highest level of private support in a single non-land purchase effort in National Park Service history.

The Park Conservancy's development office then designed a revenue-generating strategy. The center could generate critical additional income from the cafés and retail operations at the center and at the restored airfield, by experimenting with facility rental, summer camp programs, and after-school care. The program fund decreased the burden of producing significant revenue during the early years as the center established its identity in the community.

The Ohlone Shellmound

The unearthing of an Ohlone archeological site on Crissy Field transformed what many considered just a natural landscape restoration project into a cultural landscape restoration project. The approach to the excavation and preservation of the site demonstrated the ways in which awareness of diversity encourages creative and inclusive solutions to cultural conflicts.

The shellmound contained accumulated material from Ohlone daily life—ashes from cooking fires, animal bones, and artifacts. Based on advice from the Ohlone, the NPS and Parks Conservancy planning team redesigned the marsh to minimize disturbance to the shellmound. This differed

significantly from a traditional archeological approach, which would have excavated and removed the articles and preserved them in a museum. The staff consulted with the Ohlone community as to which indigenous plants should be used in the restoration. Members of the tribe monitored the Crissy Field transition, enabling them to reconnect to a site important to Ohlone history. Tribal members also shared a ceremonial dance when the wetlands opened, celebrating the bringing together of the fresh and salt water for the first time in nearly a century.

The restoration of Crissy Field taught the partners an important lesson: that whenever we consider the natural world—plants, wildlife, bodies of water—we must also consider cultural perspectives in our interpretation and management. The partners also came to an important realization together: A successful model of community involvement means putting the community, not the park, at the center. This is the model the Crissy Field Center would later adopt.

The Crissy Field Center

The Parks Conservancy's director of community programs spearheaded the strategic planning and program development for the center. A multicultural team of staff comprised of GGNRA's education specialist as well as community consultants, including Ohlone community members, guided the comprehensive planning for the center. This planning team was aided by a second, larger circle of advisors drawn primarily from the NPS cultural and natural resources divisions and from the Parks Conservancy's community programs department.

Representatives from a wide range of community-based organizations, education institutions, and youth councils shared their perspectives in workshops held throughout the planning efforts. Their recommendations, as well as those of staff and boards of the partners, were outlined in a series of planning documents that envisioned how the park might broaden and diversify public use of Crissy Field. The center would play a pivotal role in effective public engagement with the park as a facility for education and community programs. Several questions arose that began to frame the development of the center's mission and operations:

- What would inspire a more meaningful relationship between the park, communities of color, and other groups that had not seen themselves as the park's constituents or even as welcome in the park?
- How would learning and teaching about the environment within the philosophical context of Environmental Justice, inclusive of social justice, health, and economics, help the NPS create innovative programming and draw new audiences?
- How could the center offer resources to support neighborhood organizations' efforts to bring about change in their home communities?
- How would our organizations combine their respective strengths and resources to make the center a success and help it find its place among Bay Area educational institutions?

The planning team established links with a wide range of organizations interested in helping design and deliver programs at the center. The team then

drafted a mission statement, identified core values and themes, and developed a master plan that outlined the program mix and operating requirements.

Drafting the Mission

Drafting the mission statement was a challenge, because the center's mission had to be linked to the larger NPS mission, and it also needed to instill a special meaning for Crissy Field. After several weeks of discussion, the core team crafted the mission statement:

The mission of the center is to build a sustainable and environmentally just society with the resources of our national parks through multicultural programs that speak with many voices, value many ways of knowing, and act with integrity.

Interrelationship of Building Design and Program Structure

Excited about the new mission, the planning team set out to tackle two fundamental issues: the physical configuration of the facility, and the education and community programs it would offer. The center would be housed in a 1920s U.S. Army structure located in an historic district. Because the building fell under NPS historic preservation guidelines, the façade could not be altered, but the internal walls and infrastructure could be completely renovated.

Discussions with focus groups revealed that potential center users wanted to have experiences on Crissy Field that would help them make personal connections between the urban and natural environments. These desires drove the planning team's choices. The planning team chose Crissy Field's striking *convergence of urban and natural environments* as the principal theme for center programs. Programs would concentrate on the human impact over time (cultural resources); the interplay between ocean, bay, and wetlands (natural resources); and environmental equity (social justice, environmental choices, and community values).

The programs cover four principal areas.

Community Connections. Center programs are designed to deepen partnerships with community-based organizations and develop an active presence in neighborhoods. *Parks to People*, in which a park ranger visits a community site with a series of hands-on activities that help participants understand local environmental issues, is part of this effort.

Learning Environments. Designed by educators, students, and staff, handson K through 12 programs utilize the wetlands of Crissy Field, as well as the laboratories of the center, as rich alternative classrooms. Curriculum-based and after-school programs, summer camp, service learning, internships, and teacher institutes make the center an active forum of learning.

Stewardship and Community Service. Building on the Help Grow Crissy Field campaign, center programs advance a solid tradition of park stewardship. The center partners with community-based organizations and residents on projects that improve quality of life.



Young Leaders. Through the Inspiring Young Environmental Emerging Leaders Program, young people take part in dialogue and decisions that have an impact on our communities. The program helps ensure that the voices of young people are heard and valued, and encourages them to be advocates for positive change.

The preferred design for the center became clear as the themes and principal program areas coalesced. The physical design grew from suggestions given in the community planning workshops. The center would have three upstairs laboratories in which to explore the relationship of the urban and natural environment from different perspectives and through multiple learning experiences. An environmental technology lab with a variety of electronic media would address the center's mission and themes. An urban ecology lab would allow students and the public to take part in hands-on activities. A sustainable arts lab would invite participants to express visually their experiences and understanding of the convergence of urban and natural environments.

The Media Lab contains 16 computers, as well as digital cameras, mini recorders, and GIS units. In the Urban Ecology Lab, students perform water and soil testing, interact with live frogs or a snake, study a compost system, or use the microscopes and marsh models. In addition to the typical paints, crayons, and construction paper, the Sustainable Arts Workshop is equipped with blenders, glue guns, hot plates, stamps, a print press, and tools of every sort—hammers, wrenches, saws, and screwdrivers. The Arts Workshop also has a large variety of recycled materials, from cardboard boxes to old computer paper to plastic bottles, all of which are eventually incorporated into art projects. The laboratories provide experiences that blend with and enhance the outdoor program components.

Focus groups had expressed a desire for a meeting space, accessible to large community groups at low or no cost. The centerpiece of the first floor would be a large gathering room. Exhibitions would introduce visitors to environmental issues and solicit their reactions through opinion cards.

Building the Staff Team

The first critical juncture in the implementation of the master plan was centered around the question of the center staff. Initial plans called for the Parks Conservancy's director of community programs to administer the center's day-to-day operations, including the recruiting and supervision of staff. The Division of Interpretation and Education, under whose direction the NPS staff worked, would lend support by collaborating on the development and delivery of certain projects or programs.

But as plans for the center progressed, the park management began to recognize an unprecedented opportunity for the NPS to engage the public in a new, dynamic way. The partners reconceived the center's staff as an integrated team bringing the strengths of both organizations to the table. Both organizations created and hired new positions as part of the center administration. The NPS Division of Interpretation and Education created the new position of community programs/outreach specialist, establishing a



"As teachers, it is our job to nurture the power and determination within students, and to offer them the tools they can use to transform their lives. I truly believe that connecting students with the natural world around them is a pivotal part of this process. By the same token, we as teachers need someone to nurture and encourage us as we envision ways to better serve our students, and for me the GGNRA has been a constant in that respect. It is a beautiful, feasible, and diverse locale for any teacher wanting to connect students to nature. Just as important, the GGNRA has met me and my colleagues with support and enthusiasm at every stage of our development, from the beginning and into our future plans. And that is precious because what it translates to is a vision and a bigger world for us as teachers that we can then offer

Catherine Salvin, Community Board, Crissy Field Center

our students."

parkwide role to better meet the programmatic needs of new, diverse audiences. Most of this work is done through the center, but there are many sites in the park where the specialist works with interpretive staff to establish new programs. At the center, the specialist builds alliances with community partners, coordinates NPS relations and park resources, and supervises three NPS interpretive rangers.

After the center opened in 2001, the director of community programs departed. The Parks Conservancy determined that the center's program director, already facilitating daily operations, should be reclassified as the director of the center. The center director's position includes responsibility for overall operations, fiscal management, administration, and direct supervision of seven staff. The director works closely with the finance, development, public relations, marketing, and project offices of the Parks Conservancy.

The center director and NPS outreach specialist jointly set policies, facilitate program planning and evaluations, review operations, strategize about audience development and staff recruitment, and collaborate on training and supervision. Together, they produce annual reports for park and Parks Conservancy management. The park's Education Specialist acts as the principal liaison in relation to other park education programs and initiatives.

Community Advisory Council

A key element of the center's infrastructure is the Community Advisory Council, which was established before the center opened. The Council's mission is to ensure that the center is accessible (physically, culturally, and economically) to all communities. Comprised of teachers, executive directors of community-based nonprofits, youth activists, environmental community leaders, directors of city-operated environmental programs, and eco-friendly small business owners, the council acts as a vital link between the community and the center.

To accomplish the mission, the council works toward three key objectives: to provide a resource and act as a conduit to reach into urban neighborhoods, to ensure input by providing a community forum, and to identify and establish creative partnerships within the neighborhoods. The group now meets quarterly with the center staff. Council members are recruited by existing members and serve a one-year term that can be renewed annually. The NPS outreach specialist and the community programs specialist, a Parks Conservancy employee, are liaisons to the council.

The Crissy Field Way

With the mission, program mix, and staff in place, the NPS and Parks Conservancy were able to focus on the center's organizational development. From the beginning of the Crissy Field Center project, the Parks Conservancy board and the Haas family encouraged the center staff to work with external consultants to bring in fresh thinking and new perspectives. Following this advice, recommendations were solicited and a list of consulting firms was created.

Ultimately, the unique approach of Trimtab Consulting was selected to guide the organizational development, integrating diversity into organi-

"Oooo, it's a LEECH," exclaims the third-grader as she kneels along the banks of a small stream in the Presidio. Her class is Walking the Watershed. Today, they will hike the path that the water takes through a watershed that eventually leads to the Crissy Field marsh. As they pass homes, construction sites, and even a freeway overpass, the students begin to connect the ways these urban elements affect the stream, the marsh, the creatures that live in the water, and even themselves.

zational practices. The firm worked with the staff throughout the first three years of planning and implementation, posing critical questions, devising methods to encourage dialogue about diversity issues within the partnership, and developing a problem-solving approach that could work for staff from both organizations.

The result, the center's key analytical tool, *The Crissy Field Way*, guides the staff in making certain that the community-driven vision for the center is embodied in all program areas. *The Crissy Field Way* also is used to test center policies, marketing approaches, budget development, and recruitment and hiring practices. In short, it guides all activities at the center, because it encompasses the core values of the center's mission.

The K Through 12 Program

As *The Crissy Field Way* unfolded, the education team delved deeper into establishing the role of education programs at center, as well as the center's role in GGNRA's overall park education program. Shortly after the site's ceremonial opening day in May 2001, center staff began to develop programming for the K through 12 audience. The partners, still in the infancy of their relationship, faced a number of critical issues that both affirmed and tested the partnership.

The Niche

Delineating a niche in a geographical area flooded with environmental programs and opportunities for school field trips was at first quite challenging. However, several factors set the center apart from other environmental education programs: its ability to capitalize on its location in a national park, the effective partnership, and the positive publicity generated by the Help Grow Crissy campaign. The center also could build on the park's reputation for excellent interdisciplinary, curriculum-based education programs. The center's theme—the convergence of urban and natural environments—supports place-based learning that engages students with significant resources in a national park, as well as with resources in the local community.

Crissy Field Center education programs all have certain defining features beyond the sound pedagogy that is a trademark of NPS educational efforts:

- Students learn about the GGNRA's resources *and* how human behavior has an impact on those resources. By the end of a program, participants are empowered with knowledge to make choices that will affect the environment in positive instead of negative ways.
- Programs connect the environment of the park with the students' school or home environment. Students learn how the quality of the GGNRA's resources affects their home environment, food sources, or health.
- Students always leave the center with something to take home—an art project, a watershed investigation kit, or a map they created. By taking something home, the students help fulfill a basic part of the mission: connecting the community to the park.
- Programs use the park's resources as well as the learning spaces within
 the center. Students experience one or more features of the park firsthand. Then they build on that experience in one of the three Crissy Field
 Center laboratories.

Although none of these program elements alone constitute major innovations, combined, they give the programs a unique character. The center programs have been well-attended and well-received by San Francisco teachers and students.

Building the Education Staff

The strategy for staffing the education programs underwent several significant revisions. Early organizational charts showed two education program managers, one from the NPS and one from the Parks Conservancy. The advantage was the balance and comfort generated by equally shared field management. However, by the time the center opened, the relationship between the partners had matured enough to abandon parity in favor of practicality; the partners dropped the idea of two managers in favor of more field staff to deliver the programs.

The NPS education coordinator, already stationed at the center, became responsible for the overall development and management of the education programs at Crissy. Working in tandem with the park's education specialist, the education coordinator now facilitates training, program review, and evaluation of the center's education programs. The Parks Conservancy hired three specialists to manage the learning labs of the center. The specialists expect to devote approximately one quarter of their time to developing and staffing education programs that take place in their respective learning areas. The NPS coordinator, a part-time NPS interpretive ranger, and education interns assist with delivery of the programs as needed.

The integrated core education team functions remarkably well considering the complications that can arise when staff members report to different supervisors. The success can be attributed to a number of key factors:

- The team is unified by the center's well-defined mission statement and their commitment to that mission.
- Members of the group work in the same building; physical proximity helped build rapport early in the team's working relationship.
- The team recognizes that each organization, through its staff, brings needed and particular expertise and resources to education efforts at the center.
- Several team members had previous experience working with or for their partner's organization.
- Both the center director and the outreach specialist respect the team.

Fees and Scholarships

The Parks Conservancy envisioned diverse streams of revenue supporting the Crissy Field Center in the early years of operation. To help offset overhead costs, they also proposed charging a fee for education programs.

The partners found themselves in a bit of a quandary: The park had never required schools to pay for an education program. The staff shared its concerns that program fees would decrease the accessibility of the center's programs and send an unfavorable message to the school community. The team also believed it put an unfair burden on an already struggling school system, and recognized that a situation could arise in which fee-based

center programs would be competing for audiences against other free park-based programs.

The center staff conducted intensive research into the fee structures of other Bay Area program providers. The team discovered that fees for comparable programs ranged from around \$35 to over \$250 per class. After debating the issue for several weeks, the staff agreed to charge a modest "lab fee," and implement a strong scholarship program for schools that would find the fee a barrier to participation. The center decided on \$75 per class (approximately \$3 per student) for each program. The Conservancy and NPS also agreed that the outdoor portion of the program would still be offered at no charge to schools.

Several factors convinced the education team of the appropriateness of minimal fees. First, the center made a commitment to provide scholarships for at least one third of all education programs each academic year. Second, the center's spaces are quite limited and are shared across a number of program areas. Third, the center staff spoke with teachers who had brought their classes to the park; they indicated that the fee was reasonable.

The NPS contribution to center operations comes in the form of staffing and other in-kind services. These contributions will remain stable. The center's growth, however, will be achieved primarily through earned income (school fees and retail sales), endowment yield, grants, and other fundraising efforts. In addition to an endowment, the center also used contributed funds to create the early program fund devoted to complementing income over the first 3 to 4 years. As this fund is expended, the Parks Conservancy will pursue additional philanthropic and government support as well as revenue-generating programs such as summer camps.

Which and What

Another issue requiring dialogue was the question of the pace at which education programs would be introduced. Specifically, the staff needed to decide which grade levels would be served in the first and subsequent years.

NPS staff, with a successful record in program development, favored the creative and methodical approach, including significant use of both internal and external focus groups in the beginning stages, followed by extensive review, piloting, and revision over a period of 6 to 12 months. The National Park Service team proposed opening with a high school program (*National Park Labs*, imported from another GGNRA site) and a pilot program for one elementary grade later in the school year. One program then would be added during each year of operation.

The Parks Conservancy managers, however, believed it was crucial for the park to maintain the momentum leading to opening day. They recommended that the center offer at least one program for each grade level (K-2, 3-5, 6-8) in the first year of operation. Essentially, the staff had less than four months to design four programs.

The conflict over the pace of program development was indicative of the difference in the partners' immediate objectives. NPS staff advocated a slower



approach built on a proven model. The Parks Conservancy, cognizant of its responsibility to raise financial support for and public awareness of the center, supported a much faster—if less methodical—approach. They expressed great confidence in the education team's ability to produce programs on a short timeline. Ultimately, NPS staff deferred to the Parks Conservancy, and the center advertised six programs in its first education brochure.

The accelerated development timeline did not allow for teacher/student focus groups, educator review of curriculum, or significant input from the center's Community Advisory Council. Thus, in these early months of operation, the center's education team found themselves oddly out of step with both the park's education program development model and parts of the Crissy Field Center mission.

Despite the challenges, the center emerged from the first year of operations with a well-rounded series of programs, a substantial following of teachers, and an education team that had learned to function as an unit. They had served over 2,100 students, approximately 20% of the total number served by the park overall. The Parks Conservancy's trust in the team, as well as the staff's hard work, was rewarded when *Garbology 101* received the Governor's Award for Historic Preservation.

Evaluation

Evaluation of education programs is one of many areas in which the Parks Conservancy and NPS staffs are in strong agreement, since both organizations firmly believe in the value of assessing the effectiveness and relevancy of education and public programs. But what would success look like for the education programs at the new Crissy Field Center?

The staff would utilize *The Crissy Field Way*, coupled with criteria established by the education committee, to determine the programs' effectiveness. For center programs to be considered successful, they must do the following:

- Help students see the park and the environment through a new lens.
- Be relevant to the students' lives and the school curriculum.
- Reflect current educational research about the most effective ways to facilitate learning.
- Reach diverse audiences.
- Create and reinforce interest in other center program areas.

Although the emphasis in the early years of the center's operations was on program development, the core education team built into their work plan several elements that were intended to help the staff gauge the success of their programs.

- Teachers and students completed evaluation forms.
- Staff held regular debriefings to solicit opinions on whether students were engaged and achieving the objectives of the programs.
- GGNRA's education specialist and education committee observed and reviewed programs against specific park criteria for sound education programming. Program management reviewed school demographics of classes attending programs.

Program demand served as a gauge as to whether the programs were relevant to students and teachers. During the first school year, all program slots were filled by early spring. During the second year, the program slots were filled by early winter. Many teachers returned the second year. A significant number of new teachers commented that a colleague had recommended the center's field trips. Some of the programs were in high demand while others did not build an audience. This indirect feedback, along with casual conversations, was useful in analyzing which programs were working and which needed to be revised or discontinued.

All these factors pointed to success on some level, yet the team knew that a more methodical evaluation was needed. Late in the second year of operation, the center was awarded a large grant. Staff decided that a significant portion of the grant should be allocated to evaluation by an outside organization. Money has been earmarked for focus groups, teacher advisors, and outside review of curriculum materials. The center staff is looking forward to collaborating with the community and embarking on this substantial evaluation project.

Partnerships with Other Organizations

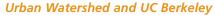
Even before the center opened, staff received numerous calls from organizations seeking partnerships. After the May 2001 opening day ceremonies, weekly inquiries included program ideas from environmental education groups, museums, youth groups, and community nonprofits.

The center staff, who faced the difficult, time-consuming process of meeting with organizational representatives and then evaluating the potential of each proposal, created criteria specific to the center. Partnerships would be considered only if they would be likely to contribute to the mission of the center and not hinder current priorities. They should enable the center to achieve objectives that it would not otherwise be able to achieve. The center found that most of the new partner proposals would not be appropriate, at least for the first few years. Staff instead decided to see how the center could enhance the existing relationships. Five are summarized below.

Presidio Trust

An obvious choice was to partner with the Presidio Trust, the governing agency of the Presidio of San Francisco where the center is located. The Trust, Parks Conservancy, and NPS already collaborate on several projects. The Trust demonstrated its commitment to the urban environmental center by making a building under their jurisdiction available for the center.

The trust and center staffs worked closely to develop and deliver *Garbology 101*, for which they received the prestigious Governor's Historic Preservation Award in 2002. The program introduces students to historic artifacts in the Presidio's archaeology lab, and decomposing miniature landfills in the Crissy Field Center ecology lab. In the center's arts workshops, students create journals documenting their experience and new understanding of the impact of garbage in the past and its potential impact on the future.



The center's relationship with the Urban Watershed Project (UWP) is a good example of how a successful partnership between two organizations creates the opportunity for a third, the University of California at Berkeley's Interactive University, to join the collaboration and add faculty expertise and web-based activities.

The Urban Watershed Project's mission is to restore the Tennessee Hollow riparian corridor on the Presidio of San Francisco and demonstrate how environmental stewardship significantly improves the quality of urban life. For several years before the opening of the center, the Urban Watershed Project and the NPS's Natural Resource Division enjoyed a successful partnership in which Galileo High School students participated in handson learning in the Presidio.

The project brings together a truly interdisciplinary staff: Galileo High School teachers; UC faculty; UWP ecologists; NPS Division of Resource Management personnel; and Crissy Field Center science, technology, and education staff. The partnership will raise the visibility of the center and the Urban Watershed Project. The Interactive University also brings financial resources to the table: It plans to contribute to the overhead costs and offset the expense of operating the program by making UC instructors available to teach. The center provides a convening space and a much-needed science laboratory unavailable at the school. UWP brings staff and expertise to the program, allowing the center to serve this diverse, urban high school group with multiple visits. The partnership blossomed over the first two years of center operations, and there are plans to expand the program to a second high school within the next two years.

San Francisco Education Fund

The San Francisco Education Fund (SF Ed Fund) is the primary nonprofit support group for the San Francisco Unified School District. GGNRA had a strong partnership with it long before the creation of the center. Teachers active in *National Park Labs* received the Fund's highest accolade—the Golden Apple Award for teaching excellence.

Since the center opened, however, the partnership has deepened in three significant areas. First, the center now hosts several events, most notably the annual New Teacher Reception. Second, center staff developed and facilitated a special training on *Closing the Educational Achievement Gap* for ethnic groups in the middle-school years. The training was requested by the SF Ed Fund to serve teachers in their math and science collaborative. Third, two members of the Parks Conservancy staff have served on the SF Ed Fund's Board of Directors. The two organizations continue to plan joint projects.

San Francisco State University

San Francisco State University (SF State) offers a dynamic academic program for a teaching credential and Masters in Education. Over the last ten years, graduate students from SF State have joined GGNRA's educational efforts as volunteers, conducting programs in the park and in the classroom. Students also have volunteered with the park's Cultural and Natural Resources Divisions.

the CREEC Advisory Council. **Future of Partnerships**

The Crissy Field Center makes it possible to extend more than an invitation to volunteer with the park: The center and SF State faculty are introducing new and experienced teachers to innovative pedagogy in outdoor education. Through both seminars and an independent study, involving an internship, the center and the park provide beautiful venues in which to discover how place-based education can help students achieve academically. GGNRA and SF State are in the process of formalizing the partnership with a Memorandum of Understanding. The potential is enormous.

California Regional Environmental Education Community (CREEC)

The local chapter of CREEC plays an important role in linking environmental education providers and classroom teachers. For years, the park's education staff had participated in CREEC events, but the park and CREEC had not developed a working relationship. The education coordinator at the center took the initiative to strengthen the partnership by providing meeting space, co-sponsoring two conferences, and serving on

The center's involvement in the CREEC conferences communicates the center's mission and familiarizes dozens of educators with the center and the GGNRA. The partnership with CREEC helps position the park as a leader in the Bay Area environmental education community.

Several factors account for the early success of these partnerships. The center was able to build on a foundation already established. In addition, each partner brings resources to the relationship that the other would not easily have access to alone. In all cases, the center is able to provide a rich learning and convening space, expertise, and dedicated staff time not available in the park before the opening of the center.

In a short time, the center partnerships confirmed what the NPS and Parks Conservancy planners envisioned. Enduring partnerships will benefit the center, as well as the broader GGNRA education efforts, and help position the center as the gateway into other park experiences. Partnerships leverage resources, attract funding, and earn a reputation for excellence.

Lessons Learned from Negotiation to Collaboration

The center is the first facility jointly operated by the Parks Conservancy and the NPS. While the two organizations share many values, they also have two distinct work cultures and ways of doing business. The partnership and the subsequent relationship between the Crissy Field Center staff and the top management of the two organizations journeyed from uncertainty to negotiation to collaboration. While myriad issues surfaced throughout the planning and opening of the Crissy Field Center, six, in particular, are worth noting for the lessons learned.

Cooperative Agreement

The two organizations brought 22 years of formal partnership experience to the Crissy Field Center project. The agencies, however, also realized that the center demanded a higher level of integration for planning, renovating

an II,400 square-foot facility, staffing, and delivering programs. The partners agreed that they would produce a special *Task Directive* carried out in accordance with the terms of the existing Cooperative Agreement. The *Task Directive* was developed over two-and-a-half years. The document outlined the ways in which the two organizations would do the following:

- Jointly further the mission and goals as stated in the master plan
- Assume certain obligations regarding daily operations, including staff allocation, VIP management, safety procedures, and work space
- · Divide fiscal management and administrative responsibilities

In retrospect, waiting to complete the Task Directive until both agencies had a clear understanding of their commitments to the project proved helpful for the center.

Advice: In any partnership, it is critical to formalize agency agreements. It can be a risk to wait until after the project has begun, but it also can be a risk worth taking. Each project is unique and deserves its own process to reach an effective formal agreement. Do not simply make a template of an existing agreement; it may not serve the needs of either the partners or the project.



The Crissy Field marsh restoration began as a traditional NPS project with traditional expectations for and by NPS staff: Re-vegetate the landscape and then preserve it by allowing limited public access. Some resource management staff suggested various protective measures, including the installation of fencing around the newly planted areas. The natural resource staff expressed concerns over issues such as group size, management of student groups, and public confusion over why some people were allowed in restricted areas and others were not. They also expressed concern over the disturbance of wildlife habitats and fragility of new seedlings and rare species of plants. All of their objections related to the potentially high level of human impact on the marsh.

Some partner staff appreciated their concerns but still championed an opposing viewpoint: They saw the broader community connecting through a series of steps that relied heavily on access to the marsh. If the community could interact directly with Crissy Field, people might be inspired to help preserve the marsh and see its relevance to community issues.

The center staff was caught in the middle. Respecting the park's need for protection, yet needing access for school programs, the staff proposed a solution: limited and controlled access for education programs, beginning with *National Park Labs*. NPS natural resources staff agreed primarily because the NPS education team had tremendous credibility. Educators and resource specialists had designed and delivered resource-based education programs together for five years.

The success of the education programs encouraged the resource managers to approve limited access for the center's community programs on a case-by-case basis. Formal agreements were negotiated between the field staff and approved by the interpretation and resource management division chiefs. The agreements outlined the center's increased permission to enter



the marsh, as well as regulations for outside educational institutions interested in utilizing the park.

Advice: Past successes play a big role in negotiations. Partners should listen to each other's concerns, seek common ground, and compromise whenever possible. They should move incrementally toward the bigger goal and build on personal relationships, establishing formal agreements as soon as politically feasible.

Work Cultures

The NPS culture can aptly be described as individualistic: Staff is judged, and receives formal awards, based on individual performance. However, the trend is for interdisciplinary teams to work together on special projects. NPS staff are seeking training and experience in partner relations.

The Parks Conservancy, on the other hand, typically works in interdisciplinary teams, involving everyone from the development department to the design staff to the publications division. GGNRA's education staff also has relied on an interdisciplinary model for several years.

The Crissy Field Center staff takes the interdisciplinary model and applies it across all program areas. The education coordinator and the lab specialists first design programs for K through 12 and then, with the community programs coordinator, consider how programs might be adapted for adults or families by integrating similar hands-on activities into an interpretive program. As a result, Crissy Field public programs, unlike other park interpretive programs, feature relevant content *and* authentic interactive elements that engage the community directly with the resource.

Advice: Partners should recognize that partnership organizations bring different work cultures to the table. They should create an organizational structure that encourages interdisciplinary teamwork, support staff with training and follow-up skill development measures, and institutionalize a truly collaborative effort by identifying this skill as a critical element of annual performance standards: How does the employee contribute to both the product of the partnership (programs, etc.) and the quality of the partnership itself. In other words, how is the employee helping to move the partnership forward?

Decisions, Decisions

The Crissy Field Way, the living document, guides the center director and outreach specialist through decision-making, hiring practices, and any subsequent conflicts that might arise.

The entire Crissy Field Center staff meets every other week. Everyone states his or her perspective on specific issues. The group first tries to reach consensus. If consensus is not possible, they reach an agreement, and the group agrees to honor it. There have been very few times when the center managers needed to take actions that were not supported fully by the staff.

The hiring process for center staff is quite different than in the parent organizations. A team of center staff, including the future supervisor,



reviews applications and interviews candidates. Once the field is narrowed to two top candidates, the entire staff weighs in with their opinions. The staff again tries to reach consensus. Among the criteria is a key question: What skills and personal experience will the new person bring to help advance the mission and partnership?

Consensus at the Crissy Field Center is based on the shared agenda of putting the community first. Consensus also springs from the strength of *The Crissy Field Way* as a tool for planning and evaluation.

Advice: Partners should transfer their ideas of best practices in education to their personnel practices. They should involve the entire staff in a process of informed, collaborative decision-making.

Driving the Mission and Program Goals

The recurring dilemma faced by any institution is balancing the interests and sensibilities presented by funders with its own goals and principles. Sometimes, despite the best intentions, development staff and program staff can find themselves at odds.

Program staff may not be in the best position to move quickly on a grant proposal, but development staff may see an opportunity that seems too good to decline even though it may take the program in a slightly different direction or require a more immediate timeline than originally planned. This situation is ripe for conflict unless the two groups understand one another's aims and have a strategic plan on which they mutually rely.

Procedurally, the center director and the park's education specialist work closely with the development staff on attracting funds for K through 12 education programs, while the outreach specialist collaborates with the director in securing both NPS and private/public funding for community programs. Emphasis is placed on sustaining existing programs by securing operating funds. To accomplish this goal, budgets are developed for each program and include all overhead costs, such as maintenance of equipment, all non-NPS-associated staff costs, janitorial services for the facility, and a percentage of administrative costs. These expenses are readily available to the Parks Conservancy's grant writers and fundraisers so they can communicate the true costs of education programs, while conveying the value of the programs to prospective benefactors.

The center currently is designing a five-year business plan with the probono services of a business-consulting firm. Both partners will be involved in the development of the plan and will have access to all financial data needed to make critical planning decisions.

Advice: Program planners, working alongside development specialists, need to design an articulated 5-10 year plan with milestones, including program design, audience development, and funding strategies. The plan helps ensure that funding does not drive the education programs. Program staff also need to build-in some flexibility in case a funding opportunity arises that can help move the overall program development forward.

Shifts in Organizational Culture

Perhaps the most compelling result of the Crissy Field Center partnership is a newly defined commitment to environmental education within the context of Environmental Justice (EJ). As commonly defined, EJ is the right of all people to their basic needs: clean water, healthy food, non-toxic communities, open space, safe energy, and equitable educational and job opportunities.

The partner education programs had been addressing issues in Environmental Justice for several years. An entire unit of *National Park Labs*, for example, encouraged students to examine policies and formulate opinions based on an understanding of the underlying community issues. Students who participated in Service Learning (project-based and linked to school curriculum) also were asked to transfer their new knowledge and skills to benefit a community project.

As the partners began to articulate the center's mission of putting community first, they found themselves reassessing both the interpretive messages and public impact of other community and public programs in GGNRA. The new approach at Crissy came at an opportune time for the NPS. The Division of Interpretation, incorporating *Multiple Perspectives* into public programs, was encouraging field staff to address controversial issues as long as programs were balanced and informative. Although the division did not identify EJ as an explicit theme or approach, individual interpreters felt free to incorporate some of EJs basic tenets into their programs.

With inspiration from the center model, the Division of Interpretation has incorporated more inclusive language into its Comprehensive Interpretive Plan and created its own version of *The Crissy Field Way* as an evaluation tool for the division's programs. The interests of the community are playing a much larger role in program planning and resource allocation.

Advice: Partners should be prepared to go through an organizational change that can be difficult and lengthy. Not everyone will agree on the objectives or pace of change. Partners should learn, as individuals and as a group, to embrace controversy and challenges, for they can give meaning and deeper relevance to the work we do.

Final Note

The NPS and Parks Conservancy staff and managers learned profound lessons that ultimately moved the two organizations forward in their missions and in their partnership. The Crissy Field Center staff witnessed that education is about more than programs - it is about challenging our own assumptions; it is about providing opportunities for people to drive their own learning.

The Crissy Field Center sees diversity as its essential goal. The center sees itself in the context of the community in which the park is located. Its mission recognizes the centrality of families to the work of education. The true measure of the Crissy Field Center's success will be apparent if the young people who participate in the center's programs return to the center with their families, and if they in turn bring their communities to the park, and invite the park to their communities. Then we will have our next stories and lessons of transformation to tell.



Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM) Pi Beta Phi Elementary School

Bill Beard (Pi Beta Phi Elementary School) Jennifer Pierce (GRSM)



Parks as Classrooms

"One of the most gratifying aspects of this project is how it has brought the community and the park together. Businesses provide funding, parents teach on field trips, and students complete service projects in the park that

Karen Ballentine, Education **Coordinator, Great Smoky Mountains National Park**

come full circle."

benefit the community. It has

"In Parks as Classrooms everything you do is rewarding, basically because it's all for a greater purpose. Before I came to this school, I knew nothing about the outdoors, so I really wasn't able to enjoy it like I wanted to. But because of Parks as Classrooms I don't feel threatened by the outdoors and I am able to enjoy [it]... Now I can have fun, be safe, and learn about the Smoky Mountains, all at the same time!"

Eighth-grader, class of 2003 at Pi Beta Phi Elementary School

Introduction The story of the partnership between Pi Beta Phi Elementary School in Gatlinburg, Tennessee, and Great Smoky Mountains National Park (GRSM) is a story of success. An eighth-grade girl who had participated in this partnership program, known in the school as the "Parks as Classrooms" program, remarked, "The Smoky Mountains National Park is very mysterious and wondrous in its own way... If it weren't for Parks as Classrooms, most kids would know nothing about the mountains and how important they are to us. Parks as Classrooms teaches us about the mountains as a whole, how parks play a vital role in our lives. We also learn how to have fun in the park but be safe and protect our mountains at the same time. Parks as Classrooms is a wonderful program that I believe should be kept for years to come. I know I would like my kids to learn about the mountains just like I did."

> A kindergarten child who enters Pi Beta Phi Elementary School and stays to complete the eighth grade will have experienced at least 37 units of instruction that include on-site educational activities within the park. Those units include components from all subject areas of the curriculum, and other park-related learning experiences conducted individually or with a small group of peers. These small-group and individual classroom experiences have stimulated many student science-fair and social studies projects as well as stewardship opportunities.

> We believe that the children participating in these partnership activities will be forever shaped by their experiences. The outcome will live long past the scope of the project itself. That is one of the great joys of being involved in the education of children.

> What are the results of nine years of structured park visits for all grade levels using GRSM as a classroom? How are young boys and girls changed by the experiences contained within those park visits? What attitudes do they hold with respect to national parks, the natural environment, their hometown and its relationships with "their" park? How are their behaviors impacted by what they have experienced and learned? How have these programs affected the park's relationship with the community of Gatlinburg, Tennessee?

These are among the questions that arise when one looks at the unique partnership that exists between Pi Beta Phi Elementary School and Great Smoky Mountains National Park. The partnership, referred to in the school as "Parks as Classrooms," and on paper as the "Pi Phi Project," represents one end of a continuum of park involvement with a single elementary school. It is difficult to see how a school and a park could be more inextricably involved in the educational lives of students.

The following narrative reports the history of the project. It examines the motivations of the individuals who initiated the collaboration, the steps taken to build the team that created the education programming, and the challenges in the evolution of the partnership. Finally, the effects of the partnership on the students, the teachers, the school, and the park are described.

Who Are
We? A
Description
of the
Partnership

Pi Beta Phi is an elementary school with close to 450 students in grades K-8. The school is public, though its name evokes the image of a private school. Pi Beta Phi serves the city of Gatlinburg in Sevier County, Tennessee. Its students come from native families whose histories pre-date the park as well as from families who arrived recently. About a quarter of the families qualify for free and reduced school meals. In terms of socioeconomic status and ethnic affiliation, Pi Beta Phi students are indistinguishable from those of the other schools in the district.

A crown jewel park, Great Smoky Mountains National Park is the most heavily utilized park in the National Park system, with over 10 million visitors a year. The park is large: over 800 square miles across two states, transected by a federal highway. GRSM has no entry fee and hosts car-tourists, hikers, campers, scientists, swimmers, and more species of flora and fauna than perhaps anywhere east of the Mississippi. The park is an international biosphere reserve. It is also consistently at the top of the list of threatened parks.

We are a partnership administered jointly by a steering committee of education rangers, the school principal, and the school technology coordinator who oversees the sole employee of the project, the project coordinator. The partnership's programs take children out of the classroom and into the natural world, specifically, Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

The Pi Beta Phi/Great Smoky Mountains partnership is a collection of 37 units of instruction. It spans kindergarten through eighth grade with a minimum of three park experiences a year in grades 7 and 8 and a maximum of six per year in most grades. These units are interdisciplinary and have presite and post-site components. Older students participate in service learning as well as more traditional units of instruction. Rangers lead some of the in-park experiences, but most are taught by classroom teachers. All units address issues of importance to the park as well as elements of the required state curriculum frameworks. All units of instruction include pre-test and post-test assessment of student learning.

The 37 units bring students to all areas of the park that are accessible within a one-day bus trip to sites located on the Tennessee side of the park, many of which are within sight of the school. Older students, more capable of enduring longer bus rides, venture into the North Carolina side for some of their lessons. Consequently, by the time they complete eighth grade, students have become familiar with a good portion of the park's 500,000 acres.

It is important to distinguish some of the things this partnership is not. It is not an environmental education program. It is genuinely interdisciplinary and does not emphasize one content area over others. It is not residential.

"This program is truly the most successful education effort to incorporate the full range of National Park values in an integrated program that builds from year to year. It is THE model that all should follow! The true measure of success is the knowledge that your students can share with others of all ages."

Mike Tollefson, current superintendent of Yosemite National Park, previously superintendent of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

There is one overnight experience in the project, a culminating activity for eighth graders. It is not necessarily a model to be replicated in its entirety by other school systems in partnership with the park, but we have worked together to disseminate project materials and experiences to other schools through the park's Smoky Mountains Classrooms program. This extension of the project serves 10,000 students annually in the park.

In the Beginning: 1990-1994

The partnership was first the idea of two leaders. In 1990, Glenn Bogart was the newly appointed principal of Pi Beta Phi Elementary School. Gene Cox served as the Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services (now Resource Education) for GRSM. These two institutions shared a mission to educate the public. Among the park's eight million visitors recorded that year, school-aged children constituted an important audience.

These two individuals met to discuss the possibility of working together to ensure that students would take advantage of the tremendous resources literally in their own backyard. Principal Bogart was concerned that many of his students appeared to be woefully uninformed about the park. As a life-long resident of the park's neighboring community of Sevier County, TN, he recognized that many of his students would eventually take up business and civic roles in the local area. The decisions they would face in their professional and personal lives would have a direct bearing on the park as well as their communities.

Chief Cox not only agreed with that point of view, but also understood that it reinforced the park's mission regarding school-aged visitors. Pi Beta Phi Elementary School was a resource of skilled professionals specifically trained in pedagogy. Cox saw an opportunity to expand park programming for young visitors generally by working intensively with a single elementary school in an important gateway community.

The timing of the Bogart-Cox meeting coincided with a shift in National Park Service (NPS) priorities to strengthen formal educational programming as a component of visitor services and to embrace collaboration between a park and educational organizations. Randy Pope, Park Superintendent at the time, supported this type of educational partnership.

The collaborative style was a new way of doing business for the park, but the enthusiastic leadership and direction of Bogart and Cox provided a solid foundation for the beginnings of the partnership. In its initial stage, a steering committee of seven individuals began many hours of open, frank discussion, turning an ambitious idea into a program.

The park representatives were as follows: Gene Cox, Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services for GRSM; Don DeFoe, Assistant Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services; and Karen Ballentine, an interpretive ranger who was the Visitor Services liaison with the Division of Resource Management and Science.

The school representatives were Glenn Bogart, principal; Bill Beard, counselor; Marie Peine, special education; and Shirly Eli, librarian. Each

was responsible for programming that spanned all nine grades and required a comprehensive grasp of the total K-8 curriculum. Their perspectives were important in setting the goals and objectives for the programs.

Without strong, persistent (and sometimes insistent) leadership from the school principal and the chief of interpretation, the difficulties facing the team would have been overwhelming. The inertia of business as usual is difficult to overcome. The direct involvement of these two leaders in every facet of the initial stage was a key to the eventual success of the partnership. Individuals in each organization had to become familiar with the missions and professional responsibilities of the others. Values held by both institutions had to be recognized and respected before the parties could agree upon common goals.

First, the steering committee set about to create a rationale, mission statement, and goals for the partnership that addressed the educational needs of the students and the missions of both the National Park Service and the school. Although in subsequent years the partners made minor changes in these guiding principles, their essence has been retained and has served the program well. Excerpts from the original are reprinted in Figure 1.



Figure 1. Mission Statement and Project Goals.

Program Rationale

As we examine the parameters of the educational process, our instruction often becomes proscribed by the four-walled classroom and the prescriptions of the basal texts. The processes of learning should not be so tidily encapsulated into a fragmented series of content lessons taught daily for finite periods of time. Just as the world around us is a tapestry of interdependent systems, so should the fabric of learning be formed of interconnected elements whose most eloquent examples are found in the natural world....

Mission Statement

To develop a holistic instructional model for Pi Beta Phi Elementary School that will provide interdisciplinary learning experiences for all students, K-8, integrating the natural and cultural values/resources of Great Smoky Mountains National Park while meeting the educational standards of Sevier County and the state of Tennessee.

Project Goals

These goals represent statements of intended outcomes for participants in the Parks as Classrooms project and were developed jointly by the school staff and personnel from the Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

- I) To increase the awareness of students and teachers in the surrounding community of the significant opportunities provided by the Great Smoky Mountains National Park for education, recreation, and personal enrichment.
- 2) To inform students of the park's critical resource management issues so that they develop an understanding of the complex relationships that exist between people and natural systems and better understand National Park Service ethics of resource conservation and stewardship.
- 3) To help students become aware of the biological diversity within the park and the organization of natural communities and their ecological interactions.
- 4) To instill in students an appreciation for the unique cultural heritage of the southern Appalachians.
- 5) To promote an understanding of the relationships between Great Smoky Mountains National Park and global environmental and social issues so that students can actively demonstrate their concern for park resources and the environment beyond.
- 6) To provide a variety of rewarding interdisciplinary experiences that take students from the classroom setting to the natural setting for supplementary study challenges.
- 7) To establish a working relationship between park staff and teachers for the exchange of ideas and information that will increase the comfort level of both groups in providing instruction in non-traditional settings.
- 8) To increase the awareness of students about the mission of the National Park Service and to provide career investigation opportunities for students as appropriate.
- 9) To increase or maintain student achievement in all content areas as measured by annual standardized and criterion referenced assessments.

Second, the steering committee members needed to take on additional roles and duties in the park and school and adapt to a shift in priorities. In addition to their normal job duties, this team supervised all elements of the project and served on specific curriculum development teams. The availability of such persons, equipped with imagination, expert knowledge in their fields, and dedication, was as essential as the leadership that created the environment for change.

Armed with a clear set of guiding principles, the committee turned its attentions to creating a strategy for change, including the need to incorporate learning theory, multi-modal approaches to learning and development of interdisciplinary units. The idea of taking learning out of the classroom and into the park was the goal, and the committee took pains to identify how such a change in environment could be most fully exploited.

To facilitate the change from more traditional, textbook-defined teaching, the committee chose six themes around which all instruction was organized. The themes were Order, Change, Culture, Interactions, Patterns, and Structure. These "big ideas" provided a flexible framework for integration of the Tennessee State Curriculum objectives and the critical issues facing the park. Units were conceptualized as consisting of three primary subdivisions: pre-site lessons, on-site lessons, and post-site lessons.

Three grade-level teams (first, fourth, and sixth grades) served as pilots in the development of units of instruction. Each team included two teachers and two steering committee members, one each from the school and the park. Steering committee members ensured the work targeted the goals and objectives of the program.

While developing curriculum materials and units, the rangers discovered that working closely with the teachers gave them a much greater and more indepth understanding of the school culture. Park personnel learned about the massive numbers of objectives in the many subject areas taught in elementary and middle school. Ranger involvement in re-organizing those objectives and relating park experiences to the lessons prior to and following visits was an eye-opening experience. They gained a great deal of knowledge of pedagogy and assessment of learning, particularly about the state assessment program and how it impacts state curricula. This process required learning some new educational jargon. Terms like "objective" and "goals" carried specialized meaning in a school context, and rangers soon developed a more sophisticated understanding of the resources and limitations faced by teachers.

The Steering Committee made an early commitment to the evaluation of learning via pre-testing and post-testing. These tests were designed to mimic the techniques used in the annual statewide assessment program. In addition, units were designed with a variety of authentic assessment opportunities for students, such as projects, models, essays, artistic expressions, and multi-media presentations.

Throughout the summer of 1992, grade-level teams prepared three thematic units of instruction that were field tested in the 1992-93 school year. During this stage of implementation, rangers were heavily involved in

direct instruction of almost all units. The evaluation of the units revealed strengths and weaknesses in the planning and implementation. Revisions were made to accommodate the findings before involving the rest of the school staff. In the summer of 1993, the original teams continued to create new units for their grade levels while at the same time dispersing their efforts to join new grade-level teams charged with beginning the process of curriculum development school-wide.

The school year 1993-94 was busy with development and implementation of units. Students, parents, and teachers were researching, teaching, and learning in the park in an exciting bloom of creativity. By the end of that year, all grades had visited the park at least once.

At this point, the fruits of the project began to be shared with other schools. The management team guided the park staff in numerous discussions on outreach and the feasibility of offering various units to other schools. The selection of specific units for different age groups depended on a variety of factors. The park looked at all the units and picked the unit that was strongest in terms of key park messages and themes. Other factors considered were logistics, distance from nearby schools, and units that were the most hands-on, creative and engaging. Units were chosen that lent themselves readily to the packaging of pre-site materials that teachers could easily use with their students. The on-site programs were adjusted to anticipate an audience less well grounded than their Pi Phi peers. These units of instruction became known as the Smoky Mountain Classrooms.

National awareness of the program grew. Cox and Bogart were asked to present the program to the National Association for Interpretation annual meeting in November, 1993, in Washington, D.C. Even in its formative stages the program impressed those who saw it in action. A year later a much more fully developed (though still incomplete) program was examined by Roger Kennedy, director of the National Park Service. He pronounced it "the finest program of its kind in the nation." The occasion of his praise was a ceremony at which he presided to pay a special thank-you to the parents whose work in becoming teachers, interpreters, drivers, and chaperones had helped to make the project a success.

Early Success Stories and Potential Obstacles There were many things that we got right, even from the beginning. We were smart to take all the time we needed in planning, even in the face of some impatience to produce something tangible. In taking our time, we were able to adequately bridge the gaps between the two partners. Those steps were not part of our initial plans but were critical in developing the teamwork that has blessed the project with success.

Initial gaps affected the steering committee as we discovered that rangers and teachers often used the same English words in different ways. The institutional jargon of each group required clarification, and eventually, we created a "cheat sheet" that helped us communicate more specifically. Additionally, neither group had any in-depth knowledge of the roles nor functions required of their counterparts.

Perhaps the most critical gap was with respect to the core values that each institution held. The team-building that occurred during days of creating curricula often took the form of sharing these values, some of which are explicit, i.e., the Organic Act, but many others were unstated. As teachers became more aware of the critical issues facing the park, the values that make those issues critical became more apparent to them. The park staff had to develop a better understanding of the pressures that affect teachers, particularly those associated with preparing students to do well on standardized assessments. As the level of understanding deepened, so did the collegiality and respect.

In retrospect, we could have been more self-conscious about the teambuilding aspect of the partnership. Partnering individuals from two very different organizations into a focused team was not easy, but because we were striving to articulate a very tempting vision, each person involved was highly motivated.

The fact that we each envisioned something slightly (or even dramatically) different turned out to be a strength, in the end. While it took many hours of frank and sometimes frustrating conversations to iron out the differences in our conceptualizations, these differing points of view broadened the scope of the discussion. Our initial reach exceeded our eventual grasp, but striving for an ambitious goal kept the creative team members energized. The original plan was to completely reorganize the school's curriculum in all subjects in all grades around the thematic, interdisciplinary structure chosen for the project. The end results have proven to be most satisfactory, but fall short of the revolutionary ideals of some of the original planners.

Setting lofty goals had a filtering effect. There were those whose creative juices were stimulated by a "blank slate" approach. There were more who were suspicious and not looking forward to the work. A few who were openly disdainful of the project were obviously waiting for it to fail and sometimes actively working against it. The steering committee recognized that to ease into the project through the careful selection of pilot grade-level teams would be a successful strategy.

The individuals involved were enthusiastic change agents who brought realistic scope to the project without losing the innovative spirit that informed it. These individuals were seen by their peers as having credibility in their professional lives, and this respect was key in the next step. When all of the school staff were required to begin developing parkrelated units the second year, one pilot team member was included on each new team. The team structure provided a bridge between the experiences of the pilot groups, the steering committee, and those staff members being brought on board. While the change process still produced discomfort in some individuals, the experiences of their peers reduced their anxiety. Coupled with clearly articulated expectations from the leadership of both the school and the park, resistance to change did not present an insurmountable barrier.

Transition from Development to Refinement: 1994–1997 By the fourth year (1994-95), teams at each grade had planned and implemented six thematic units. Students were taking three-to-six field trips into the park to study the themes. As units of instruction were added and the project began to grow almost exponentially, the oversight of the day-to-day operation of the project by members of the initial management team became burdensome. The need for a project coordinator was emerging.

The first attempt to address this need was to modify the teaching assignment of one of the steering committee members at Pi Beta Phi. Her teaching load was altered to allow her to serve as a part-time coordinator. During the fifth year (1995-96) of the program, revisions were necessary in many units. The flow of programming across grade levels was less than satisfactory; there were inappropriate duplications of certain topics and some park areas were being over-utilized. The steering committee decided to undertake a comprehensive program evaluation to help guide the revision process, and it became a priority during that year.

In an instance of good timing, the National Park Service was in the process of designing an evaluation model for Parks as Classrooms programs and the Pi Phi Project served as a testing ground. With the assistance of the NPS evaluators, a visiting committee of educators and NPS specialists conducted a weeklong observation and study of the program in the fall of 1996. The feedback received from the committee was positive overall and provided the reinforcement needed to take the project to a higher level of sophistication. At this point, the partners made a commitment to find the resources to fund a full-time coordinator dedicated to the needs of the project. In the summer of 1997, the position was filled.

With the addition of the project coordinator, management team responsibilities were narrowed to that of oversight, and the composition of the team shifted. Gene Cox (Chief of Interpretation and Visitor Services) retired and the new Division Chief of Resource Education Resources delegated the primary park role on the team to Karen Ballentine, whose position had evolved to Education Coordinator. As permanent education rangers were hired, they also joined the team. Over time, school staffing changed, but members of the team were not replaced, so the school representatives were Glenn Bogart, principal, and Bill Beard, technology coordinator.

From that point onward, the project has undergone significant refinement. Most of the changes have to do with imposing a more global organization of student experiences. The curriculum was re-written to ensure uniformity across grade levels and to "tweak" units that were shown to be less than effective. The teaching load for on-site instruction shifted from NPS personnel to Pi Beta Phi teachers, but park rangers continued to do some teaching to ensure that students became familiar with the role and function of rangers and developed relationships with NPS personnel.

Money Matters

Through the course of the project, costs have been kept at a minimum. In the initial planning stage, park management was able to provide \$20,000 from a Parks as Classrooms grant from the National Park Foundation. The

funds were used to pay for release time for the teachers who created the units. Principal Bogart utilized local funding opportunities to sustain the project through the rest of the creative phase.

In 1997, the creation of the full-time Project Coordinator position required new funding. This position was to be jointly funded by the park and school, with the school's legal supervision authority, Sevier County Schools, as the fiscal agent. An annual budget for the project was created in 1997, totaling over \$30,000. Financial support has also come from city funding to the schools and from the school's parent organization (PTA). The park has primarily relied on two sources for its share of the funding: Great Smoky Mountains Association and Friends of Great Smoky Mountains National Park.

While many grant opportunities have been pursued through the course of the project, most of these have not been funded. A number of successful small grants include a Department of Agriculture grant through the Tennessee Non-Point Pollution Source Program, an America the Beautiful Seed and Bulb Grant, a cash award from the Tennessee Students Against Pollution, three minigrants from the Tennessee Environmental Education Association, and a teacher grant from a local television outlet, WBIR-TV. Donations from parents, individuals, businesses, and organizations helped defray costs of specific programs or for specific equipment acquisition. Other nonprofit organizations have supported the project, such as the Sunrise Garden Club, the Tennessee Historical Institute for Teachers, and the Tennessee Educators Newsletter.

Over the course of the past six years, over \$100,000 has been expended in support of the project, but the largest investments have come through inkind services provided by staff members of the two partners. While some stipends for teachers have been provided for summer work, most of the work done by rangers and teachers has been without extra compensation. In fact, the project would not exist without these contributions.

Managing **Transitions** and

Change and growth has been a hallmark of the program. Personnel have changed in both organizations, and the partnership still thrives. Of the original "gang of seven" steering committee, three individuals remain. Park Sustainability representatives now include Karen Ballentine, Mike Maslona, and Jennifer Pierce, all of whom serve in the park's Resource Education Division. School representatives are Principal Bogart and Bill Beard, the technology specialist. The project's first coordinator, Susan Sachs, held the position for two years before leaving to be hired as an employee for the National Park Service, and was replaced by the current coordinator, Judy Dulin. The management team is counting on the program's reputation to sustain it through leadership transitions.

> One important facet of the project's robustness is its positive image in the community. The grassroots community support is gratifying. Parents have volunteered their time, and since Gatlinburg is a small city and its citizens are directly involved in city governance, parental involvement translates into continued support from the Gatlinburg School Board. Many of the parents are involved in the other associations that support the project

"A park or system of parks can only be sustained when community members, visitors, educators, school children and their parents, and governmental/business/nonprofit entities decide there is something fundamental to the communities' well-being derived from a close association with what parks represent." Karen Wade, director, Intermountain Region NPS, former superintendent of Great Smoky **Mountains National Park.**

financially, so the esteem in which the project is held ensures that it will receive due consideration as the needs of other worthwhile initiatives compete for limited resources.

Despite its success, the partnership must plan to attract new sources of funding. As park budgets continue to get tighter, all projects are scrutinized. Previous administrations and superintendents have argued that not only is education a core mission, it is vital for the survival of the National Park Service. However, values and priorities change, and now education must compete with other vital needs like deferred maintenance. If the steering committee faces budget cuts from either partner, other sources of funding could be explored. It would be advantageous to find an ongoing sponsor, creating a structure that does not rely on annual funding approval. The management team has set a goal to spend more time with public relations so that many would step forward if the program were ever in jeopardy.

Other factors that contribute to the project's perceived value are the programs that have spun off from it. Smoky Mountain Classrooms units are available for grades K-8. Schools have been extremely enthusiastic about this program. Currently, schools are turned away because park capacity is filled. Both the Pi Phi Project and Smoky Mountain Classrooms have allowed the park to initiate a Parks in the Classrooms (PiC) program. PiC serves exclusively Title I (federal assistance) schools that have difficulty coming to the park because of funding. In this program, a park ranger goes into the school and teaches curriculum-based units about park topics. Using the Pi Beta Phi units as a base, PiC programs provide age- and grade-appropriate activities and reflect the objectives required by the state curriculum. Over 5,000 students annually participate in these unique offerings.

The addition of the project coordinator in 1997 has been vital to the project's success. The coordinator interacts with the steering committee and educators at both the partner school and at schools interested in adopting the Pi Beta Phi model. She also reviews and revises the curriculum as state curriculum frameworks change and content in the disciplines grows or changes. The coordinator reports to the steering committee on all matters related to project implementation and planning.

In addition to attending meetings of both partners, she handles particular issues with staff. For example, she reports specifically to the principal regarding issues of vacation, leave, and other incidentals. While her input regarding school curriculum is formally restricted to the Pi Phi Project, she serves teachers as a resource for curriculum development and arranges logistics for all park trips. The coordinator functions with park staff in a less-than-formal capacity, though she does have a formal role on paper. While the Friends organization contacts donors, the coordinator does extensive grant research and has authored many grant proposals. She functions as a liaison with local press outlets, though sometimes her efforts are duplicated by those of park public relations staff.

The project's credibility and viability are directly tied to the vitality of the curriculum. A curriculum that is static quickly becomes less than relevant

"The programs were ageappropriate with timely topics meeting our curriculum needs." Fifth-grade teacher, Pi Beta Phi Elementary.

or useful, so much of the coordinator's time is invested in vital curriculum review and revision. The project coordinator's efforts to keep the curriculum up-to-date have been successful. Without this time-consuming work, the project would not continue to impact the students it serves. The State of Tennessee has revised its curricular frameworks for grades K-8 twice in the lifetime of the project. Through the timely and diligent efforts of the project coordinator, plans are already in place to align the project with the

most recent sequence of state objectives.

Without such attention to curriculum, a mismatch between the project's learning experiences and the objectives tested by the state would cause teachers to drift away from the project, carried on the tides of the annual state assessments. The impact of statewide assessments upon teachers is significant. While the debate on the appropriate role of standardized testing rages, the reality of high-stakes testing continues to provide some of the most salient motivation currently affecting teachers across the nation. This situation will exist for the foreseeable future and deserves some specific attention in this narrative.

The Role of **Evaluation** and Assessment

Our project began during the early stages of the national preoccupation with the use of standardized testing to evaluate students, teachers, and schools. Tennessee took the lead in the movement with the adoption of the Tennessee Comprehensive Assessment Program (TCAP). With its Value-Added components, the TCAP was one of the first systematic attempts to provide annual objective performance feedback for students in grades 3-8, as well as to teachers and schools.

Pi Beta Phi was more than ready for such a system. For decades, the school had been testing its K – 8 students annually with the Stanford Achievement Test. The use of standardized test instruments was part of the school's culture and became a way to assess strengths and weaknesses in instructional programming. Areas of need identified through standardized assessments have prompted changes to Pi Beta Phi Project units, particularly to specific unit objectives.

Evaluation was built into the project from its inception. To assist in program evaluation, one of the steering committee members from the school drew upon a background in social science research to design survey instruments on student attitudes, knowledge, and behaviors related to outdoor topics and GRSM in particular. The instruments were used with a random sample of students to collect baseline data before any activities were constructed. Assessment of learning from activities was designed to take place at the level of individual student, instructional units, and the overall project. An important facet was the inclusion of a pre-test in every unit. Combined with various post-testing schemes, each unit was evaluated and revised based upon the data generated in the pre-test/post-test assessments. Individual student growth is also measurable from the data.

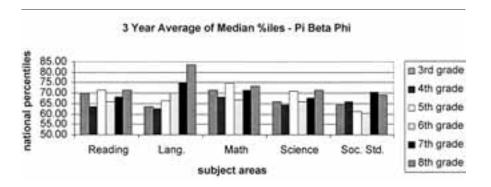
This effort provides an opportunity to compare student populations who received none of the benefits of the project with those who have completed

nine years of programming. Resources have been unavailable to compile data until recently. Currently, two doctoral candidates at local universities are conducting their dissertation research on the project. The years of collecting and archiving raw data are paying off.

The project's formal assessment plan is a comprehensive system for using student data, statistics on participation of various groups, anecdotal records and summaries, and an annual audit to ensure that the project stays true to its goals and objectives. Indicators are linked to program goals and reflected in evaluation questions and data collection techniques. The plan serves the needs of both partners: it supports the school's need to measure the growth of its students while at the same time providing data to the park to evaluate its educational programming. The steps and strategies outlined in the plan have been implemented or are scheduled for implementation in the next 18 to 24 months. Within that time frame, we hope to achieve the goals of this assessment plan.

As noted earlier, Pi Beta Phi students are indistinguishable in terms of ethnicity and socio-economic background from the larger population in Sevier County Schools. These facts are a necessary context in which to view the achievement test scores of Pi Beta Phi students who score well above national and state means and out-perform their peers in the system. Pi Beta Phi scores indicate that it is one of the top performing elementary schools in the state.

Figure 2.
Academic
Achievement
at Pi Beta Phi
Elementary
School 19992002



The average of median percentiles of our students as measured by the Terra Nova achievement test is presented in Figure 2. Note that the lowest median percentile earned by Pi Beta Phi students is at the 60th percentile nationally. Based upon these scores, the school has recently set improvement goals calling for a minimum median percentile performance of the 70th percentile in all subjects.

At this time, statistical studies designed to apportion the relative impacts of the project experiences are being planned. The state testing environment changed radically at the same time we were developing our project; therefore there are no statistically valid measures that can be applied to the impact of the project on student achievement. Even without any statistical treatment, one implication is clear: intensive outdoor educational experiences do not bring down achievement test scores. Our students are out of their classrooms more than any similar group of students in the region, but their test scores outrank those of their more traditionally educated peers.

"The hands-o

Benefits of the Project to the Park It is clear that students at Pi Beta Phi receive a quality education that is greatly enhanced by their opportunities to study and learn in GRSM. Yet questions remain: What does the park get in return for its investment? How can park educators justify their intensive involvement with a single school when there are at least six school districts bordering the park on the Tennessee side alone?

"The hands-on activities were at an appropriate level for my students. The teamwork concept worked well to get all students involved. The activities were diverse and the content was well covered."

Third-grade teacher, Pi Beta Phi Elementary.

The most obvious benefit to the park is access to a high-quality curriculum specifically designed to take advantage of the natural and cultural resources within the park. The pressures to prepare for the annual exams motivate teachers to limit field trips to those that are specifically linked to the state curriculum. Through the efforts of the project coordinator and the teachers at Pi Beta Phi, Smoky Mountain Classroom units retain this important linkage, resulting in programs that are not only effective, but also justifiable to teachers and their supervisors.

The park provides on-site programs to 76 different schools in 13 counties of the two states bordering the park. Program attendance totaled over 10,000 in 2002 with the expectation that this number will increase in succeeding years. Park records show a year-to-year 75 – 80% return rate of participating groups.

The park also benefits from many of the project coordinator's efforts, especially those related to increasing the visibility of credible educational programming in the park. She serves as an excellent educational ambassador for the park. She has made presentations to local community groups and at the following professional meetings: National Association for Interpretation (NAI), North Carolina Environmental Education (NCEEA), Tennessee Environmental Education Association (TEEA), and The East Tennessee Historical Institute. The project model has been shared with graduate students from half a dozen regional colleges, the Georgia Environmental Education Association, a curriculum developer from DeCalb County Schools (Georgia), the State Social Studies Curriculum Director, and the director of a similar project in Louisiana. Overall, about 1,000 adult leaders and teachers hear about the program each year. She also participates in park educational efforts outside of the partnership, having contributed significantly to the educational components of Discover Life in America (DLIA) and the All Taxa Biodiversity Inventory (ATBI). In these instances, her participation was reviewed and approved by the management team. Such efforts increase the credibility of the project in the wider educational community.

It is important to note that her professional identity is directly connected to GRSM. She presents herself as a representative of the park through the ties of the partnership. She and the project have received the following awards: the 1998 Tennessee K-12 Environmental Awareness Award presented by the Tennessee Department of Environment and Conservation, the 2002 Tennessee Students Against Pollution Award presented by the TEEA, the 2002 Conservation Educator of the Year Award presented by the Tennessee Conservation League, and the Golden Shovel Award presented by the Great Smoky Mountains National Park Volunteer Division.

"I was pleased that the program wasn't watered down. When expectations are kept high, the students strive to meet them—and that is what happened! I am recommending your school programs to the supervisor of the Knox County gifted/magnet programs."

Fifth-grade Talented and Gifted teacher from Knox County, Tennessee.



Another benefit to the park is the preparation and training Pi Beta Phi provides to the park's seasonal and permanent employees. Through school visitations and staff development activities, teachers and specialists provide training on issues such as effective discipline and characteristics of learners at various developmental stages. In return, the park provides Pi Beta Phi teachers opportunities to enhance their knowledge of the park and of teaching in an outdoor environment. This relationship not only reinforces the professional and personal bonds between the staff members of the two organizations, but gives NPS staff an opportunity to develop and test professional development experiences with one another.

Being publicly associated with a demonstrably successful elementary school elevates the status of GRSM within the educational community of the region. The partners have jointly participated in meetings with a focus group of teachers from area schools, with directors of schools from most of the neighboring school districts, and with the Tennessee State Commissioner of Education. These meetings reveal the results of the project in an effort to raise awareness of educational opportunities connected with the park and help to identify potential obstacles to greater utilization of the park by other schools.

Recognition of the educational initiatives in the park beyond the regional level has been another positive result of the partnership. The National Park System Advisory Board and the NPS National Leadership Council both visited Great Smoky Mountains and spent part of their visits focused upon the project. The comments from members of those organizations were overwhelmingly positive.

A less direct benefit accrues to the park as the citizens of Gatlinburg and Sevier County become well informed about the park and the issues that confront it. Students at Pi Beta Phi demonstrate through their actions and their words that they have internalized some the core values promoted by the National Park Service. Parents report that they, too, have learned a great deal about the park from their children.

The participation of students in service-learning projects provides assistance in extirpating exotic flora, maintaining segments of the trail system, and restoring wetlands. Since the service-learning component is an annual affair, Pi Beta Phi students will continue to be directly involved in volunteer efforts. Some of the children even take on stewardship projects outside of school.

As the National Park Service adapts to its role in the 21st century, education will take on greater importance. GRSM is well positioned through its partnership to do the following:

- "establish the park as a distinct resource for the educational community,
- help people understand the many landscapes, life forms, and stories of America,
- increase connections between the National Park Service and educators,
- increase the skills of NPS employees and the effectiveness of NPS programs,
- · help build a national ethic of resource stewardship, and

"When I observe the students of Pi Beta Phi displaying their knowledge of park issues and their stewardship responsibilities, it warms my heart and brings tears to my eyes, because I know that the park will be in good hands for generations to come."

of Great Smoky Mountains

National Park.

 develop an informed citizenry committed to the stewardship of natural and cultural resources."

(Elements of the purpose of education in the National Park Service as explicated in the Educational Initiative Symposium conducted by the NPS in 1997.)

The staff of the Resource Education Division have seen their role with respect to formal education change markedly over the course of the partnership. Early stages involved writing occasional lesson plans, while the progress of the project led to having a staff of six full-time education employees. The role and function of this division has been shaped in part by the positive interactions with their partner school. The rangers now teach thousands of other students in the park as well as providing inschool programming to hundreds of underserved students.

Looking to the Future

In the immediate future, maintaining the quality and relevance of the instructional units continues to be a high priority. Currently, technology is not a large part of the Pi Beta Phi Project, but we are working to expand that aspect of each unit. Digital cameras, handheld and laptop computers, and GPS units are being introduced, and internet resources are being added as research aids or to reinforce concepts associated with the units. Post-site authentic assessment activities in the upper grades require students to use Power Point or other computer resources to report on their project experiences.

The culmination of the assessment plan and the accompanying comprehensive program evaluation is a very high priority. Research being conducted by the two doctoral candidates is eagerly anticipated.

The idea of project replication has lingered in the collective mind of the management team since the inception of the partnership. At this point, we think that few parks or schools would be willing to invest the time and effort that is required to sustain such a partnership. It would be beyond the current resources of GRSM to attempt to establish a similar relationship with another school if such a relationship were built from scratch. However, any school or school system near the park that could provide its own project coordinator could institute the Pi Beta Phi model in a relatively short time. We have initiated discussions with the superintendents of all the surrounding school systems in Tennessee. Similar discussions have been held with the commissioner of education and social studies curriculum coordinator for the state of Tennessee. School officials from nearby Eastern Band of Cherokees and surrounding North Carolina systems have also been informed of these opportunities. We are publishing teacher-directed units to share with others, as well as making plans to publish them on our website. We continue to look for schools and teachers willing to embrace parts of the project, with the ideal being schools that would undertake a comprehensive adoption of the Pi Beta Phi model.

Threats, Obstacles, Bumps in the Road

The project has been blessed by great success thus far, but past success is no guarantee for the future. Some predictable obstacles threaten the partnership. Changes in leadership in either or both organizations could potentially impact the program for good or ill. Division chiefs and park superintendents obviously exert an influence on the allocation of park resources, and those resources are finite. Other than memoranda of understanding and cooperative agreements, there are no formal dedications of resources to the partnership. The park is currently seeking both a new superintendent and a Resource Education division chief.

The leadership structure of the school partner has been entirely stable over the history of the project. Glenn Bogart remains principal, and the school system has also enjoyed the benefits of stability of its top leadership over the same time period. While there are no indications of any changes in the near future, change will inevitably occur. Strong and consistent leadership within the partnership has been an obvious hallmark. A transition in school leadership would be similar to the potential impacts of changes in park management.

The critical contributions of the project coordinator make that position integral to the continued success of the program, but the position presents issues of both organizational identity and financial support. Serving two masters has been a personal challenge, though not as a result of any unresolved conflicts. The coordinator does not seem to be a fully-fledged member of either organization. Since the coordinator's office space is located in the school building, the park staff does not have day-to-day contact with her. She does not wear a park service uniform, as she is not formally a National Park Service employee. Though she is located at the school, the coordinator does not serve in any specific instructional or supervisory capacity, so she is separated professionally from the rest of the certified staff. She does take part in school faculty meetings, but there are subtle reminders that she is not formally a teacher. This lack of professional identification with either organization creates some issues that need to be resolved in the future.

Funding for the position is not guaranteed and is subject to annual review and consideration. The potential loss of funding could prove to be a significant threat to the program's sustainability. We have not cultivated much support beyond the local level. Our congressional representatives have not been approached, nor do we have a relationship with anyone at the regional level of the National Park Service.

Program replication presents unique problems. The park may not have the capacity to expand to many other partners beyond what is being accomplished with Smoky Mountain Classrooms. Questions about the best form of sharing information remain. Do we share through publishing or teacher training, a dedicated on-line presence, or combinations of these initiatives? Will the funding for such projects to allow us to add staff to make our project coordinator available so she can work with other teams?

Service projects are one of the strongest elements of the project. Today, the only service projects conducted by school-age children in the park other

than Pi Beta Phi students are through scout troops and other community groups (many of the members of these organizations are Pi Beta Phi students, too). Babette Collavo, VIP coordinator at GRSM, suspects that the supervision and safety concerns involved in the typical service-learning project probably discourage other schools from attempting these activities. If we could ever get more schools engaged in a more comprehensive approach—even K-8 or ranger-led programs—this would be a priority from the park's perspective.

The name issue is one that remains a thorn in our collective side. The lack of a unique title for the project limits it in subtle ways. It is entirely possible that opportunities could be missed simply because the project is confused with something else. While it certainly exemplifies the best qualities of Parks as Classrooms, it is more than that. Persons familiar with other Parks as Classrooms initiatives may gain an incomplete perception of the project if our labeling does not somehow better communicate the complexity of the partnership.

Experience Is the Best **Teacher**

The project is grounded in that idea. So, what have our experiences as educational partners taught us that might be helpful to others?

Plan...

There is no substitute for effective planning. Take all the time you need to create a clearly articulated set of goals that meet the needs of all the partners. Avoid the rush to produce tangible results if that haste would shortchange the planning process.

Lead...

Leadership is the key. Make certain that those who approve the commitment of resources are not just supportive, but directly involved in the creative process, if possible.

Evaluate...

Plan for evaluation and construct feedback loops. Programming cannot respond to changes without formal and informal input. Adaptations will occur as circumstances change, but those adaptations can become reactive instead of proactive without a comprehensive assessment system designed into the program.

Understand change...

Change processes are fraught with peril. Organizations have different reactions and tolerance to change. Identify all the potential obstacles that confront the partnership and develop strategies to overcome them. Have a thorough understanding of the organizational cultures involved in the partnership, and especially of how those organizations handle change. Institutional knowledge resides in individuals, so try to identify key people in each organization and get those persons on board.

Manage your time...

Time pressures can erode a partnership. As their responsibilities to a new partnership grow, individuals seldom see a diminution of their previous duties. While productivity can be increased through "working smarter, not harder," there are obvious limits to such an undertaking. When apportioning the new responsibilities that grow from an evolving partnership, be sensitive to demands on the time of those individuals whose contributions will make or break the program.

Manage your money...

Before money is committed to a partnership, hammer out a thorough understanding of all the financial issues likely to confront the partners. Proactively discuss these issues and reach consensus before the issues come up, if possible. Keep all financial matters transparent to avoid misunderstandings.



Lowell National Historical Park (LNHP) University of Massachusetts Lowell Graduate School of Education

Elizabeth Hoermann (NCES) Peter O'Connell (TIHC) Kathy Tevyaw (NCES)



Tsongas Industrial History Center

"I just wanted to tell you that I had a great time. I think the best part was being a water wheel scientist. I felt really important standing there trying out different water wheels and bases. I didn't feel like I was a 10-year-old who was new at this. I felt like I was a 24-year-old and had been at this for years. It was like I was making the city's power better."

This case study tells the story of the evolution of a 20-year partnership between a public university and a large urban national park. Because it is the story of a partnership between two large organizations, a large education center, and funding from both state and federal governments, readers from smaller organizations may view this case study as beyond their means or mission. But this case study is relevant to any size organization because it describes a series of organizational transitions in a partnership, the impact of the education reform movement on the partners, and challenges and opportunities unlike those envisioned initially by the planners.

In the 1980s, the founders of the Tsongas Industrial History Center imagined a hands-on learning center of 15,000 square feet that would engage 20,000 students annually and operate on a budget of about \$500,000, including both park and university contributions. Two decades later, the Tsongas Center has grown well beyond the initial vision in space (22,000 square feet), staff (7 NPS and 30-35 UMass Lowell staff), visitation (64,000 students and teachers) and budget (approximately \$1.7 million including university staff, park staff, grants, and in-kind support).

Today, on a typical school day at the center and park, 300-400 students participate in four-hour thematic programs led by a ranger or UMass Lowell museum teacher. The programs include 90 minutes of hands-on activities in the Tsongas Center workshops and 90-minute visits to related park resources, exhibits, and audio-visual presentations. Some groups test water quality in the center's environmental "labs" at the university boathouse to assess the impact of industrialization on the Merrimack Watershed. The park and the city of Lowell are experiential classrooms.

The center's programs are carefully structured to help teachers address history, science, and language arts curricula. Tsongas Center staff offer a wide range of teacher workshops, institutes, and curriculum materials. In turn, teachers bring their classes to the center and park year after year. Both the continued growth of the center's visitation, despite huge changes in the school world, and student and teacher evaluations testify to the accuracy of the original vision and the ability of center staff to adapt to change. (For a description of educational programs for students and curriculum materials for teachers, go to www.nps.gov/lowe or www.uml.edu/tsongas.)

"The Institute was fantastic! When I teach, I will allude to the greater social impacts of some of the scientific areas I cover, and I want students to realize that discoveries and events don't happen in a vacuum—I want them to see connections!"

1978-1987: Seedbed for a Partnership

The Tsongas Industrial History Center is a great success story for both the National Park Service and for the Graduate School of Education at UMass Lowell. In 1978, the odds against the creation of an education center in an urban national park in an old, economically depressed, ethnically divided,

"The Morrill

"The Morrill Act of 1862 created public land grant universities whose mission was to conduct research and then to share that research with constituent groups. . . . In this land-grant tradition, as the Lowell regional campus of the University of Massachusetts, we have a responsibility to work in partnership with community groups like Lowell **National Historical Park to** identify needs, to conduct research, and to help improve the quality of economic, educational, and social life of the region."

Chancellor Hogan, UMass Lowell

industrial city were high. But, led by lifelong Lowell resident Senator Paul Tsongas, a group of civic leaders had begun to reverse the 50-year depression caused by the exodus of the textile industry.

Tsongas believed that to rebuild itself as a thriving city, Lowell had to form economic and educational partnerships to bridge ethnic, organizational, and personal divisions, and that Lowell's landmark status as the first large-scale industrial city in the U.S. could leverage federal funding for historic preservation projects, in turn attracting state and private matching investment. Tsongas led the legislative process to create the National Historical Park in 1978.

During the same period, Chancellor William T. Hogan was overseeing the transformation of the University of Lowell into a branch of the University of Massachusetts. Senator Tsongas, Chancellor Hogan, and other community leaders created several organizational structures that would cut through bureaucratic red tape and serve as building blocks for Lowell's long-term revitalization. For example, the Lowell Preservation Commission began a decades-long process to preserve and reuse Lowell's industrial structures, thereby preserving its historical identity.

Tsongas and Hogan also created the Lowell Education Reform Commission in the early 1980s to address the needs of a public school system in crisis. The Commission, comprised of Deans from three universities, was directed by consultant and later Dean of the Graduate School of Education Donald Pierson. It recommended that UMass Lowell partner with the Lowell Public Schools and community organizations to use Lowell as a history classroom, an idea championed by Patrick Mogan, Superintendent of Schools. Although the report did not specifically call for a partnership between the new national park, the university, and the Lowell Public Schools, it prepared a seedbed for such collaboration.

Meanwhile, the staff of Lowell National Historical Park had transformed the idea of the park into reality and had placed a high priority on educational programming for schools. Staff completed a General Management Plan (GMP), built a Visitor Center, and began restoring its historic resources—the boardinghouse, the five-story Boott Cotton Mills, and the Suffolk Mill turbine and waterpower exhibit. They conceptualized the exhibit and media presentations that would tell Lowell's story. Lowell's first park superintendent took the unusual step of giving Lowell and neighboring Chelmsford teachers priority for limited seating on park's popular canal boat tours in return for the schools' commitment to build park programs into the social studies curriculum for all grade 4 students. During the winter, seasonal rangers offered hands-on programs in schools, paired with canal tours in the spring. Some park staff questioned the priority given to local schools that took all available boat tour spaces through 2:00 p.m. on most days. These staff felt that all visitors should have equal priority.

Despite the park's commitment to education, virtually unheard of in the National Park Service at that time, Chief of Interpretation George Price



and his staff were painfully aware of the park's limitations in delivering education programs. He and Education Specialist Kathy Tevyaw began lobbying park leadership to include at least a hands-on resource or discovery room and lunch room in the space allocations then in the planning stages for the five-story Boott Cotton Mills. They organized several staff visits to area museums, including a visit to nearby Old Sturbridge Village and its highly popular hands-on Museum Education building, accompanying lunchroom, and gift shop.

Superintendent Chrysandra Walter said, "When I saw the size of the education complex at Sturbridge and how engaged those kids were, I knew we needed to enlarge our idea of a Lowell education center. I went out on a limb and told the Denver Service Center designers to lay out 15,000 square feet of space for a hands-on education center in the Boott Cotton Mills. A lot of NPS people were opposed, but I was completely convinced that only an experiential education center would help us bring industrial history to life for students. To have credibility with the education world and to attract foundation grants, we needed a partnership with the University of Massachusetts Lowell's College of Education, and we needed the director of the center to have a Ph.D. I asked Bill Hogan and Fred Sperounis [UMass Lowell Vice Chancellor for Development] to help us. They immediately saw how this partnership and a downtown education center complemented the university's mission."

Planning for the history education center began immediately as part of the large and complex restoration of the Boott Mills. A group of park staff, the NPS Denver Service Center, and exhibit consultants worked on the design of permanent exhibits and media programs. The Denver Service Center laid out the basic floor plans, including, at Superintendent Walter's insistence, space on the third and fourth floors of the Boott Mills to house education offices, hands-on workshops, bathrooms, a lunchroom, and a teacher resource room.

A second group was led by Chief of Interpretation George Price and Education Specialist Kathy Tevyaw. They worked with Donald Pierson and staff of the UMass Lowell College of Education's Center for Field Services and Studies and consultants to create a fundraising prospectus describing what would actually happen in the education center.

Don Pierson described the university's goals for the center: The Chancellor and I believed that teachers would benefit greatly by getting out of their school cultures and participating intensively in an active learning experience in a community setting. They would have an intellectually reinvigorating experience that would suggest ways that they could change practice in their schools. Teachers from all over New England would bring their students to Lowell National Park and the education center, experience the new Lowell, and return with their families to visit the park and other attractions, and to eat in the restaurants.

Education center planning groups also included community leaders, teachers, College of Education faculty, and park staff. Everyone agreed on the need



for hands-on, experiential learning. Everyone had his or her own idea of what kinds of activities they would like to see. The idea of an "industrial history education center" was specific enough to rally around, yet broad enough to embrace nearly everyone's conception of what it might be. Still, staff from both the park and the university had to get beyond what Dean Pierson termed an "arrogance of expertise" characteristic of strong organizational cultures.

Although everyone on our planning team was committed to the development of the education center, and we all shared a belief in experiential education, we had some "cultural" gaps to overcome. Some School of Education staff conveyed the impression that National Park Rangers were amateur educators, and faculty were the experts in the world of schools, teaching, and learning. On our side, as rangers with teaching backgrounds and a lot of experience in field-based learning and curriculum development, some tended to view the university folks as being in the ivory tower and not as expert about teaching and learning in museums and national parks. The absolute commitment to the partnership and the education center by Sandy Walter and Don Pierson helped us all to get over our "cultural" differences and to realize that we all had a lot to learn.

—George Price, Chief of Interpretation

Beyond the planning group, some park staff, including leadership staff, objected to sharing any part of an essential park function with an outside organization. One experienced ranger cited the partnership with the university as the reason for her resignation. Others objected to the financial resources that would be diverted from the park's interpretive programming. Some supported the partnership but wanted to limit the university role to fundraising. The park superintendent listened, but was firm in her convictions: 1) interpretive needs and expectations of students and teachers required a hands-on education center; (2) the needs of these visitors took precedence over alternative uses for the upper floors of the Boott Mills; and (3) the park could not create and sustain the education center without the expertise and support of an educational partner.

The huge scale of the restoration of the mill and the simultaneous development of exhibits, media, and the education center were major challenges. The education management team substantially shaped the design of the education center. With all their work on the education center, the team did not participate in developing the museum exhibits and media presentations. As a result, many of the permanent exhibits included few participatory activities and the media programs could not be copied on videos for school use before or after a visit.

Finding funding was a huge challenge as well. The restoration of the mill and the development of other park facilities left the park no funds to add education center staff to plan or implement outreach. Indeed, the park needed to increase its base funding just to complete the Boott Mills interpretive exhibits. University funds were already committed to bringing the former state college up to university standards. The partners recognized they would need state and federal financing.

"Writing the first cooperative

Superintendent Walter and Vice Chancellor Sperounis recruited the support of local legislators Representative Rourke and Senator Sheehy, who successfully earmarked \$250,000 in annual funding for the education center in the state budget. Additional financial support also was sought from the federal government. After Massachusetts Senator Tsongas gave up his seat because of ill health, incoming Senator Kerry's staff suggested that an increase in Lowell National Historical Park's base budget to fund the "Paul E. Tsongas Industrial History Center" would be an appropriate congressional recognition of the Senator's service. Representative Atkins introduced the legislation in the Department of the Interior appropriations bill, which passed both houses and was signed into law. By early 1987, the park had federal funding to complete the Boott Mills exhibits and to design the education center, and the university had state funding to hire the first staff to bring the vision of the Tsongas Industrial History Center into reality.

1987-1991: Hiring **Center Staff** and **Developing Programs**

agreement was almost painful. We weren't really

sure what it would look like

in the end, but since it was

the first formal agreement

education center."

With funding in hand, the partners began to define the structure of the partnership and to develop the first cooperative agreement governing the financial relationship between the university and the park. Not surprisingly, this was a long and difficult process.

The members of the university team (Director Don Pierson and his staff at the Center for Field Services and Studies) and the park leadership team (Superintendent, Chief of Interpretation, and Education Specialist) identified the need for four full-time staff: (1) a director to provide creative direction, to manage the complex relationships among park, university, legislators and local leaders, and to oversee the budget; (2) a school liaison with classroom teaching experience to secure teacher advice, offer teacher workshops, and sustain in-school presentations until the center opened for visitation; (3) a curriculum development specialist with history teaching experience to be responsible for the historical and educational content in workshops and the development of curriculum materials and other publications; and (4) an administrative assistant. The center staff would report to Virginia Biggy, Dean of the College of Education through the Director of the Center for Field Services and Studies.

between our institutions, everyone felt the pressure to get it right. It took as much time to resolve big issues like questions about decisionmaking authority, as it did to figure out the little things like how to deliver the mail. Finally we got the language to everyone's satisfaction. But more important than any language was the trust and respect among the principals —Chancellor Hogan, Dean Pierson, and Superintendent Walter-and their determination to create a successful **Kathy Tevyaw, Education Specialist**

The staff of the Center for Field Services and Studies organized a national search committee of faculty, teachers, park staff, and community representatives to hire a director who would have a Ph.D. and relevant park or museum education experience. This was an unusual combination, since education was just emerging as a career field in museums and the NPS. Relatively few people in the museum education field had an earned doctorate. After a lengthy search, Ed Pershey, curator at Edison National Park, accepted the position. He then hired former teachers as School Liaison (Dorrie Bonner) and Curriculum Specialist (Elizabeth Hoermann), and an Administrative Assistant (Pauline Carroll) familiar with the university. Chief of Interpretation George Price and Education Specialist Kathy Tevyaw worked closely with the team. Seasonal park rangers continued to teach school programs in classrooms and at the park.

George Price and I lived and breathed education with the Tsongas Center staff, but we were involved more at the policy and problem-solving level, not at a program development level. We met weekly, and our role was to ensure that everything was deeply rooted in the park's existing education roots and to grease the skids where there were issues.

-Kathy Tevyaw, Education Specialist

By hiring four full-time staff with diverse experience, the partners created the "critical mass" needed to initiate a project of this scope, rather than asking park or university staff to squeeze time from their other duties. The team was representative of the National Park Service and schools. Everyone involved realized that although the team would build on park programs already in place and draw on the College of Education's expertise and network, the team needed to combine the expertise of both parties to create uniquely engaging hands-on experiences.

From a partnership perspective within the context of the university and the College of Education, the Tsongas Industrial History Center was conceptually, organizationally, and physically on the cutting edge. It was one of three new university "Centers of Research and Innovation" to give faculty greater freedom to work innovatively with community groups. Most centers were located on the university campus, staffed by faculty, and anchored in the university culture. In contrast, the Tsongas Center, a community-based learning laboratory for K-12 students, was unlike anything else in the university, and the Tsongas Center director had adjunct, rather than full, faculty status. The center staff and Dean Biggy had many issues to work through with the university bureaucracy, each requiring an explanation of how the center was part of the university!

Though their paychecks and general supervision came through the university, the four center staff had substantially more contact with the Park Superintendent, Chief of Interpretation, and Education Specialist. Center staff used park themes and park-developed tours or in-school programs to structure the education center activities. Finally, though, they were not employees of the Park Service, their temporary offices were not in a park space, and they had relatively little contact with the majority of park employees. Their mission was to create something that would be unique in the National Park Service. Thus, the Tsongas Center staff team's organizational identity was neither "park" nor "university" but rather that of a creative team developing a new organization, culture, and pedagogy.

Pedagogical Visions

When I was first hired, I knew that there had been extensive community interest in the center. I met with lots of different people in Lowell to ask them about their views on the proposed center. What I discovered was that there was anything BUT a single, coherent set of expectations. I heard all kinds of things that the new center would provide, from school group education, to teacher training, to public programs, to programs for senior citizens, to even providing low-cost meals for kids and seniors! The first couple of years were spent sharpening the expectations and narrowing the focus.

-Ed Pershey, Director

"From the very beginnings of the idea of the Tsongas Industrial History Center, when the university and park officials were coming up with the first two job descriptions, the words 'participatory,' 'experiential,' and 'interdisciplinary' were embedded into the whole idea. It was clear, then, that students would come to the center to DO something."

"[Senator] Paul Tsongas once commented to me that the Boott Mills project may have been exceeded in its length only by the pyramids of Egypt! Even with funding and top-level leadership, planning and implementation of a project will take significantly longer than the planners anticipate, and it will cost more."

The new team and the parent organizations agreed that the Tsongas Center's primary audience would be visiting school groups rather than the general public or families. In the 1980s, school districts taught Lowell's themes (the history and science of the industrial revolution, changes in women's roles, immigration, and urbanization) in a variety of grades. So the staff felt the center's programs should work with upper elementary through college levels. The team faced a major challenge in making industrial history come alive. Director Ed Pershey described the challenge this way: Ask students what their ten favorite subjects are and history will be about twelfth. To kids, history is boring, stories about dead people. Industrial history is even worse. It involves industrial science, math, engineering, and economics, topics neither students nor many teachers are comfortable with. We had the prospect of having to teach some of the most difficult topics using the most boring of subjects!

Based on early park education programs, exploration of existing science and history education programs, and consultations with a teacher advisory board, Pershey and the staff determined that the Tsongas Center would be "a cross between Old Sturbridge Village and the San Francisco Exploratorium, a cross between a hands-on history and a hands-on science museum." Students would "do history" or "do science." They would investigate important historical or scientific questions through hands-on activities using real objects to re-create a process of invention, construction, production, or social or economic change that was central to the Industrial Revolution. The hands-on activities would be linked closely to investigations of the "real thing"—historic structures and resources in the city.

The content to be learned—concepts, facts, and issues—had to be embedded in the hands-on process itself, as well as in other interpretive media. The learning experiences had to be fun for kids and very different from what a teacher could do in the classroom, in order to justify the cost of the trip. To stay on the cutting edge and to keep teachers coming back, center staff expected to develop five hands-on workshops initially but then to rework each of the workshops every five years.

The original timetable called for completing the Boott Mills and the Tsongas Center program by the fall of 1989, slightly more than a year after the staff was hired! Fortunately, delays in construction and exhibit development moved opening day for the Tsongas Industrial History Center to October, 1991, giving the staff the opportunity to shape both the design of the Center spaces and to pilot-test activities with teachers and students. But legislators, teachers, and National Park leaders needed some evidence that the center would be successful. The staff responded by obtaining National Science Foundation grants for summer teacher institutes (giving the center national visibility and creating long-lasting relationships with local teachers as well). Staff also worked with park staff to revise the outreach programs and develop new resource-based programs that would be part of the Tsongas Center experience.

The staff developed the new programs on several bedrock educational principles:

"The center's success rested on the strong foundation of LISTENING to teachers and watching how students learn in a museum setting. We wanted to create a place where learning was energetic, full of meaning, and, at the same time, enjoyable. We tried whenever possible to make the logistical details (scheduling, bus parking, lunches) go smoothly so that students and teachers could focus on learning." **Ed Pershey, Director**

"As a middle-school science and history teacher, I've served on the Tsongas Center Educator Advisory Board since before the center opened. All of us happily spend our own time serving on the Advisory Board because we know that the center staff listen seriously to our advice and act on it. The center's programs meet teacher needs and engage kids. Teachers matter to the center."

Harold Crowley, Quincy, Massachusetts, Public Schools

- Programs would be organized by historical themes common to both park goals and to school curricula.
- Tsongas Center programs would include a higher proportion of hands-on activity than any other area museum education program. Each thematic program would include a 90-minute, highly engaging and educationally informative experience paired with a 90-minute investigation of park resources relevant to the theme.
- Teachers would be partners in learning through (a) membership on a standing Teacher Advisory Board, (b) ad hoc advisory committees assisting in program development, (c) participation with their students during the pilot phase of each program, and (d) participation in teacher workshops and institutes. Institute products included pre/post field activities the center could share with other teachers.

The center would provide curb-to-curb staffing for school groups. The Tsongas Center could afford to provide this intensity of staffing because of the subsidies provided by the park and university.

The programs would tell the story of Lowell's national significance and also model ways that teachers could use the resources of their own communities to interpret the industrial history of their own towns.

Every program would be connected to the schools' curricula through pre/post field materials carefully created on the principle that teachers would use a few activities built around study prints, historical sources, and a concise content background essay. Separate packets for each park theme would make clear the significance of Lowell. Once teachers had utilized the packet and visited the park and Tsongas Center with their students, they would be ready to add new materials and activities to their units of study.

This phase of the partnership focused intensely on planning and implementing workshops and institutes for teachers, hands-on activities for children, and special events for students and families. Led by Director Ed Pershey, everyone had immense energy and creativity ("an idea a minute") and, to some extent, everyone managed, everyone innovated, and everyone helped with grant writing. Staff roles were often dictated by the tasks that had to be accomplished at a given time and by the personal talents of the individuals rather than by the position descriptions of Director, School Liaison, Curriculum Specialist, or Administrative Assistant.

Money Matters

Grants from the National Science Foundation for intensive teacher institutes, as well as project grants from corporations, banks, and from the National Park Service, supplemented the \$250,000 annual appropriation from the state legislature and the park's staff and in-kind support. Between 1987 and 1992, the staff attracted \$1,000,000 in grants to launch the center's teacher workshops and institutes and to partially fund new programs. Although an "Executive Committee" of influential local officials was formed to help with fundraising, the committee was underutilized in this role and ceased to function soon after the center opened.

Funding from the university and park covered the core management positions and some operating costs, but the center needed to generate fee income to pay for part-time staff to supplement park ranger staffing. The partners agreed that each visiting school class would pay a fee for a "Tsongas Center" program (initially \$50 per class). The park would make the reservations, collect the fees, and transfer the funds to the university. The university, using revenue generated by fee income, would pay the wages of part-time "workshop leaders" hired to teach the hands-on workshops.

When it became apparent that schools in Lowell were not visiting the center and park, the staff of the center made a proposal to the Superintendent of the Lowell Public Schools that was enthusiastically accepted. The center would charge the Lowell Public Schools a lower fee, and the Lowell Public Schools would budget enough money each year to pay for the programs for every fourth-grade class to visit the park and the center as part of its curriculum. This decision recognized that the university, the park, and the Lowell Public Schools each had a stake in creating and sustaining high-quality, curriculum-linked programs that used Lowell as a classroom. The center recognized that the Lowell teachers and administrators were contributing in-kind services.

1991-1996: From Vision to Realities What would success look like? When we first envisioned the center, we thought we would be wildly successful if we served 15,000–20,000 students a year after being open for a few years. When we opened in the fall of 1991, we told reporters we would be pleased if we worked with 5,000 students that year. We never dreamed that we would have 17,000 visitors the first year, and work with nearly 11,000 more in classrooms and special events!

—Chrysandra Walter, Former Superintendent, Lowell National Historical Park, 2001



The center opened on October 15, 1991, by offering two workshops, each linked to a tour. Two additional workshops opened one month later. A fifth workshop opened the following March. Ten part-time workshop leaders were hired, most of whom worked 30 hours per week. On the park side, staffing included an Education District Supervisory Park Ranger, who supervised an operations ranger and four seasonal rangers, two of whom were subject-to-furlough positions. Together they constituted an Education District assigned to the center. Other rangers were assigned to an Interpretation District with a similar supervisory and line structure. The Interpretation District staffed park facilities, designed and implemented tours and interpretive programs (including some park programs for school groups not visiting the center), and coordinated special events. Although the director of the Tsongas Center generally coordinated the work of everyone assigned to the Center/Education District, university/center managers supervised staff hired by the university, and park supervisory rangers supervised rangers who reported to the Chief of Interpretation. Park staff participated in Interpretation District meetings as well as Tsongas Center staff meetings.



A logical division of roles between the center's teaching staff (including seasonal education rangers) and the interpretation rangers was to have interpretation rangers lead the resource investigation and to have university-hired "workshop leaders" and education rangers teach the hands-on workshops.

The center's immediate success was like having a tiger by the tail—exhilarating, exhausting, and stressful. Staff struggled to keep up and spent an amazing amount of time simply defining logistical procedures. The realities of day-to-day management and the scale of visitation required management staff to become more specialized in their roles. This, in turn, raised issues of whether a particular function should be performed by park or by university staff and led to redefinitions of positions.

What had been a cooperative, visionary enterprise now began to fracture a bit. Within the Tsongas Center group, university workshop leaders began comparing their work and benefits with their ranger counterparts. Rangers were full time with benefits but museum teachers were hired as part-time, grant-funded, non-benefit positions. Rangers had time for research and were expected to develop their programs, but museum teachers did not have the same amount of time to research, participate in training, or develop their programs. Rangers had more access to career training. Concurrently, as rangers assigned to the Center/Education District became more focused on school groups, some "we-they" issues began to crop up between the rangers in the Interpretation District and those in the Education District. Questions and issues included the following:

- When personnel difficulties arose between a Tsongas Center/university staff person and a ranger (as they did), what authority did the Center Director have over a Park Service person? And what authority did the park leadership have over Tsongas Center staff? When would the Dean and the Park Superintendent get involved, and how would they resolve issues?
- Would the Tsongas Center provide all education programs for visiting school groups, or would rangers continue to provide school tours that did not involve hands-on activities? Would all schools pay a fee for any educational program offered by the Park, or only schools that reserved a hands-on program at the Tsongas Center?
- How should the staffing of the Tsongas Center be portrayed on an organizational chart of the park and the university?
- In an era of shrinking budgets on both the park and university sides, what should the park budget pay for, and what should the university budget pay for?

Key Transitions

The transition from planning/innovation to management and operations was complicated by staff turnover in key positions. Park Superintendent Chrysandra Walter took a position in another region and soon became Deputy Regional Director of the Northeast Region. The Deputy Superintendent, Chief of Interpretation, and Education Specialist all left the park to take NPS promotions. The Curriculum Specialist on the Tsongas Center staff left to enroll in an Ed.D. program and eventually was hired by the NPS. Two years after the center opened, the Director of the Tsongas Center became ill for an extended period and subsequently

resigned. He was replaced by an interim director from the Graduate School of Education for one year, and then, when the national search for a new director did not succeed in the first year, for a second year.

With the departure of these founding staffers went much of the organizational leadership "glue" that had been the basis of informal decision-making. During a period of rapid growth and continued sorting out of roles, funding, and logistics, and in the absence of any more-formalized decision-making structures, middle managers found it difficult to resolve issues. The subtle divisions between the Interpretation District rangers and the Center/Education District widened, as did differences between the center's university and park staff members. Partnership structure issues of role and function were complicated by personality conflicts and differences in styles of planning and decision-making. The center's finances were confused, and expenses were beginning to outstrip income.

Between 1995 and 1996, as the search continued for a new director, the park and university renegotiated their cooperative agreement set to expire in 1996. One group of staff suggested that the solution to the various issues was to create more of an "arms-length" partnership in which the director of the center would more formally negotiate issues with the chief of interpretation and with the superintendent's office. Park staff assigned to the center would have more clearly defined and distinct roles from the university management team. Park leadership, however, argued that the park and university should work through the issues, retaining the integrated partnership structure, and regain the collegial relationship characteristic of the early years. The congressional budget stalemate that shut down the federal government in November and December of 1995 was a turning point. At first glance the shutdown supported the argument for an arms-length partnership structure. Because of the legally binding cooperative agreement, the center stayed open in a federal building using staff hired by the university (federal employees could not work). But on further analysis, because visiting school groups had no access to park exhibits and historic structures and the trolley could not run, the shutdown demonstrated the thorough interdependence of the partners.

The center staff and the partnership sustained themselves between 1992 and 1995 because:

- The center leadership was able to hire a corps of talented museum teachers who worked well with education rangers assigned to staff the center.
- Attendance increased significantly. Teachers loved the programs and brought their students year after year. Staff shared a common desire to see the center succeed, even though their different definitions of "success" sometimes led to conflicts.
- Former Superintendent Walter and other park staff moved to key positions in the Northeast Region, increasing the center's regional support and national visibility.
- Top park and university leadership would not let mid-management and front-line conflicts undermine the partnership. Don Pierson, who had become Dean of the Graduate School of Education, provided crucial continuity and commitment, appointed an interim director from the



School of Education faculty, and organized a national search committee for the new director. Niki Tsongas, wife of Senator Paul Tsongas, served on the search committee. Core financial support was sustained by the park, university, and the legislative delegation, who viewed the center as a significant achievement.

 Personnel changes occurred over time, so remaining staff sustained day-to-day management despite their conflicts.

This period in the center's history was one of "success stress" as the focus shifted from thinking about innovation to managing success. Management now required skills and attitudes different from innovation. The partners had not anticipated this kind of shift nor built in sufficient reserves of time and money to plan for staff transitions and to create a process for incorporating new staff into the "culture of partnership." Though the success of the center meant that the university and the park leadership sustained their full commitment to the partnership, the challenge was to "institutionalize" the partnership within both the park and the university organizational structures and to resolve the logistical issues that undermined collegial relationships with the staff.

1996-2001: Education Reform and Partnership Issues

Shortly after the government shutdown ended, Peter O'Connell, Director of Education at Old Sturbridge Village, accepted the position of Director of the Tsongas Industrial History Center. O'Connell, a former history teacher, experienced museum and teacher educator, grant-writer, and administrator, held a doctorate in adult and community education and had served as a consultant in the planning of the Tsongas Center in the mid-1980s. To strengthen the integration of the Tsongas Center within the Graduate School of Education, he was appointed as an assistant professor and expected to teach two graduate courses per year.

The Director's position and management authority was also clarified and strengthened within the park organizational structure.

- The Superintendent and Dean affirmed their commitment to a collegial decision-making structure.
- The center Director would report officially to the Dean of the Graduate School of Education and functionally to the Superintendent of Lowell National Historical Park.
- The Superintendent would convene regular partnership meetings with the Deputy Superintendent and Chief of Interpretation to review strategic plans and budgets and to discuss and resolve partnership issues.
- The center Director would have status equal to the Chief of Interpretation and supervise all staff assigned to work in the Tsongas Center, including functional supervision of NPS staff.
- The Director would meet regularly with the Chief of Interpretation, develop annual goals for the Education Branch Chief and NPS staff assigned to the center, draft or review the annual performance reviews for signature by the Chief of Interpretation and Education, and provide on-site supervision of NPS staff.

This structure was intended to create a unified and balanced Tsongas Center management team of two Supervisory Rangers (grade 12 and grade 11) and

the School Liaison and Museum Education Specialist. In addition, the Superintendent, recognizing that the park needed to be communicating with schools with a single voice, agreed that all programs for schools would conform to the NPS requirements of a curriculum-based program (as described in Module 270 of the NPS Interpretive Development Program) and be coordinated through the Tsongas Center management group.

The Supervisory Park Ranger for Education gracefully accepted supervision from the Director of the Tsongas Center, and the five NPS staff she supervised also accepted the arrangement. She functioned as a critical member of the management team, but she was placed in a difficult position with respect to her formal supervisor, the Chief of Education and Visitor Services, and to some of her Interpretation colleagues. The new, integrated center management team moved quickly to resolve frictions. Using a combination of substantially increased grant support and increased fees generated from schools, three new university full-time "project assistant" positions with full benefits were created equivalent to the four full-time front-line ranger positions, ensuring balance at both the top and mid-management levels. The wages of the part-time university museum teachers were aligned with those of part-time NPS seasonal rangers.

New and Continuing Challenges

With these issues resolved and a clear charge from the Superintendent and Dean, center staff responded to major shifts in school curriculum. State guidelines defined the U.S. history content to be taught in specific grades, which had the effect of shifting the center's audience from fourth and fifth grades to third and eighth grades. Within a six-month period, center staff re-wrote all curriculum guides to demonstrate how the programs met new history, English, and science standards. They also created a new program for third graders, a new living history in-school program to accompany it, and teacher workshops to promote the program. Center management staff participated in curriculum committees of the Lowell Public Schools and arranged for all eighth graders to visit Lowell National Historical Park to explore Industrial Revolution themes and all ninth graders to investigate the effects of industrialization and urbanization on the watershed. State funds were secured to offer intensive summer institutes for third- and eighth-grade teachers. By the end of 1999, the center was serving 50% more students and teachers than it had in 1996. The center had been recognized for excellence by the National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Education ("exemplary program") and by the Northeast Region of the National Park Service (Education Partnership Award and Interpretive Services Awards).

Resolving Issues

But difficulties persisted between the Education and Interpretation functions and staff groups within the larger Division of Education and Visitor Services. In an effort to resolve the friction, in 2000, the park invited an NPS Interpretive Operations Review team for a three-day site visit. The committee included a regional representative, a park superintendent, a chief of interpretation, and the director of an educational partnership at another park. The review team met with park leadership, divisional staff,

and Tsongas Center team members to review programs, structure, issues, and decision-making. They suggested that a variety of problems contributed to the difficulties:

- The broad vision for Lowell as a model of interpretive programming had become unclear to many people. Though the park and its partners had had great success in some areas, the lack of a long-term comprehensive vision resulted in decisions that seemed disparate and fragmentary.
- "A troubling disconnect" among work groups existed within the Interpretation District responsible for interpretation, education, and special events, suggesting that the division lacked cohesion and a broad vision for interpretive programming for non-school audiences.
- There was a lack of collaboration between the Chief of Education and Visitor Services and university staff.
- A climate existed in which "the smallest lapse in communication makes it nearly impossible to resolve minor problems."
- NPS interpretive staff were confused about supervisory responsibilities.

The report from the review team noted that broadening [the park] vision to include interpretation and education as one operation will require a collaborative approach to management. And perhaps the most important skill that the Chief [of Interpretation] must possess is the ability to work with teams of people to get things accomplished. In the non-traditional world of partnerships, complete autonomy is not realistic, and decisions cannot be made in a vacuum. However, collaboration does not imply consensus. [Park] employees need to be valued, their expertise respected; they should be given an opportunity to contribute ideas or provide feedback but should not expect to have control ... Be clear about the level of autonomy staff have and who will be held accountable for implementing decisions that are made by managers. The park should take a broad look at the entire realm of visitor services and reconnect the pieces of the operation that should not be operating in separate worlds.

The recommendations of the review team coincided with the arrival of new Superintendent Pat McCrary. Superintendent McCrary appointed a staff committee to respond to the recommendations made by the review team and re-stated the park's commitment to the Tsongas Center as a signature park program and as a model of an educational partnership for the National Park Service. He incorporated the existing partnership structure in the renewal of the cooperative agreement for 2001-2006. Shortly after he arrived, the Chief of Education and Visitor Services accepted another NPS position, and the superintendent invited the Director of the Tsongas Center to participate in the interviews to hire a new Chief of Interpretation. All candidates were briefed fully about the structure of the partnership and the center Director's functional supervision of NPS staff assigned to the center and asked if they had reservations that would prevent them from successfully partnering with the university in this structure.

A new Chief of Education and Visitor Services was hired in December 2001 and began to rebuild the interpretive vision.

• The Division was renamed the Division of Interpretation and Education to reaffirm that it was one function.

"There is no way the park alone could have the impact on school visitors in the region that the center does—creating future advocates of the park, its mission, and the telling of its stories. But to do so, it remains critical that the center programs be clearly recognized as park programs, that the center remain fully integrated with park programming and planning, and that every student goes home from a center program saying 'I enjoyed my visit to Lowell National Historical Park today.' This integration has been reinvigorated, and Tsongas Center teachers remain careful to recognize the park and its resources in every program they conduct." Jim Corless, Chief of Interpretation

and Education, 2003

- The Chief and the Director of the Tsongas Center began to meet regularly and to agree on the division of roles and functions.
- The Division embarked on a strategic planning process to create a larger vision that built on the early vision and successes of the park as a partnership park.
- The park allocated approximately 3,000 square feet of additional space in the Boott Mills to house the center's growing grade-3 programming.
- A budgeting plan was developed to anticipate park budget shortfalls. The plan defined current ranger staffing at the TIHC and the required funding as part of the park's "core" Interpretation and Education divisional staffing.
- The park and center's web pages were re-designed so external visitors navigate seamlessly between them.

Money Matters

In this period, the park and the university sustained at least level funding for the center. This commitment required them to make difficult budget cuts in other areas. The park's contribution, valued at approximately \$950,000, included the salaries and benefits of an Education Branch Chief, Supervisory Park Ranger and four FTE ranger positions, space and associated utilities and support services (custodial, maintenance projects, protection), reservations and fee collection services, computers and technical support, the use of vans to present in-school programs, and a small supplies and materials budget. Although the number of park FTE remained level, the cost of the positions increased. The university increased its commitment beyond the \$250,000 originally budgeted by picking up the cost of the benefits for the four original positions. In return for relatively stable investments of partner funds, center productivity (numbers of teachers and students served) nearly doubled in the five years as a result of increased revenue generated from fees and grants.

The Future: Strengthening **Financial** and Center **Partnerships**

In contrast to the previous five years that focused on expansion and the resolution of partnership and management issues, the Tsongas Center's future success will be measured by the extent to which it sustains, deepens, and documents effective collaborative programs with schools, increases Sustainability and diversifies its funding streams, reaches a national audience of teachers and students through effective use of technology, plans for succession in top leadership positions, and aligns its strategic priorities with those of the park, the National Park Service, and the university.



Responding to Changes in School Curricula and Finances

Sustaining the center's flexibility and readiness to respond to changes in schools has been critical to the center's success. Where the schools, the university, and the Tsongas Center have developed strong collaborations, the schools will be likely to sustain them. Schools continue to change in response to the imperatives of federal and state legislative mandates, so Tsongas Center staff will need to sustain and diversify outreach programs to include science and English teachers as well as history teachers.

A large number of teachers will retire in the next five years, creating the opportunity and need for the center to offer workshops for pre-service

curriculum teams and provide workshops for teachers. We need more partners like the Tsongas Center." Schools

"The staff of the Tsongas Center have credibility with Lowell teachers and administrators because they know what they are doing. They know how to engage urban children and young people in hands-on learning that builds their skills in reading and writing and leads to more powerful thinking in their classrooms. They know how to develop history, language arts, and science curriculum materials teachers can use. They work with us on our

Karla Brooks Baehr, **Superintendent, Lowell Public**

teachers and new teachers in schools. New licensure requirements present opportunities for the Tsongas Center to engage more teachers in history seminars, workshops, and institutes. We will need to concentrate on the development of professional service programs for principals and superintendents as well. Schools are increasingly under pressure to document that programs produce student learning, so the center will need to spend time and funding on more formal research studies, an activity particularly appropriate for a university-affiliated center.

Building on the curriculum materials, teacher workshops, hands-on activities, and historical role-playing programs developed over the past ten years and utilizing the university's capacity in distance-learning technologies, the center can now begin work to reach out to a national audience of teachers and students to tell the park's industrial history stories.

Adequate Financial Support

The Tsongas Center has faced an unusual set of financial pressures at the beginning of the 21St century. The national economy declined, the park and the university have experienced 25-35% budget reductions, funding for schools was cut, gas prices and bus expenses escalated, and operating expenses increased. The lessons are clear—the center needs to reduce operating expenses, increase its staff's capacity to seek and administer grants, work with the park and the university to attract large gifts from individuals, corporations, and foundations, and build a strong financial reserve.

Plan for Changes in Leadership

The success of the partnership has been due in no small measure to the fact that the chancellor of UMass Lowell has held his position since before the center was opened, as has the dean of the Graduate School of Education. Chrysandra Walter has been either the superintendent of the park or the deputy director of the Northeast Region. The park and university management staff of the Tsongas Center have remained virtually unchanged for eight years. In the next three to five years, the center, park, and university will experience significant leadership change. The partners need to develop a process by which successor leaders will be introduced to the partnership culture and recruited as active supporters of the partnership programs. This case study will be a valuable tool in such an effort.

Conclusion

Innovative organizations move toward the edges of their organizations by constantly seeking new and better ways to achieve their missions. The Tsongas Center was formed at the cutting edges of its respective parent organizations, but, increasingly, it has become more central to the strategic vision of the parent organizations. In the past five years, the center has hosted conferences in collaboration with university faculty, written grants, served as a field site for college history, science, engineering, and literature students, and functioned as a teacher training laboratory. But as the university moves aggressively to use distance-learning technologies to reach new audiences, re-examines the university's role in contributing to a sustainable economy and to a high-quality educational, social, and

"Many parks have educational partners, but none are as strong and successful as the partnership between UMass **Lowell and Lowell National** Historical Park. The commitment and belief in the value of the programs offered by the center from the very highest ranks from both the park and university keep the center a priority for both partners. And certainly we could not be successful in serving the teachers and students in the **Lowell Public Schools if the** Superintendent of Schools and the School Committee didn't see the value in both cost and educational benefit." Pat McCrary, Superintendent, Lowell National Historical Park, 2003)

cultural life in the region, the center will need to keep pace. It can be a rapid dissemination tool in linking the university to K-12 educators in the region and provide historical perspectives on modern issues.

Like other national parks, Lowell National Historical Park faces the challenges of reducing its operating budget as inflation outstrips base budget increases, sustaining its role as a force in community revitalization through preservation, and sustaining its high-quality education and interpretation programs. As the park re-examines how best to accomplish its work through partnerships, Friends-Group fundraising, and expanded collaboration with the university, the Tsongas Center can provide organizational links and fundraising expertise.

Nationally, as the NPS has reaffirmed its educational mission and sought ways to expand educational partnerships, the Tsongas Center has expanded its services as a demonstration site for park-partner groups, made presentations on educational trends in schools, visited other parks, and will soon co-offer a distance-learning course on school-based strategic educational planning. The NPS, in turn, provides the center credibility and avenues for outreach to national audiences as well as to national funding sources.

The Tsongas Center has evolved and changed significantly since it opened in 1991, and must continue to change as its parent organizations change. It will be able to do so, in part because partnerships provide flexibility by which the parent organizations can respond quickly to change and then gradually to incorporate the innovations into the parent cultures.



New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (NEBE) New Bedford Whaling Museum

Jennifer Gonsalves (NEBE)
Lee Heald (New Bedford Whaling Museum)
John Piltzecker (NEBE)



Portraits of a Port Teacher Institute

Overview: The Park and the Museum New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park was established in 1996 to commemorate the whaling industry and its influence on the economic, social, and environmental history of the United States. The park encompasses a 34-acre National Historic Landmark District with over 70 buildings—representing approximately 1/3 of the city of New Bedford's downtown area. Federal property ownership within the park is minimal. Partnerships are therefore paramount in carrying out the park's mission.

In addition to the area within the park's boundary, the law establishing the park authorizes the National Park Service to provide assistance at several key whaling and maritime sites outside of its boundary, including the Rotch-Jones-Duff House and Garden Museum, the Schooner *Ernestina*, and the Inupiat Heritage Center, the park's most geographically distant partner, located in Barrow, Alaska.

Established in 1903, the New Bedford Whaling Museum is a nonprofit institution located within the boundaries of the historical park. In addition to being the largest physical plant within the park, the museum, accredited by the American Association of Museums (AAM), holds the world's largest American whaling collection. As such, it is the park's principal collecting institution and is key to interpreting the primary themes of the park. Highlights of the museum collection include a half-scale replica of the whaling bark *Lagoda*, a re-creation of a whale ship foc's'le, a 66-foot blue whale skeleton, and the Kendall Institute, a scholarly research facility. The museum's collection embraces over 500 whaling implements; 2,000 paintings, prints and drawings; 35,000 original photographs and negatives; 2,000 scrimshaw items and carvings; thousands of ethnographic objects; hundreds of ship models; and an extensive collection of ships' log books.

This case study will examine the relationship between New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park—a small park still in its infancy, with an annual budget of \$600,000, a permanent staff of six, a small visitor center, and no museum collections—and the New Bedford Whaling Museum—a 100-year-old institution with an operating budget of over \$3 million, a staff of over 50 people, vast collections, and a long tradition of education and public programming. The park's enabling legislation states that a purpose of the park is to "collaborate with the city of New Bedford and with associated historical, cultural, and preservation organizations to further the purposes of the park." Congress left the "how" of collaboration up to park managers.

Not long ago at a public event, Anne Brengle, the Executive Director of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, was introducing Park Superintendent John Piltzecker to a visiting dignitary from the Azores, Portugal. As she

"New Bedford Whaling **National Historical Park helps** to preserve, protect, and interpret certain districts, structures, and artifacts located in New Bedford, Massachusetts, that are associated with the history of whaling and related social, economic and environmental themes for the benefit and inspiration of this and future generations. These efforts will be undertaken in partnerships with the City of New Bedford, local and regional institutions, and the **Inupiat Heritage Center in** Barrow, Alaska."

A General Management Plan for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, 2001 The challenge

struggled with a way to succinctly describe the role of the National Park Service and the relationship between the park and museum, a flash of understanding finally came across the visitor's face. "I see," he said, "it's a concept."

A Concept
within
Larger
Context:
The City
of New
Bedford

A case study about the park and the museum cannot be told without setting the larger context in which the two partners operate. New Bedford is an urban seaport located on the south coast of Massachusetts, with a population of nearly 100,000, making it the seventh largest city in the Commonwealth. Its primarily blue-collar, working-class population reflects those who first came to work in the city's whaling industry, those who came when whaling was in decline to work in the city's textile mills and factories, and those who came more recently to build commercial fishing and scalloping industries that have become some of the most lucrative in the nation. The population is diverse, including significant Black and Hispanic communities as well as other well-defined ethnic groups, including Azorean and Madeiran Portuguese, Cape Verdean, West Indian, French Canadian and Norwegian (in neighboring Fairhaven). Southeastern Massachusetts is home to many members of the federally recognized Wampanoag Tribe of Gay Head (Aquinnah).

"The challenges for us today are to identify what the New **Bedford Whaling Museum can** be in the future and to reconcile this with our regional history role. We must define how best to be a key player in the international museum community as well as in a local community that is diverse and multi-cultural. We must create a compelling visitor experience in all of our activities and make our unparalleled collections accessible worldwide. We should serve as a forum for the exploration of cultural and environmental issues. And last—as we have done over the past 100 years—we must never let short-term challenges prevent our taking advantage of longterm opportunities."

Anne B. Brengle, Executive Director

Beginnings of the Whaling Museum: Preserving the Legacy

The parent organization of the New Bedford Whaling Museum, the Old Dartmouth Historical Society, was founded in 1903 to preserve the rapidly disappearing history of whaling. The Old Dartmouth quickly established itself as one of the foremost historical societies of the day. At the time, this type of institution generally focused inward on the growth, care, and study of its own collection and topics that stimulated the intellectual curiosity of its own membership. The fact that Old Dartmouth's charter members undertook operating a public museum as its earliest activity was quite advanced.

The Old Dartmouth made great strides in the professional development of a formal museum. At the 1915 annual meeting, it was announced that Emily Bourne would finance the building of a whaling museum in memory of her father, whaling merchant Jonathan Bourne, Jr. The President of the Board stated, "With Miss Bourne's gift completed, the museum will become a unique institution, one of the most interesting museums in the country. Now we are not going to settle down into a dull and musty antiquarian society, we are going to be a live issue in the history of New Bedford!"

The 1930s were very much a time of transition for the museum. The trustees began to plan for a gallery to exhibit materials specifically related to the whaling industry. Museum attendance grew from about 4,000 to 10,000, with 90% of visitors coming from outside the city. In 1933, the trustees felt that collections should be by choice, not by accumulation, that the stimulation of local history for school-age children should be broadened, and that the museum structure should be enlarged.

The museum ushered in a new era of professionalism with the appointment of the first professional director in 1967. This was an era of steady growth in the physical plant and in the collections, and increased access

of the collections to the community. From 1973-1982, the docent program and Volunteer Council were formally organized. The museum was expanded, and a 250-seat theater was built.

A strategic plan undertaken in 1993 and the hiring of the current director, Anne Brengle, signaled a clear mandate to advance the institution in physical plant, programmatic activities, collections care and community outreach. In 2002, the museum successfully concluded its "Lighting the Way" capital campaign, raising \$12 million dollars. The largest expansion in its history included a new wing with a lobby gallery, family-oriented exhibitions, and a welcoming, multi-purpose entrance plaza. In the past decade, the museum promoted increased recognition of the importance of the city's ethnic heritage and community participation, enjoyed a major expansion of its collections through the gift of the entire collection of the Kendall Whaling Museum in October 2001, and played a leading role in the establishment of the New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park.

Beginnings of the Park

The seed for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park was planted in spring of 1988 when more than 100 interested citizens attended a meeting to entertain the possibility of pursuing a Heritage *State* (italicized for emphasis) Park designation for New Bedford. After two years of exploring possible options, the committee decided, in light of a fiscal crisis at the state level, that this designation was no longer feasible and focused its energy on investigating a national park designation.

Involving the Community

The New Bedford Whaling Museum was one of many local cultural organizations that, in the early 1990s, worked with the Massachusetts congressional delegation to bring the National Park Service to New Bedford, ultimately resulting in a Special Resource Study (1991) and the establishment of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park (1996). The partnership between the park and museum has its roots in the park's enabling legislation, which states that a purpose of the park is to "collaborate with the city of New Bedford and with associated historical, cultural, and preservation organizations to further the purposes of the park." As a result, this park is considered a partnership park both within the context of the National Park Service and the local community.

In 1990, Congress directed the National Park Service to undertake a Special Resources Study to look at the national significance, suitability, and feasibility of an NPS site in New Bedford. That study stated: "If the story of whaling, with the human themes that are rightfully embraced within it, is to be preserved anywhere, New Bedford is the most logical and most suitable location to do it." Ultimately, it was the existence of organizations that were willing and able to partner with the National Park Service that proved to be the driving force behind the congressional support of the project.

In 1994, community leaders testified before Congress advocating for a national park. Anne Brengle, then Director of the Rotch-Jones-Duff House

"The National Park Service recognizes that New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park is a source of community identity and pride and that positive, local participation in support of the park will yield success. New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park fosters a climate in which community initiatives and collaborations are encouraged."

A General Management Plan for New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park, 2001 and Garden Museum, spoke in support of the designation and acknowledged the need for collaboration: "The partnership organizations continue to recognize that they must form alliances and partnerships, not only among themselves, but with city government, business, transportation, and tourism professionals who can help us realize this area's unique appeal and potential. What better enhancement and endorsement of these efforts than to have them recognized, protected, and further advanced by the creation of a New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park?"

The establishment of the park in 1996 was heralded by a dedication of the park visitor center, a gala reception at the whaling museum, and performance of a symphony composed for the event and enjoyed by over 2,000 people at a downtown theater. What was not lost on the National Park Service representatives present that day was that it would take as much, if not more work, to take the partnership from a celebratory piece of legislation to a meaningful reality.

On the heels of this celebration, the National Park Service began to chart a course for the park's future through the development of several planning documents, including a general management plan. For three years, federal, state and municipal agencies, nonprofit institutions, community organizations and interested citizens participated in a public process. Most became involved in a group known as the *Partners in the Park*—neither formal nor advisory, but joining together on a regular basis to discuss issues of mutual concern and interest.

Building the Framework: The Growth of the Plan

The first strategic choice in the development of the park's management plan was achieving consensus around the park's interpretive themes. The park planning process took place in an environment in which long-standing institutions had strong material culture collections as well as their own mission statements, interpretive themes and strategic plans. In developing the park's interpretive statements, the National Park Service clearly refereed and acknowledged the work of other institutions, providing critical content alignment as a point of departure for future programming.

The second strategic choice, and one which helped to solidify emerging partnerships, resulted from the public scoping process. The thoroughness of the National Park Service in eliciting community input and feedback offered a new vision of connecting with audiences. There was clearly the sense that having been asked for their opinions, community members felt that the National Park Service would more fully represent the diverse strands of the whaling story—including the contributions of African Americans, Cape Verdeans, Native Americans and Portuguese to the industry—than had been represented in the past. The support of community leaders was strong.

Formal comments on the National Park Service's preferred management alternative for the park are illustrated in excerpts from some of the letters received:



We support this option, which proposes to share stewardship of the park's resources with park partners and which will amplify the strengths of the partners. We also support the balanced partnership of public and private participation in preserving the rich cultural history of New Bedford.

—Anne Brengle, Executive Director, New Bedford Whaling Museum

My administration supports this option because it shares the responsibility of resource stewardship among park partners, continuing the long-standing tradition of public/private partnership in New Bedford.

-Frederick M. Kalisz, Jr., Mayor, City of New Bedford

The resource pool of energy and social capital built in this fashion [public/ private partnerships] is generally far more effective than individual, non-synchronous contributions of time, effort and money.

—David Kennedy, Planner for the City of New Bedford

The Record of Decision for the management plan was signed in 2001. The management planning process provided an opportunity and a framework for the new partners to get to know one another, to discuss each other's goals and capacity to carry them out. The whaling museum had a longstanding relationship in the community, and the National Park Service was very much the "new kid on the block." The true meaning of "sharing responsibility" for effective programming is somewhat open-ended and still evolving.

From Idea to Implementation: The Growth of the Partnership

Both the park's General Management Plan (June 2001) and the Whaling Museum's Strategic Plan (2002-2012) committed the partners to collaboration across a number of functions, including development of interpretive and educational programming, special events, marketing programs, access to museum collections, and joint funding approaches. The park-museum partnership, formalized through a cooperative agreement in 1998, also benefited from a personal relationship established prior to the park's designation. The whaling museum's Director of Programs, Lee Heald, and the park's newly appointed Superintendent, John Piltzecker, had worked together on collaborative education programs at Boston National Historical Park. This earlier collaboration would serve as an important model for the New Bedford partnership. The New Bedford Whaling Museum and the National Park Service partnership that has grown out of these beginnings is based on four components: location, capacity, collaboration, and empowerment.

Location

Both the park and the whaling museum have developed goals with a "sense of place" in mind. Contemporary New Bedford—its buildings and streetscapes, and its people—serve as a canvas on which the culture and industry of whaling is painted. And then there is the most obvious benefit of location—the park visitor center is located just one block from the whaling museum, providing an environment where collaborative programs can evolve in a campus-like setting.

Capacity

The partnership between the park and the whaling museum is based on the ability to increase capacity to carry out the mission of both institutions and to serve the interests of constituents and stake holders. For example, the whaling museum, having a long history of curriculum-based education programs and strong staff expertise, has invited the park to take an active role in its teacher training and educational publications initiatives. And while the park does not yet have the capacity to conduct many formal education programs for students, it has capitalized on being part of a national system by bringing the funds and technical expertise for the development of interpretive media, including an orientation movie which is shown in the theater of the whaling museum and has been incorporated in the museum's school programs.

Collaboration

In any successful collaboration, one or more groups or individuals agree to work together to accomplish something greater than could be accomplished working alone. Everyone brings something to the table, though not necessarily the same thing. As the organizational charts for the park and the museum illustrate, there are opportunities for staff from different disciplines and layers within the operation to interact. To bring interaction to the higher level of collaboration requires trust, shared vision, and ongoing dialogue at all levels. Building these personal relationships has been key to success.

Empowerment

It is fortuitous that the establishment of the park coincided with a period of re-invention and growth for the whaling museum. Both were in a position to empower one another. The whaling museum provided skills and expertise vital to the National Park Service in its start-up phase and throughout the public process leading to the park's General Management Plan. Both the park and the museum worked together to empower smaller community groups to collaborate on public programs, publications, and educational services.

Strategic Choices for Strategic Advantages

Throughout the park's start-up phase—and it should be noted that the park has not yet fully moved beyond its start-up—it has been important to present the park's partnerships publicly. It has been necessary to choose partnerships that represent the community through exhibits and events.

The Partnership's Public Face

Choosing which partnership programs and events to support with a limited budget and staff was especially challenging for park staff in the first years of the park's operation. One of the first requests was for \$17,000 to support the dedication symphony concert for the gala "opening" of the national historical park. And this did not include the price of the tickets for National Park Service guests. Requests followed for everything from telephone systems and furnace repair to "corporate sponsorship" of major events that would happen whether the park existed or not.

To manage these requests, and to account for the matching requirements stipulated in the park's legislation—four non-federal dollars for every federal dollar spent through cooperative agreements—the park adopted the Collaborative



Park Resources Program (CPR). Park management understood that it was a "pay to play" situation, that a portion of operating budget would need to be set aside to foster collaboration, that organizations with fewer resources were worthy of a seat at the table, and that the NPS would need to work hard to change the mindset from an "NPS grant" to a true collaborative partnership. This is the primary reason that the word "assistance" does not appear in the title.

The CPR process was kept deliberately user-friendly—a helpful suggestion by the museum. A one-page double-sided application, accompanied by a one-page cover sheet that describes the program's objectives, invites proposals "which will substantially involve the park, and assist the park in fulfilling its legislative mandates through partnerships." In the "How to submit a proposal" section, general parameters as well as typical funding levels were outlined:

- Proposals may be submitted by: nonprofit organizations; educational
 institutions; federally recognized tribes; state and municipal governments.
 Projects must take place within the boundaries of New Bedford Whaling
 National Historical Park or at sites specifically named in the park's
 enabling legislation.
- Collaborative partnerships are strongly encouraged. Outreach projects beyond the park's boundaries will be considered where there is substantial opportunity for increasing public understanding and appreciation for the park or the National Park Service. Typically, CPR funding will not exceed \$2,000 per project.
- Additionally, all project proposals must:
 - Demonstrate an active and visible role for the National Park Service in New Bedford
 - —Support park themes and management objectives
 - —Assist the park in preserving and interpreting park themes and resources through partnerships
- Additional consideration will be given to those projects involving more than
 one institutional partner. All projects must fit within the scope of the park's
 mission as described in detail in the park's General Management Plan.

It may seem odd to some of the larger NPS areas or regional offices that so much effort would go into requests for as little as \$2,000, but the park has found that with its limited budget and no end of good ideas from prospective partners, many small partnership projects have had a great impact. They truly helped the park staff test and pilot programs that would serve as the basis for future development. Projects requiring larger amounts of funding are part of the park's annual program funding requests, and the park has been successful in receiving funds through the *Parks as Classrooms*®, *Ethnography*, and *Challenge Cost Share* programs.

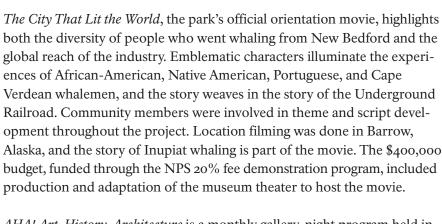
Just as it was important for the park to put some framework on what it would fund, it was just as important to be clear on what it would not fund. As stated in the CPR application cover sheet, the park will not fund:

- Staff salaries (other than project-related) or capital campaigns
- Construction projects which would be considered federal undertakings by the State Historic Preservation Office
- The acquisition of property or equipment

The Whaling Museum has been especially instrumental in helping the park reach out to small community-based organizations that lack nonprofit status. The museum has served as a responsible fiscal agent and benefited, along with the park, in many projects small in scale but of great resonance to the community. Collaborations summarized below include those of the park and museum and those with community groups. An important, long-standing educational collaboration, *Portraits of a Port*, is reviewed in detail.

Park and Museum Collaborations

The park and the whaling museum have worked on projects that have helped show the community that both institutions are serious about interpreting the diversity of the whaling industry, that have shown visitors aspects of the whaling story that they would not previously have seen, and that have involved individuals from the community who can help interpret stories and inform research and educational programming. Three examples of projects that helped to shape education programs, as well as teacher training, are included. The Faces of Whaling oral history project grew out of a public program held at the whaling museum. It identified individuals and places representing the diversity of cultures in the whaling industry, collected oral history interviews, and archived them. Public programs were held and an exhibition was created. The interviews, photographs, and videos included interviews with New Bedford's last known whaleman (who died at the age of 103 shortly after the first phase of the project ended), and Faces of Whaling was designated a "Local Legacies" project by the Library of Congress. The project was funded by \$33,000 in NPS Ethnography Program funds. The Whaling Museum took the lead in hosting public events and archiving oral history transcripts. The park and museum worked jointly to involve community groups.



AHA! Art, History, Architecture is a monthly gallery-night program held in and around the park. More than 15 venues highlight the art, history, architecture, and ethnic heritage of the region. The park visitor center and the whaling museum serve as the hubs for information and programming. Thursday Evenings in the Park and Maritime Heritage Days invite the local community to visit the park throughout the summer to enjoy programs highlighting Cape Verdean, Native American, Madeiran and Azorean Portuguese music and dance, net mending, scrimshaw, blacksmithing, and sailmaking. The park contributes approximately \$2,000 in funds for the AHA!, Thursday evening and Saturday programs. The park's financial support for AHA! is through the CPR program. The park also provides office



space for a program coordinator hired through grant funding. The overall project budget is approximately \$60,000. Both the park and museum participate in steering, programming, fundraising, and marketing committees.

These individual projects—and others—have had a major impact in informing the development and implementation of educational programming. Connections made with members of the community who are willing to share their history, heritage, and talents have been incorporated into *Portraits of a Port*, a summer institute for teachers that includes related educational materials.

Community Collaborations

Below, two community collaborations illustrate the empowerment of the community in the unique setting of the New Bedford partnerships. The first is more recent, and the second began during the process of the park's creation.

The Azorean Boatbuilding Project was a community initiative to construct two whaleboats at the park on the grounds of the whaling museum. The initial project required a contribution of approximately \$2,500 in park funds through the park's CPR program. Funded in part by the government of Portugal and spearheaded by a community organization, the project brought skilled craftsmen from the Azores to construct boats identical to those used by whalemen off the Azores. Throughout, the public was invited to view the progress of the boatbuilders and community participants. The success of the program has led to a grant from the United States Department of Agriculture for \$10,000 to produce an exhibit and three USDA-sponsored cultural exchange trips to the Azores by park and museum staff.

Portraits of a Port was created to meet the emerging need of teachers who were living in the world of shifting curriculum content. The Massachusetts Department of Education (DOE) requested proposals from organizations interested in offering Summer Content Teacher Institutes. The DOE required that the institutes focus on targeted grades, and mandated that institutes address specific content and teaching methodology within the newly ratified curriculum frameworks.

The initial lead partners were the Schooner *Ernestina* Commission and the Whaling Museum in concert with other nonprofit organizations involved in the interpretation of the historic district. The proposal was submitted in the fall of 1996 for implementation in 1997. In effect, this program predated the existence of New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park. As the park came on line with staff and new research from the management study, the teacher institute provided them a ready forum to benefit from these new resources.

In the early years, the DOE provided technical support, a structure for service delivery, and qualitative and quantitative evaluation. In the first round of funding, nonprofits could be the grant recipient. In subsequent years, the grant was made to the school system and subcontracted to the museum partner.

The initiation of the *Portraits of a Port* Institute marked the first time that several of the smaller community-based partners—many of whom had been identified through the park planning process—had been substantially involved with school partners and as content providers for teachers. The project directors from the Whaling Museum and Schooner *Ernestina* had designed an outline based on major themes in New Bedford's history: the whaling industry, the textile industry, the fishing industry, and contemporary New Bedford, with high involvement in historic preservation and cultural tourism.

The Institute has gone through several designs, but the signature components have remained constant. Participants have direct experience with the places where history really happened, direct contact with people who are researching and interpreting history today, and clear awareness of the resources available in New Bedford to support the teaching of history in the classroom. The presenters, representatives of local cultural groups, expressed some anxiety that they were not professional historians. Over time, however, the involvement of local researchers who are connected to the cultures they represent and available as local resources for the teachers has been one of the strengths of the program.

Year I was a success in terms of teacher learning, growth of collaborative opportunities, and a new experience for most of the partners. It was one of the first collaborative ventures of the Whaling Museum in the educational arena, and the community feedback was supportive of continuing. The organizations found out what they had in common and discovered the power of working together.

On the heady success of the first year, partners moved forward very quickly—too quickly, as it turned out —without organizational structures in place and an understanding of the individual organizations' goals. In year 2, the institute was lengthened to three weeks to include new ideas and structural variations in the daily schedule. But, good faith alone was not enough; questions arose about who was in charge and how decisions were made.

In a related effort to look at the school-based context of these teachers and available curriculum resources, the Whaling Museum staff took the initiative to obtain a one-year planning grant from the Massachusetts Cultural Council's (MCC) Educational Partnership Initiative. Representatives from 13 organizations and the schools came together to plan the scope and sequence of the curriculum to develop a direction for the teacher activities and to create an understanding of what was needed to work with teachers. This project took place in the schools between years 2 and 3 and years 3 and 4 of *Portraits of a Port*. The idea was to develop partnerships between schools and cultural organizations to implement programs at each grade level so that (1) there would be enough programming to offer access and equity to the students and (2) the content of all organizations would appear in the curriculum. The process throughout the year led to conversations about the summer institute. Out of the MCC grant, and its second-year extension, came clarity and some degree of comfort with the differing



levels of institutional capacities. Two main partners were interested in pursuing historical content—the Whaling Museum and the park. The Schooner *Ernestina* had received state funding to be the lead partner in a series of environmental programs.

Year 3 brought a return to a two-week institute and a much more structured program. From this point on, the format and the activities seemed to jell, and there was an exchange of planning input with a trust that many points of view would be included. Each year, we tried to identify the most current ideas in the local history scene and use teacher evaluations to invite the return of successful presenters from the previous year. The Massachusetts Department of Education funded years 1-4. The program was stable and benefited greatly from the involvement of the National Park Service staff. A great relationship developed with the school systems, and the buzz about *Portraits of a Port* and its participating teachers was pervasive.

In years 3 and 4, state support for the Summer Institutes declined, and more and more state requirements had to be met with less and less funding. Without operating support from MCC grants, the partners turned to the National Park Service to help sustain the project. Although the development phase of the Institute had been paid for and implementation was easier each year, the partners needed some outside support to sustain the project. In year 5, grants from the NPS Parks as Classrooms® program supported teacher materials, and a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities allowed the partners to offer a three-week Summer Institute titled "Melville and Multi-Culturalism" that attracted teachers from Alaska to Georgia, from Texas to New England. In Year 6 a Newspapers in Education supplement, called "Portraits of a Port: New Bedford" went out to each household in the Southcoast area and was distributed to middle schools for individual student use in the classroom. The supplement was an attempt to publish the information from local historians and sources and to provide a curriculum booklet. The insert won first place in the New England competition for the Newspapers in Education program.

In year 7, *Portraits of a Port* was funded by the Education through Cultural and Historic Organizations (ECHO) program, part of the No Child Left Behind Act of 2002. This funding supported work on historical whaling practices with the Aquinnah/Gay Head Tribe on Martha's Vineyard. We continue to work on the website, portraitsofports.org, to expand the reach of the teacher resources.

The 2003 program was interesting in many ways. *Portraits of a Port* remains the signature program of the partnership, but it is only one of a menu of opportunities. In 2003, the Institute was not as well attended as before, and, in some ways, it suffered from benign neglect. Our staff evaluation pointed to a need to refocus and redevelop the professional development offerings. During the year, we offered 6 after-school workshops around the seminal topics and themes of the Summer Institute. About 50 teachers attended each. That was a surprise success, but we now need to think about how programs during the year complement the summer offering and

how the summer experience might be unique. We have come to the conclusion that we need to have a better network of teacher contacts and to check in more frequently.

The 2003 summer also revealed serious staffing issues caused by the gradual reduction in the number of community partners providing administrative support. As the project grew, even the primary partners faced choices with staff time and resources. The capacity limitations which had surfaced during the Massachusetts Cultural Council grant were revisited. The park and museum remained as the only stakeholders in planning and implementation. Both of the core administrators of the project face an intense schedule and time demands, including new programs with the Alaska partners and local public programs. However, the questions of limitations for daily implementation of programs which ultimately stymied the MCC project are less of a barrier to a collaboration like a teacher institute. It is far easier to have a diverse and representative group of staff for an event that happens once or twice a year with a long lead time and great planning.

Participant Feedback

When asked in a post-institute evaluation, "What did you gain from the institute?" some of the teachers' responses have been:

- "A keener appreciation of the unique legacy of New Bedford and a wealth of ideas about how to convey, celebrate, explore this legacy with its 8th grade inheritors."
- "A unique and valuable opportunity to think, analyze, make connections, be prompted to consider new ideas. Enormous content and knowledge of area. Appreciation for contributions of all groups of people—both historically and present-day. Meeting the challenge of doing the unfamiliar."
- "An understanding of some of the factors of New Bedford's history but, more importantly, I have a clearer sense of how to find and pull together some of the same factors which were, and are, at play in my own town."

Impact for the Park

Portraits of a Port provides an opportunity—one that probably would not exist without the partnership— for park staff to establish relationships with local teachers. Having a small staff as well as other priorities associated with a new National Park Service area means not having the time or capacity to seek out and work with particular constituencies as fully as the park would like. Portraits of a Port offers an opportunity for teachers to become familiar with the park and for park staff to explore new curriculum collaborations with teachers.

While the museum has established curriculum-based programs and an education staff, the park does not have a full-time staff member to work with teachers and schools. By adopting the "train the trainer" model, i.e. working with teachers in an immersion-style content institute, and using it, indirectly, to reach students, the park themes and resources are made accessible to a previously underserved audience.

Portraits of a Port provides a meaningful opportunity for the park to be a key partner in the delivery of quality educational programming in a way that would not be possible, at this stage of the park's development, if the park were working alone. The teacher institute has also helped us think about how we can work together when the park's education center becomes a reality, and what skills we will need on staff in order to work effectively with teachers, students, and our park partners.

Impact for the Whaling Museum

The New Bedford Whaling Museum benefits from *Portraits of a Port* because it fulfills the core mission to educate "all the public." First, the partnership allows the museum to access content that is more representative of the diverse elements of the community than ideas that would come solely from the extant museum collections. Second, the administrative structure of the partnership ensures reaching and working with diverse audiences; it is much stronger than a museum-owned project. The park is more credible and more open and responsive to community views and has built strong liaisons with the community members. Third, working in collaboration is simply more fun and more fulfilling, as staff are able to expand their own horizons.

Teachers who go through the institute leave with a broader knowledge of the spectrum of available field and classroom experiences as well as the contacts to help make them happen. A curriculum-based program at the museum can include the park's orientation movie, a stop at the park visitor center, and/or a teacher-led walk through the park, using one of the park's themed interpretive brochures.

In general terms, the partnership has forced the museum to take a look at itself and to assess more critically its relationships within the community. The stature of the museum—in terms of age, size and reputation—has both strengths and weaknesses. The reputation and museum's collection have allowed the museum to claim an unassailable pre-eminence in the interpretation of the whaling story. The diligent oversight of the board has demonstrated fiscal responsibility and assured financial stability of the institution even in tough financial times. The same traits, which assure conservation of artifacts and resources, can also make responding to external forces in the community a slow and sinuous process.

Turning Points

A turning point in the development of the education partnership between the park and the museum was the collaborative process undertaken with MCC grant support in 2000. As described above, the representatives of 13 cultural organizations and the schools looked at the rich resources of the community to see how to divide them across the grade levels and schools and ensure equity of distribution in the changing landscape of state education reform and curriculum frameworks. Several pilot programs were developed as a result of this grant. However, at the end of the planning phase, no implementation grant was sought from the Massachusetts Cultural Council. It became clear that although the potential for contributions to the mix of content and themes was powerful, many institutions lacked the capacity and

infrastructure to consistently offer schools, teachers, and students access to their resources. This included the park, which had not yet staffed up its education function and had not yet planned and constructed the facility that was intended to house park-sponsored education programs.

The strength of this process was the identification of teachers as the target audience for service. All of the organizations and institutions had the ability to work with teachers for in-depth experiences. Jennifer Gonsalves, who was hired as the park's first permanent park ranger and who was promoted to become the park's first Chief of Visitor Services, was well positioned to work with the whaling museum and to assist in the implementation of learning opportunities for teachers. The plan that evolved is one that will continue—to work with teachers who will then frame and translate the experience for their students.

In 2002, the whaling museum asked Jennifer Gonsalves to serve on the museum's Programming and Education Committee, a key step in bridging organizational cultures, staff capacity, and shared goals. In terms of the bigger partnership visualized through the MCC grant, the park proposed an education plan, which, if funded, could bring these same stakeholders back together to re-visit the work that was started. The education plan would require additional National Park staff, as envisioned in the park's management plan, to work collaboratively to increase the capacity of all of the partners to serve students and teachers.

Shared Visions and Stumbling Blocks What is the shared vision for the partnership? This is a difficult question because the partnership is dependent on many individuals in the park and museum: educators, curators, archivists, managers, and so on. We are all still a long way from speaking the same language. For example, it took a long time for whaling museum staff to stop saying that NPS was "providing a grant to the museum for an orientation movie" when in reality the NPS was providing the funds, project management, and access to media expertise. The museum was providing the venue, access to its collection, and subject matter expertise.



We also do not share language when trying to reach our audience; one partner is more academic, the other more interpretive. In some cases we are, in fact, trying to reach different audiences. The museum has cultivated its membership while at the same time reaching out to the community, perhaps its future members. It has offered programs targeting its membership audience. The park reaches out to the community to foster stewardship locally and tell an inclusive story. It pays careful attention to those visitors coming to the city for the first time, looking for an overview of the whaling story. The park has been instrumental in bringing in funds to provide many of the experiences outside the museum's doors that national park visitors have come to expect: a visitor center, signs and orientation maps, brochures, an orientation movie, and orientation exhibits both inside and outside the visitor center. The museum has contributed the vast resources of its collection of images, artwork, and expertise in the development. Some of the development projects

outside the museum's walls are clearly not part of a shared vision—but nor are they something that the museum would oppose. Park Superintendent, John Piltzecker, states:

We strive for something more than providing a National Park Service 'stamp of approval'—something greater than showing up in a uniform or writing a letter of support on park letterhead to provide an endorsement of a service, project or event. We reach for meaningful collaboration and mutual respect. The process of sharing power, control and responsibility is something we are still working on in New Bedford—with all of our partners. It is a balancing act that will take time and no doubt change as the park grows to reach its full potential.

On the other hand, collaborating with the National Park Service and the park partners allowed the museum to easily develop programs to work with the community. The collaborative programs have allowed us to hear the varied voices in the community without reframing the infrastructure of the institution. In addition to working with new content, the types of projects undertaken would have been difficult for the museum alone to accomplish. For instance, the Faces of Whaling Project might not have been a priority in the midst of a building campaign for the new building, but in collaboration, the museum contributed technical input and use of collections resources without committing to administrative oversight. Most of the projects would not have competed well in isolation, but were essential to the museum's goal of engaging diverse audiences. Working with partners shifted the institutional priorities and gave value to the process of partner building as well as the ongoing products of the collaboration. The cumulative impact of this work has been very positive in terms of collecting choices, seeking more diversity on the Board, and in recognizing the importance of connecting with the community.

From an external perspective, the experience of the visitor is far richer for the collaborations. Not only is the museum's content shifting, but also the way that content is presented has changed. The orientation movie for the museum is the NPS orientation to the park, introduced by a uniformed park ranger. The Maritime Heritage Program of artisans, singers, and craftspeople is shared between the park and the museum so that a visit to historic New Bedford truly has a seamless as well as timeless quality.

Our ability to share resources and space is not without its problems and occasional "meltdown moments"—those times when there is potential for real conflict in the partnership. The park's orientation movie is a visible manifestation of the partnership. Shown on the hour from 10 a.m.-4 p.m. every day, the 22-minute orientation to the park and the whaling story is introduced by a park ranger or park volunteer and is shown in the museum's 250-seat theater. The "ranger" introduction, seen by some museum staff as an "invasion" into museum territory, does not come without its tense moments.

On several occasions, a member of the NPS staff has gone to the museum to introduce the movie and has had to wait until the school group that was seated in the theater between public showings has exited—sometimes holding up the general visitors' showing by 10-15 minutes. At other times, NPS staff and volunteers have been asked, in the middle of an introduction, to leave the theater—because it has been rented out to a private party. When the NPS is "bumped," it is into less-than-comfortable accommodations, a small room that our visitors have complained about. This is not to say that the museum does not appreciate the NPS movie. In fact, ironically, it has become the cornerstone for every school group's visit to the museum. But the movie has been the focal point of a delicate dance, a main topic of discussions and mediation.

An upcoming transition—and possible meltdown moment—will be when the park moves the movie into the new park program and education center. While this will not prevent the museum from showing the movie, the park will incorporate it into the visitor center orientation experience. It will be a leap of faith for some to believe that an orientation outside of the museum's walls will encourage a "next stop" visit to the museum, but the park feels strongly that the impact will be just as great and that the visitor center orientation movie experience can be integrated into existing and new museum programs.

Looking Into the Future

The future holds at least three challenging issues that will need to be faced. The community partners will have to accommodate the new park education and public program center. The park will have to shape the image and role of the ranger in the community, and relationships and communication among partners and staff will change as new voices and organizations enter the conversation.

Currently, in order to conduct education programs, the park relies on the museum for its physical space and staff expertise. The park is planning an education and public program center that, when completed, will provide classroom and public community spaces as well as park administrative offices in a building next to the visitor center and across from the main entrance of the whaling museum.

The park's General Management Plan outlines a staffing plan for the center that includes hiring an Education Specialist as well as an Education Assistant. Successful products such as the teacher institute can only be enhanced through this development. Other initiatives (e.g., volunteer training), currently being done by the individual institutions, can be approached in a more unified way, combining staff expertise, lessening the drain on local historians' time, and scheduled in a way that includes visiting scholars and topical speakers in the training curriculum. Over the next five years, the education department at the museum is facing restructuring with retirements. This will happen in conjunction with the park's adding education staff and building its education center. The strength of the park-museum partnerships relationship offers some possibility for job sharing and possibly to create a full-time staff person who can work with teachers and develop curriculum materials. *Portraits of a Port* in year 8 will be only one chapter of that growing relationship.

Both the development of educational space and the addition of key education staff will provide opportunities for success as well as new challenges for the partnership. As the park becomes more self-sufficient and independent, its relationship with the New Bedford Whaling Museum will undoubtedly change.

While it has been important to the museum's educators for students participating in museum programs to "see a park ranger" before the orientation movie "so they know they are in a national park," the National Park Service is not mentioned in the pre-visit curriculum materials produced by the museum for school groups. The development of the *Portraits of a Port* newspaper supplement was the first time the park and the whaling museum collaborated on education materials.

What does the fleeting presence of a park ranger in the midst of a museum mean to a group of visiting students? What relationship does it have to curriculum materials? This will be something that will no doubt be dealt with as the park grows and develops. We will in the future discuss shared curriculum materials and jointly sponsored school programs. How will we handle fees and curriculum materials? Who will manage reservations? How will we work together to build a menu of educational experiences for young people? These questions about space, staff, programs, and funding will all need to be discussed as the park evolves and as the planning for the park education and program center unfolds.

The use of park rangers as "props" goes beyond the park's relationship with the museum into the larger community. Requests continue to come for more park rangers to be "out on the street," letting people know they are in a national park and directing people to non-NPS-run institutions—most of which charge fees and depend on "gate revenue"—or to the many for-profit businesses in and around the park—shops and restaurants which hold great hope that the establishment and development of the park will foster economic development. The marketing strength of the NPS ranger uniform is undeniable. The park seeks to create greater substance beyond this powerful symbol and marketing tool.

Personal relationships between members of each of the organizations will remain and grow but may also change as new staff is added. The addition of other partners, which is inevitable because the vision for the park's education center is to create a space for use by all community partners, will certainly change the dynamic of the partnership. The challenge will be how to grow in our existing relationships while at the same time equally expending park resources on new possibilities and making sure that as the park grows into its General Management Plan, all of its community partners have a place.

Most Important Advice Public/private partnerships are very much like a marriage and, further, partnerships are a series of personal relationships that need to be nurtured. If you follow the marriage analogy through, you find some real similarities. First, comes the "so in love," dating stage: the possibilities are endless, the

future is wide open. You only see in each other what you want to see. Second comes marriage: lots of give and take, compromise, building a life together, making important choices about the direction of your life together. Then...reality hits! You've both grown—maybe in different directions. Do you still like each other? Do you stay together? Are you better off together or apart? What about the kids (in the partnership's case—the programs)? Fortunately, partners can always throw away the programs and move on with their separate lives.

If you don't want to throw away the programs, think about capacity. We have found that the tendency is to see the opportunity and to envision it as an appealing possibility. The vision is seductive and if all the pieces fit and the stars align, it would be, could be, should be brilliant. That is the moment to stop. Have a planning meeting that accurately accesses all of the projects on everyone's plate. To put it simply, don't do too much or do it too rapidly. More accurately, the issue is about existing capacity and building capacity with an infrastructure and an agreement between partners.

The biggest pitfalls are failing to understand your own capacity, and allowing others, who perceive you as having greater capacity, to hand off their ideas to you to "make it so." A different, yet related, kind of challenge is the existence of some partners who see park service participation as a stamp of approval and/or a means of securing funds.

Then, practice, practice, practice. Do pilot programs to test out ideas. Move into full implementation slowly. Think of what you can do together that you can't do separately. This isn't skydiving. If you make a mistake, you won't die. One of the benefits of working in partnership is that you have diverse experiences and expertise; you don't have to do it all yourself. In addition, coming together with ideas can germinate thoughts that none of the partners would have had independently. There also may be opportunities for the partnership as a whole to seek outside expertise in content or methodology.

Don't get too bogged down in process. If we worried constantly about advancing the vision of the partnership, deciding where to place efforts and who should do the deciding, and what "structure" was needed to make things happen, we might never get things done. Take a chance. Trust your instincts. Just do it. Sometimes it is about the process—but a lot of the time it's about the product.

Growth and good planning go hand in hand. Program expansion can be a primary challenge. The challenge is creating a smooth, sustainable growth, one that brings all the partners along. As the park grows, there is a hope that it will be in league with other key partners and that the park growth will provide opportunity to others. In our partnership, all of the pieces have fallen easily into place because of the unique history of the park's formation and the vision of the museum's leadership. At this point, changes to the current program or future developments will need to have a place at the table and a legitimate claim on staff time for the ongoing health of the program.



A primary component of growth will be the educational facility for the National Park Service working in league with many "partners in the park." The park has a strong vision for the new physical environment. While the Whaling Museum shares the idea of space, there will have to be alignment of its strategic planning vision to account for growth of contiguous physical facilities. Other partners may have goals for that space that have more to do with their needs than with sharing the park's vision of its future.

Evaluation is critical to assessing what's going right and what's not going right in the program, but also can give some valuable insight into the partnership itself and, quite frankly, this an area that we need to look at improving. Each year the Teachers Institute is evaluated for how it suits the needs of the teachers. However, since the inception, there has not been a systematic review of how the institutional partners' needs are being met. We need to create a mechanism for review and change as well as leverage the time necessary to enact such changes in the overall program.

There is an important juncture in the partnership when you begin to make critical decisions about the product. We realized we were at this point with the teacher institute. Year after year, teachers express a need for accessible curriculum materials. We need the time and staff expertise to develop such materials. We need to market the program early and often and need to get the word out everywhere. Maybe we should think about two types of *Portraits of a Port*; (I) single workshop afternoons of local history experiences that get and keep teachers up to speed, and, (2) more in-depth, one-topic institutes which actively engage teachers in local history. The critical decisions have to consider an upcoming restructuring of the Education Department of the Whaling Museum, how we can support teachers throughout the year, and how we can develop curriculum based on all facets of the park resources, not just materials that support museum visits.

Conclusion

The educational partnership between the New Bedford Whaling Museum and New Bedford Whaling National Historical Park has enabled both organizations to reach out to new audiences in order to build a stronger stewardship for the park and its resources. Further, this partnership is critical to the mission and mandate of the park and the strategic plan of the whaling museum. Through individual relationships and the reliance on each other's expertise, both organizations can become stronger and better integrated into the community. We have not fully reached our potential within the realm of partnering on educational programming. Clearly, the stage has been set for future collaboration and the possibilities exist to reach a wider and more diverse audience through our concerted efforts.

Rock Creek Park (ROCR) and National Capital Region Parks Alice Ferguson Foundation

Laura Illige (ROCR) Nancy Smaroff (BTW)



C A S E S T U D Y

Bridging the Watershed (BTW)

Bridging the Watershed Overview

Bridging the Watershed (BTW) is an educational outreach program of the Alice Ferguson Foundation in partnership with the National Park Service and area high schools. The program promotes understanding and stewardship of natural resources and public lands with a curriculum that focuses on the ecology and land use in the Potomac watershed. High school students participate in field studies in the National Capital Region national parks and collect authentic data related to natural resource issues affecting the Potomac River basin and the greater Chesapeake Bay watershed. The five science modules created for the BTW program are based on the service-learning model of preparation, action, and reflection. High school students studying Earth science, chemistry, biology, and environmental science participate in performance-based investigations to analyze the health of their watershed by applying problem-solving skills to science and math concepts in a real-world context.

The Setting and Vision

The Potomac River watershed includes 14,670 square miles in the District of Columbia and parts of Maryland, Pennsylvania, Virginia, and West Virginia. The Potomac River, approximately 400 miles long, is 11 miles wide at the mouth and has a navigable channel depth of 24 feet near the District of Columbia. About 2.5 million people use about 450 million gallons of river water each day. Over 5.2 million people on farms, in small towns, and in the suburbs use about 100 million gallons of ground water each day.

"It occurred to me that if we could clean up the parks together, then we could also educate together with offsite programs. The demand for programs at our site, Hard Bargain Farm, was beyond capacity, and this might be an opportunity to use our experience offsite. The schools, parks, and private organizations all shared a similar resource in terms of aquatic environment."

Kay Powell, Former Executive Director, Alice Ferguson Foundation

BTW Visionaries Came from Two Very Different Organizations

The key players who conceived the idea of a watershed-wide science education program came from two very different organizations: the Alice Ferguson Foundation/Hard Bargain Farm Education Center in Accokeek, MD (AFF) and Rock Creek Park (ROCR) in the District of Columbia. There was a synergy between people in these two organizations that existed long before the inception of *Bridging the Watershed*. AFF had an existing partnership with the National Park Service (NPS) since AFF land was used to establish the Piscataway Park in 1969. Also, park rangers had been implementing programs at AFF since about 1975, through an existing partnership the park and the foundation had formed with the public schools of Maryland to provide environmental science field experiences to fifth-grade students.

A watershed, besides being the drainage area for a body of water, is a unifying concept because it crosses political boundaries. Everyone lives in a watershed and in some small or large way impacts it. Beginning in 1988, the Alice Ferguson Foundation sponsored the first Annual Potomac River Watershed Cleanup. On a given Saturday in early spring of each year, hundreds of volunteers from many organizations unite to pick up trash at sites

"One key to our success was the quality of our team. Each person was well connected and respected within their agency and knew how to overcome the obstacles that were sure to arise."

Kay Powell, Former Executive Director, Alice Ferguson Foundation throughout the watershed. Kay Powell (AFF Executive Director), Sil Pembleton (AFF Education Program Director), Julia Washburn (ROCR Chief Ranger), and Maggie Zadorozny (ROCR Education Specialist) knew each other from the Annual Potomac Watershed Cleanup, they shared interests in environmental education and in the commitment to maintain and preserve the natural resources in the watershed, and they saw the potential for developing a bigger and better education program than either organization could produce alone, if only a funding source would materialize.

In 1997, the National Park Foundation advertised a request for proposals to national parks throughout the United States. A three-year grant funded by Toyota USA Foundation would be awarded to five national parks that defined a model to promote national parks as living laboratories for secondary teachers and students, and encourage greater stewardship of national parks in preserving cultural and natural resources.

Julia Washburn called Kay Powell to propose that Rock Creek Park and the Alice Ferguson Foundation submit a proposal. Kay's initial response was negative. She was afraid that it would be too complicated a partnership for her small organization. AFF had successful long-term partnerships with the schools and parks but not much experience with high school students. This would require a huge amount of time and other AFF programs might suffer. Also, AFF would be dealing with large bureaucracies who shuffle staff into different positions, so she was not sure a team could be kept together. AFF had experienced problems in this area with other partnerships.

But Julia Washburn's experiences as Principal Investigator for the NPS Parks as Classrooms: *Partners for Education* project provided her with additional tools and skills to envision a watershed-wide education program. Julia, Sil, and Maggie felt that this effort was possible if they could find the right team, so they started reaching out to highly talented rangers and educators. Once Kay saw the commitment from others interested in partnering, she put all her energy into the project. It was Kay who came up with the name *Bridging the Watershed*.



Vision for Bridging the Watershed Takes Shape

Kay, Sil, Julia, and Maggie solicited advice and support from people in other key organizations. If BTW was to be a model for other parks in the watershed, then it would be important to get more parks involved. Given the realities of what could be accomplished in the three-year time frame with \$150,000 of funding, they decided to focus initial efforts within the Washington metropolitan area rather than on the whole watershed. Superintendents from five additional parks expressed a desire to join the partnership. The goals of the grant proposal matched the goals of the parks by creating a model that served an under-represented population in national parks: high school-age students.

To reach high school students, the model would need to include schools and teachers. Two school districts, District of Columbia Public Schools (DCPS) and Prince George's County Public Schools (PGCPS) agreed to participate in the proposal. Hays B. Lantz, Jr., PGCPS Science Supervisor, provided insight

on how best to proceed with a model that aligned with national reform efforts in science education. Performance-based lessons that incorporated the 5 Es model (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate, Evaluate) were already in place in science classrooms in county high schools. This model would become the template for curriculum created for *Bridging the Watershed*.

A university would be an important partner whose staff could provide

A university would be an important partner whose staff could provide expertise in science and in teaching strategies. George Middendorf, Entomology Professor at Howard University, took on this role.

Service learning was a key component to creating future stewards of national parks. The Student Conservation Association (SCA) seemed to be a perfect fit for partnering, and Flip Haygood, Vice President for the Mid-Atlantic SE Region National Urban & Diversity Program, was quite enthusiastic about this possibility. Two other organizations, Chesapeake Bay Foundation and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wrote letters of support. Gary Heath, Maryland State Department of Education Science Supervisor, wrote a letter of endorsement. The original partners are listed in Table 1 by type of organization.

Table 1 BTW Original Partners

National Parks

Rock Creek Park C & O Canal NHP George Washington Memorial Park National Capital Parks – Central National Capital Parks – East President's Park

School Districts/Higher Education

Prince George's County Public Schools
District of Columbia Public Schools
Howard University
Maryland State Department of Education

Nonprofit Organizations

Alice Ferguson Foundation Student Conservation Association Chesapeake Bay Foundation U.S. Fish & Wildlife-Chesapeake Bay Office

Program Goals

The planning team defined the following program goals:

- Promote national parks in the Potomac watershed as learning laboratories for secondary teachers and students, and support local school curricula in math and science.
- Increase knowledge of the Potomac watershed and recognize the importance of national parks in preserving cultural and natural resources.
- Establish a model with potential to spread throughout the Potomac watershed and be replicated in other national parks to serve the high school population.

"Bridging the Watershed is an excellent vehicle for bringing local high school students to Rock Creek Park for field studies, engaging them in natural and cultural history, encouraging them to make personal connections to this special place. Bridging the Watershed is proof that complex partnerships can work, serving the high schools, fulfilling the NPS mission, and promoting greater stewardship of parks and resources." Adrienne Coleman, Superintendent, **Rock Creek National Park**

Curriculum materials for *Bridging the Watershed* would focus on the water quality of the Potomac River and its tributaries, runoff and sedimentation in the river, and the presence or absence of macro-invertebrates, invasive alien plants, and trash in the watershed. Activities would align with state and national standards and integrate water chemistry, watershed geology, watershed ecology, and land use over the past 400 years.

Both field experiences in the parks and educational materials would emphasize science and incorporate a real-world interdisciplinary approach. Lessons in the park and in the classroom would include problem-solving activities that would present real situations that national park resource managers encounter. Each module would be built around a critical natural resource issue facing the NCR parks and the greater watershed, but the issues would be generic enough that the curriculum could be replicated in other watersheds.

NPF National Parks Labs Grant

The initial seed money (\$150,000 over three years, March 1998 – February 2001) from the Toyota USA Foundation grant and in-kind resources enabled the partners to create the *Bridging the Watershed* program. One park had to apply for the grant on behalf of the six NPS parks wishing to participate and the eight educational, nonprofit, and government groups. In the original project structure, ROCR and AFF served as the overall management partners, and a steering committee was formed comprised of one representative from the other five national parks, two school districts, and other nonprofit partners. The steering committee would meet quarterly to discuss current needs and issues, decide courses of action, and identify who would be responsible for the actions.

The Alice Ferguson Foundation was an ideal key partner, because private, nonprofit organizations can increase flexibility in managing and securing funding to accomplish the goals of the project. The Alice Ferguson Foundation agreed to provide in-kind support for an office at Hard Bargain Farm, Accokeek, MD and in-kind support for program administration. A cooperative agreement between Rock Creek Park and AFF was signed, and grant funds were transferred for disbursement and project implementation.

Additional funds were needed to support program components and implementation. A National Park Service "Parks as Classrooms" grant (a total of \$40,000 for the first two years) was secured to support teacher involvement and curriculum writing. The partners also applied for and received a series of Challenge Cost Share grants (\$120,000 over the three-year grant period) to hire a project director to oversee and fulfill grant requirements.

Phase 1: Bridging the Watershed In May 1998, the AFF hired Nancy Smaroff, a curriculum writer and retired teacher, as the BTW project director with grant funding. She provided program development leadership. The grant administration and fiscal programming were coordinated by Kay Powell, AFF Executive Director; Sil Pembleton, AFF Education Program Director; and Julia Washburn, ROCR Chief Ranger.



Nancy's first task was to create the first of three annual teacher/park ranger summer institutes. Training teachers to use parks as classrooms was a vehicle to provide large numbers of high school students an opportunity for an educational experience in a national park. Since the first institute was scheduled for June, 1998, Nancy faced the daunting challenge of creating the institute agenda and recruiting teachers and rangers. Her background in education and her skills in networking with schools proved to be invaluable assets. She also created a BTW newsletter for partners and interested parties, and coordinated steering committee meetings, held quarterly.

The first Summer Institute was designed to provide teachers and park rangers with one week of field experiences in partnering parks and a second week to write the curriculum for BTW. It was Nancy's responsibility to compile, re-write, and extend the educational content gathered/developed during the first institute. Then, she had to instruct teachers and rangers in the content and pedagogy of the units and to pilot the programs with students.

Creating the curriculum became more of a challenge than expected. Three years and fourteen revisions later, the curriculum was ready to be printed. *Lesson learned:* Relying on teachers and rangers to start the development proved helpful to link the programs to the curriculum and resources. But hire strong curriculum writers to produce the final curriculum materials.

"Water is essential to life on earth, yet it is one of the most misunderstood and mismanaged natural resources.

Watershed education connects students with their local drinking water, the water cycle, and the land that carries this life sustaining nectar."

Maggie Zadorozny, Education Specialist, Rock Creek National Park

BTW Science Curriculum

The following summaries describe the five modules in the BTW curriculum, along with the science discipline or disciplines to which the module is most closely related.

Watershed Watchdogs: Assessing Water Quality. Chemistry or environmental science students study nine parameters that will help them determine the Water Quality Index (WQI) for the Potomac River or one of its tributaries.

Water Canaries: Assessing Benthic Macroinvertebrates. Students in biology or environmental science classes learn to identify benthic macroinvertebrates and then determine water quality by using the sensitivity ratings for the macroinvertebrates found in the stream during their field study.

Alien Invaders: Assessing Exotic Invasive Species. Biology and environmental science students study the importance of biodiversity, learn the basics of plant identification, and explore the extent of alien plant invasion in a local national park.

Don't Get Sedimental: Runoff and Sediment in the River. Students in Earth science or environmental education classes explore the impact on the watershed of runoff from increasing development.

Talkin' Trash: Make a Litter Difference. Students in any science class examine the impact of trash in their watershed. They learn what trash reveals about the lifestyle of the residents who create it, how trash impacts the environment, how we as citizens deal with it, and how personal choices can make a difference.



Another important component of the BTW program is an interactive database, located on the web site. This database allows students to upload their authentic data and to make comparisons with data collected by other students from other schools. More information about BTW, the institute, and the database is available at www.bridgingthewatershed.org.

Project Administration

BTW's successes and challenges are a product of its conception and birth. The success of the NPS mission to preserve and protect the national parks and their resources is dependent upon a knowledgeable and caring citizenry. The AFF mission is to provide experiences that enable people to feel connected to the natural environment and cultural heritage of the Potomac watershed, leading to environmentally responsible behavior. Both AFF and NPS can fulfill their primary missions through a joint education program. The primary partners' leadership got along well personally, respected each other professionally, and shared the common vision. Because of this strong philosophical and personal link, some management roles were not always clearly defined. A rather fluid give-and-take decision-making process made everything work out somehow. In its first three years, BTW produced very high-quality educational materials and five program modules that were aligned with national, state, and local science standards, used constructivist pedagogy, and were well-received by teachers.

Initially the steering committee met quarterly. When important decisions had to be made (e.g., regarding curriculum decisions, field studies in parks, and the teacher/ranger institute), key representatives needed to meet more often. In fairness to all partners, it was (and still is) difficult for people to attend every meeting to which they are invited. An additional problem was that, with the exception of Rock Creek Park staff, park representatives were not always supervisors or decision-makers. When representatives lacked sufficient authority, decision-making and follow-through was difficult. Lesson learned: It was critical to the development of the program that partners remain invested and that those in decision-making positions attend.

Preparing for Phase 2: **Program**

The BTW project faced several major challenges in 2000: (1) the Toyota grant would end in 2001, creating a need to identify funding that could sustain the project staff and operating budget, (2) staff turnover, and Sustainability (3) the shift from an informal decision-making process to a more formal structure.

Funding

Knowing that BTW funds would evaporate once the three-year Toyota USA grant expired in 2001, ROCR Chief Ranger Julia Washburn, with assistance from George Washington Memorial Parkway (GWMP) Assistant Superintendent Dottie Marshall, and support from National Capital Regional Director Terry Carlstrom, applied for a \$300,000 increase in "base" or "recurring permanent funding" from the National Park Service to cover ongoing BTW operating costs, including new positions.

Initially, the request to Congress was structured as an increase in the budget for Rock Creek Park on behalf of the six partnering parks, but, for political reasons, the \$300,000 base funding request was divided among the budgets of the six partnering National Parks. Some NPS staff assisting with the process felt that a \$50,000 increase request from the six partner parks would be more successful than a large increase to one park, even for a regional program. This proved to be true—the base increase to each park came through and became effective in government fiscal year (FY) 2001.

However, the superintendents and some other key officials of each park who had not been informed that the funding was to go only to support BTW, wanted to devote some of "their" new funding to meet some of their parks' other pressing interpretive and educational needs. When they were informed that the base increase was to fund the BTW project, Chiefs of Interpretation and higher-ranked officials began attending steering committee meetings, and the allocation of the funds became hotly debated. Lesson learned: Clear, effective methods of communication are necessary so that everyone is well informed about the different facets of the program development and funding.

Leadership

At about the same time, two of the founding members of the BTW partnership, the Director of the Alice Ferguson Foundation and the ROCR Chief Ranger, accepted new career positions, adding to the confusion over funding. BTW is large and very complex, and the initial planning vastly underestimated the number of staff needed just to coordinate the communication among schools, teachers, parks, bus companies and to resolve other logistical, day-to-day issues. The new ROCR Chief Ranger, Laura Illige, faced significant organizational and financial issues relating to the BTW partnership.

With the assistance/intervention of NPS officials in the regional office and at other parks, the funding was removed from the budgets of the partner parks and placed in a single account dedicated to BTW to be managed by Rock Creek Park. This caused disappointment and some hard feelings in parks that had felt the funding would go to their individual programs. In addition, other NCR parks (not involved in BTW) felt that BTW didn't benefit their programs in any way and, worse, the successful base increase meant that the region would not get other additional funding for education in the next several years.

Staffing BTW

To maintain educational continuity, BTW required a staffing plan that had low turnover. NPS rangers trained in BTW often left for jobs in other NPS areas/parks, leaving the BTW partnering parks without BTW-trained rangers. The question of who should present programs—rangers in uniform, educators from AFF, and/or classroom teachers—generated much discussion. Although the federal hiring process is cumbersome, antiquated and painfully slow, the National Park Service partners strongly felt it was important to have a uniformed employee present programs. After

sometimes-heated debate, the steering committee agreed that the base funding would be used to employ the BTW program director, an educator employed by AFF, an education technician employed by the NPS through ROCR, and a part-time secretary.

At this time, BTW Director Nancy Smaroff's three-year contract was up, and after initially indicating that she would look for new opportunities, Nancy accepted a new contract with increased compensation, increased budget authority, and supervisory responsibility over the BTW team of educators. AFF made the commitment to integrate BTW into its regular programming and fundraising strategies, and the Parks agreed to include overhead costs in the base funding to compensate AFF for the administrative and physical support costs of housing the program at Hard Bargain Farm.

Phase 2: tion and **Expansion** (2001-2003)

A new leadership team of the newly appointed AFF Executive Director Implementa- Tracy Bowen, BTW Program Director Nancy Smaroff, and ROCR Chief Ranger Laura Illige, proved to be crucial in carrying BTW through the first transition from program development to base-funded implementation. Someone had to take the lead, and the program administration and responsibility already rested on these key players. They spent many hours negotiating with school district and NPS partners and on hiring AFF and NPS educator staff. At the same time, they were continuing to carry out the ongoing program, training teachers and rangers, and offering programs to students. If either organization, the nonprofit or NPS, had failed to commit major amounts of time and energy to sustaining the program, it could not have continued. Other crucial staff included ROCR Education Specialist Maggie Zadorozny, GWMP Deputy Superintendent Dottie Marshall, and Prince George's County School District Science Coordinator Hayes B. Lantz, Jr.

Expansion of Structure and Funding

The BTW leadership team began defining roles and responsibilities and drafting a new cooperative agreement, as the original cooperative agreement expired at the end of 2003. Because the original agreement referred only to the Toyota grant, a cooperative agreement modification had to be implemented for every transfer of base funds or other grant funds. The team also identified the need for a partnership agreement, a written document from each active partner, defining who would attend meetings and restating the organization's commitment to provide staff support and to seek additional funding to support project costs beyond those covered by the NPS increase in base funding. The partnership agreement idea has not been implemented, but the NPS solicitor reviewing the new cooperative agreement strongly encourages the creation of such a document.

The bulk of NPS base funding goes to AFF to carry out the BTW program. ROCR transfers the funding for the BTW program director and the AFF educator and other support staff, supplies, and equipment. This provides maximum flexibility and adaptability for the program, and it is easier for AFF to purchase supplies and provide teacher stipends through their accounting system. ROCR retains enough funding for the

NPS BTW educator's salary and benefits, and a \$30,000 fund to support the partner parks. Each partner park receives \$5,000 to support ranger overtime or backfill salary to attend workshops and the teacher/ranger institute, conduct field studies in locations other than their home park, and to purchase supplies and materials for the program. This funding is administered through Rock Creek Park to provide consistency for the entire program, and to ensure that other NPS officials see the fund as something to use for needs of BTW, rather than other activities.

In spring 2000, the Rock Creek Park Nature Center and Planetarium was invited to apply for and received a \$500,000 grant from the Howard Hughes Medical Institute (HHMI) to expand the BTW program into other parks and school systems. While AFF was instrumental in preparing the winning proposal, the invitation came to the ROCR Nature Center because HHMI was seeking to support informal science education centers and museums. HHMI provides \$125,000 per year to employ part-time educators and conduct workshops. HHMI funding is also providing a contracted professional educational evaluation of BTW.

Major challenges included the aftermath of the terrorist attacks of September II, 2001. Local schools canceled all field trips, and schools outside the District of Columbia were not allowed to attend programs in DC. In October 2002, the Washington, D.C. sniper attacks kept all school students in lockdown, unable to leave school buildings even for lunch breaks.

The expense of bus transportation remains a huge issue. Prince George's County Public Schools provided transportation for their students, but the District of Columbia Public Schools were unable to provide any transportation. For the past three years, a combination of end-of-the-year funding and NPS Challenge Cost Share grant dollars have provided some funds to transport students. AFF could not fund or contract for the buses due to liability concerns.

In the implementation phase, the greatest concern expressed was that parks would not be able to handle the inflow of students and teachers wanting the program. Now, with budget cuts and security concerns, schools cancel field studies when the Homeland Security alert system goes to Code Orange. The primary concern is in serving enough students, and getting students out to the parks is an integral part of each module. The leadership team is looking at other models for serving students to try to increase the numbers of students served.

Phase 3: Strategic the Future (2003-2004)

In September 2003, a strategic planning meeting will be held with all partners to begin the process of planning the future of BTW. Developing an in-**Planning for** depth structure for institutionalizing BTW into the partnering organizations will be part of the agenda. Too much of the operation is still dependent upon individuals rather than organizational commitments. We are concerned about the possibility that if these few BTW leaders move on to other jobs, the program may flounder.



Other issues with the current program model include teacher/student follow-up. Many teachers do make use of the classroom lessons before the field study, and students gather data at the parks. However, the completion of the loop is accomplished when students enter their data onto the web site database and, over time, build up a picture of the health of the watershed. Currently, few schools follow up with this part of the model. A key question for BTW is, "Do we change the model or attempt to make the current program work?" Another issue has been teachers who attend the summer institute, take their stipends, and disappear into the void. BTW's summer institute for 2003 required a deposit, a statement of support from the school principal, and is withholding part of the teacher stipend until the teacher has scheduled a field visit and returned with his or her class.

BTW is also looking at an Urban Ecology extension of the program, which would provide a modified program for the huge number of school groups who visit the "National Mall" sites in National Capitol Parks Central (NACC). The groups visit from all over the country and arrive in huge numbers, but they could not have teachers attend an institute or do extensive pre- or post-visit activities in the classroom. The Urban Ecology model would take some of the scientifically valid information in the current five modules and adapt them for a hands-on experience for one-time visitors to the watershed.

The organizational structure and cultural differences between schools, AFF, and the NPS present challenges to the continuation and success of BTW. The BTW Program Director has to provide a conduit and central contact point for all these disparate elements on complex issues. For example, communicating with school districts involves issues of transportation, getting students out of class, and integrating modules into the curriculum. The BTW must work with AFF on its fiscal-year, internal funding cycles and budget tracking as well as copyright issues and the need for ongoing fundraising. The director and staff must also work with the NPS fiscal-year cycle, which differs from that of AFF, federal procurement and personnel rules, needs of parks, developmental needs of rangers, and high turnover rate of staff. *Lesson learned:* There is a real need for greater structure and institutionalization among the partners.

A great benefit to the AFF staff and the NPS has been each organization's willingness and ability to collaborate as creative teaching teams. Sharing expertise and personnel has been a real plus in staff development for these partners.

The year 2000 implementation model to support the program involved parallel staffing, all based together in the BTW office at AFF. The NPS educator and AFF educator worked as a team, frequently presenting programs together. The NPS educator was hired as a new permanent federal employee (a Peace Corps -eligible candidate). She brought enthusiasm and energy to the job but was unfamiliar with the NPS and federal government culture. Based at AFF, she worked in an environment where she neither fully belonged to the nonprofit culture nor was able to participate fully in park

ranger culture. The uniformed position confused some staff at partner parks—they weren't sure if the AFF educators, whether nonprofit or NPS-employed, were supposed to replace or supplant their role in presenting the modules in the field. Because the positions were new, the need to define their roles arose as they worked with teachers and parks to implement the program.

The NPS educator left to join the ROCR staff as an interpretive park ranger, leaving the BTW position vacant. For the short term, the position has been filled by a uniformed ranger on detail from National Capitol Parks Central. However, BTW needs to decide how best to fill the function currently left vacant. The previous model presented problems for AFF because even as a GS-07 education technician, the federal job received more compensation than was typical for AFF education staff, creating an imbalance. The federal hiring system is very slow, and permanent employees cannot have their position or duties changed easily to reflect changing conditions or shifts in the program. BTW may be better served by a different staffing model—using another AFF educator, using the funding in ways other than hiring staff to support the program, etc. All of this will be addressed during the strategic planning meeting in the near future.

Money Matters

Trust between AFF and ROCR has enabled BTW to succeed so far in monetary matters, despite the natural stress that occurs when dealing with funding. AFF knows that ROCR will dedicate the money to BTW programs as agreed (not yield to the temptation to support other park operations from BTW money). ROCR knows that AFF is an excellent steward of transferred funds, and they also trust that the funding goes to BTW rather than to AFF's other program needs.

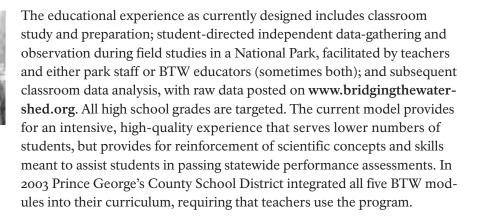
A major challenge in the future will be determining how to continue the partnership yet share the administrative burden, either with other National Park partners or with the National Capitol Regional Office of the NPS. Recently the upper management of ROCR has begun to perceive ROCR participation in BTW as lessening the park's chances in competing for funding that applies directly to ROCR resources—it "looks" like Rock Creek Park receives a Challenge Cost Share grant when a BTW request is funded, when really the park only receives a portion of the benefit from what is essentially a regional program—and other ROCR funding requests may get under-funded or ignored. If this trend continues, the superintendent's office may request that the program be managed either from another park or regionally, rather than through ROCR, so the responsibility is shared.

AFF faces the funding challenges of any nonprofit in a weakened economy, particularly since they receive a portion of their funding from the State of Maryland, which is facing a huge budget shortfall. BTW has essentially become a third program area for AFF and will need sustainable fundraising and goals in order to fit into AFF's overall strategic planning. The AFF Board of Directors is very supportive of BTW. One of their concerns is that since BTW is so complex, outreach for expansion might gobble-up this small yet "big intentions" foundation. Efforts to help BTW sustain itself

began in 2003, with AFF selling the five BTW modules and materials to teachers to help recoup some of the costs of the program. Working out the copyright issues in a joint program took nearly a year. Even with overhead for AFF now built into the funding, housing BTW's equipment, staff, and use of utilities at Hard Bargain Farm (AFF headquarters) still impacts their entire organization.

A new cooperative agreement for BTW is currently in draft form. The cooperative agreement is an instrument to allow the transfer of funds between cooperators. However, legal agreements must go beyond money matters. BTW needs a separate partnership agreement that defines the roles of partners who may never transfer funds but need to clearly commit to participation in the program. We sense the need for a legal document that commits the involved school districts to support student and teacher participation, the National Parks to provide staff and scheduling time for programs, and partners such as the Student Conservation Association and Howard University to define whether they will truly be active partners, or perhaps take an advisory role. *Lesson learned:* A cooperative agreement does not provide guidelines for all issues. A partnership agreement can provide additional guidance and structure.

Strategic Choices for Strategic Advantages BTW's primary audience is high school students. Its secondary audience includes adult teachers and NPS staff (training and development). The tertiary audience is school and park administrators. The audience served was determined by the requirements of the initial National Park Labs Toyota grant.



BTW stands at a pivotal point in its history as a program. We have excellent, high-quality, educationally tested and evaluated modules based on a delivery model that does not serve as many students as we would like, and that requires intensive support from BTW staff. How do we retain the high-quality elements that attract patrons like HHMI, yet adjust the program to serve more students?

Transportation and the coordination needed to get students actually out of class appear to be the biggest obstacles to the continued success of the current model. Staffing and funding changes may mean that the bus support that Prince George's County provided at no cost to BTW may no longer

continue—leaving a \$13,000 or more shortfall that would impact the ability of students to attend field experiences. Will BTW retain its validity as a program using National Parks as living laboratories if programs take place in the classroom rather than in the parks? Does distance learning or use of web-cam technology "count"? These are all critical questions facing the program now.

BTW is entering a strategic planning phase involving stakeholders in answering these questions. At the same time, the HHMI grant is funding a professional educational evaluation of BTW, which will generate vital information to help us improve and mold our program delivery model. We hope that the evaluation will help us learn the impact of our programs on our primary target: the hearts and minds of Washington, D.C.-area high school students.

Most Important Advice

Beware of what you ask for—you just might get it. Through the dedication and vision of the individuals who applied for the initial Toyota USA Foundation grant, we now have an established regional program serving high school students. However, if any one partner had known what a complex monster we were taking on, we might have fled screaming down the watershed to try something simpler.

When initiating a regional program involving National Parks, it is essential to have the support of the Regional Director.

As a nonprofit partner providing both development and operational oversight of the program, ALWAYS build in overhead support to help lessen the toll the program may take on staff and infrastructure.

And the final piece of advice: Everything takes twice as long as you might expect. The problems you expect (e.g., floods of students overwhelming the carrying capacity of local National Parks) may not appear—but other challenges will take their place (e.g., international terrorism, snipers, recessions)



Lessons Learned

Elizabeth Hoermann (NCES) Peter O'Connell (TIHC)



Lessons Learned

Writing this case study made me realize how even successful partnerships encounter many bumps in the road. We did not have all of the answers when we started the partnership, but were willing to make adjustments as the partnership evolved. Our experiences should invite others to not be afraid to start down the road, but to enter the road with attitudes of awareness and flexibility. (Cuyahoga Team)

This section looks across the examples presented in the six case studies and identifies some universal concepts and ideas about partnership lessons learned. The section is divided into categories of information. The major headings—Unanticipated Benefits of Educational Partnerships, Creating a Foundation for Successful Partnerships, Starting Up, Recurring Issues in Educational Partnerships, and Conclusion—provide a road map for the reader. Subheadings further identify concepts and ideas related to the major headings and guide the reader through the narrative.

Benefits of Educational

Unanticipated Three unanticipated benefits from these educational partnerships deserve special notice at the outset: (1) they were tremendously productive for each partner, (2) they rallied public support for historical and environmental **Partnerships** stewardship (park mission) and for public education (school mission), and (3) the partnerships were built on a foundation of unique learning experiences for students with the resources parks preserve.

Educational Partnerships Are Productive!

The case studies demonstrate that educational partnerships multiplied the resources of the partners and achieved outcomes well beyond what the partners envisioned when they initiated their partnerships. From the perspective of the parks, the results are impressive:

- A partner raised 32 million dollars for an education center and intensive stewardship programs for urban, low-income, minority students;
- A small Friends Group created to lobby for the creation of a park grew into a large and successful educational nonprofit group;
- An environmental education consortium of several parks and several urban school districts created programs to serve the hardest-to-reach urban youth;
- A university and park created a hands-on history center that attracts 65,000 students and teachers a year to the park;
- A park created an intensive collaboration with a single school, "incubating" new programs the park could disseminate to other schools and helping the park improve communications with people in a gateway community;
- An established museum helped found a park, raised funds to sustain an intensive teacher institute, and provided museum space for the park to implement school programs.

From the perspectives of the nonpark partners, the results were equally rewarding. They included:

- creation of learning laboratories and educational facilities for students that became highlights of that school's programming either in a single grade, or, in the case of the Pi Beta Phi School, one of the central anchors of the school's identity;
- sites that provided transformative teacher professional development experiences leading to changes in classroom practice and to development of new curricula;
- improved access to new sources of federal funding to support partnership education programs;
- educational credibility and added value to grant proposals and capital funding drives resulting from partnerships with the National Park Service; and
- greater local, regional, and national visibility for their educational efforts.

Although the founding leaders of the partnerships did not know at the outset how successful their partnerships would be—indeed some of the partnerships have only recently initiated their partnerships—they all knew intuitively that they would be more successful if they formed true collaborative partnerships than if they worked separately.

Education and Preservation Go Hand-in-Hand

Park resource managers and museum curators sometimes feel that education programs threaten fragile natural and cultural resources. These case studies show how park superintendents and a core of their management staff successfully negotiated a sensitive alliance in which education programs fostered stewardship attitudes among the students and teachers, who in turn became active advocates for the parks. Parks became active allies for funding for field-based school programs, often the first programs to be cut during times of stressed school budgets. The parks in these case studies had education-oriented superintendents who recognized and understood the educational value of these partnerships and needed no convincing that expanded school programming was one of their most effective and efficient means of securing public support for the protection of park resources. Their task was to smooth the way for expanded school programming with resource managers.

And they succeeded. The Golden Gate partnership designed strategies to reach beyond the contiguous neighborhoods to help low-income minority students and community groups develop a sense of ownership of the park. The Pi Beta Phi/Great Smoky Mountains partnership helped the park develop stronger links with its local community because every student, teacher, and chaperone who visited the park three times every year influenced a whole network of people. The Rock Creek and Cuyahoga partnerships connected urban parks with one another and suburban schools with the parks. The Lowell partnership enabled thousands of students to see for themselves that a new Lowell had been built around its historic identity. Education and preservation went hand-in-hand.

Schools obtained wider support for their education missions as well. School superintendents, principals, and teachers understood that parks offered badly needed expertise, active engagement for students and rejuvenation for teachers, demonstrated quality to potential funders and to school boards, and help in recruiting parent involvement. They gained unusual access to parks as experiential classrooms. The resulting experiential programs in parks became centerpieces of intensive classroom projects organized to meet education reform standards. School leaders obtained the help of park staff as "adjunct" teachers and curriculum developers, as sympathetic allies and fundraising partners in the challenging task of educating children. Parents, civic organizations, and foundations willingly helped fund these programs, even during periods of school budget cuts, because they could see the positive effects on student motivation, achievement, and civic engagement.

For both park and nonpark partners, investments in intensive educational collaborations with local and regional schools paid large dividends—creating positive personal relationships to help balance inevitable problems that arose with park neighbors, generating volunteers, reaching underserved audiences through schools, promoting an educated visitorship, and increasing access to non-NPS funding sources for both education and preservation. Good stewardship produced increased support for good education.

Unique Learning Experiences for Students Lie at the Core of Educational Partnerships

The core of all the visions described in the six case studies is an intensive, experiential learning experience for students in the authentic environments that parks preserve. Each of the partnership programs took a different approach to substantially improve the number and quality of students' educational experiences. Some of the partnerships built hands-on education facilities; others involved students in multiple visits to the park and in service-learning projects; still others developed professional development opportunities for teachers. All created new curriculum materials to link the park experience to the schools' required curriculum goals, created new outreach programs to serve the neediest neighbors, or used web-based technologies. The teachers and students would think, feel, and talk differently about history or the environment—and about the park and its community—when they got back to school.

Both partners had to meet a high educational standard. Teachers understood that simply going to a National Park would not meet this standard—the park had to create an engaging educational experience linked specifically to the grade-level content the teachers had to teach and to the developmental needs of their students. Parks understood that teachers had to prepare their students for the experience and capitalize on it back in their classrooms. Neither partner could succeed in this effort without the other.

Partners took a variety of approaches. Lowell chose a model in which teachers attended workshops in Lowell and helped develop curriculum materials to prepare students for a four-hour experience during a one-day visit. Cuyahoga opted for a multiple-day residential environmental education program that

served fewer students than Lowell, but provided them more contact with park resources. The Pi Beta Phi/Great Smoky Mountains model provided for several one-day experiences and stewardship projects in each grade. The Golden Gate approach provided opportunities for students to engage in wetlands restoration. The Rock Creek-Alice Ferguson Foundation model engaged urban high school students in several different environmental projects. The New Bedford project took a different approach by first focusing on teacher professional development. All the partnerships created a "WOW" experience at the Park, and all worked with teachers as partners.

Creating Successful **Partnerships**

Each of the newly forming partnerships possessed characteristics that were **a Foundation** essential for creating a foundation for that partnership. The leaders who initiated these educational partnerships were strategic thinkers, innovators, educators, and risk-takers. They were aware of both the organizational limitations of their organizations and the opportunity presented by a good partner. Successful partnerships sprout in fertile seedbeds. The vision has to be strong enough to unify partnering organizations and attract initial community support and funding.

Leadership

The founders of the partnerships—leaders and mid-level staff—were educational innovators. They brought their experiential educational ideas with them into the park service or into their careers as educators in schools, universities, foundations, or Friends organizations. These ideas were fostered by their prior personal experiences as students, classroom teachers, museum educators, interpreters, or teachers in parks and recreation programs. As they moved up in the Park Service or in organizations that would become the parks' educational partners, they recognized their kindred spirits in other organizations. If we were to portray their perspectives visually, we would locate them at the outer edges of their organizations looking around for good ideas and potential allies.

These leaders and mid-managers were strategic thinkers, acutely aware of both the near-term and long-term limits of their organizations' financial resources, expertise, space, and pedagogies necessary to build up the quality and capacity of their educational programs. They knew their regular sources of funding would be inadequate to accomplish anything but the bare mission minimums, let alone their hopes to create something on the cutting edge for their park, school, university, and community. They saw the strategic advantage—even the necessity—of achieving their own educational goals by marshalling the resources of allies. And they saw the need for partnership early enough to be able to contribute staffing and money to create it—before the necessity was forced on them.

The leaders and core team members had "partnership attitude." Each partnership leader fully valued his/her own organization's traditions, values, and programs, but each felt certain the partners would not lose their organizational identity in a fully collaborative educational partnership—they would strengthen that identity. The partnership leaders, confident that they could make a larger whole from the sum of the parts, welcomed change.

Top leaders were partnership pragmatists. Although they were both idealists and altruists, they had to show their supervisors positive results—a new education center, higher visitation, new curriculum materials, greater student engagement and learning—that convinced skeptics, mobilized funding, and sustained their teams through the hard work of starting something new. They had to share success, to create win-win situations for both organizations.

Perhaps most important of all, the leaders acted. They trusted each other and their intuition, took risks, and effectively communicated the power of their general educational vision. They did not wait to move ahead until the vision was fully fleshed out into program applications. They got going and trusted that the details would work out.

Culture of Partnerships

The leaders of the prospective partners worked in larger "cultures of partnership" in their communities and regions. Alliances of civic, political, educational, and funding organizations were already working in the areas served by parks to promote community or regional revitalization. Staff of the eventual partnering organizations were either already collaborating or cooperating on projects, either as organizations or as active citizens. The leadership of the partnering organizations knew, liked, respected, and trusted one another.

In addition, the "change agents" in the organizations were aware of and involved in educational innovation and/or educational reform movements. The staff of the partners-to-be had significant experience in experimental education programming that would inform their eventual educational vision and programs. They were active in professional associations of teachers, museum educators, environmental education associations, and as educational specialists within the National Park Service. They began to advocate for new pedagogies within their organizations, such as living history, intensive education field experiences, engaging students as historians and scientists through the use of the tools of these disciplines, and creating community service projects. As they saw comparable organizations building new education facilities—discovery rooms, hands-on education centers, interactive exhibits—they began to lobby their organizations to create these same kinds of cutting-edge innovations. More recently, the federal and state education reform movements, emphasizing high standards and high-stakes standardized testing, have created both pressures and opportunities for the educational partners. Because the partners were aware of these changes, they were able to adjust their programs and ride the wave of change rather than be overwhelmed by it.

In every case, prior experience in developing and implementing programs on a smaller scale was critical to success in the larger venture. Most of the projects developed small pilot efforts to try out new strategies and obtain stakeholder feedback. They researched "best practices" in museums or other educational centers. Initial funding proposals had the ring of credibility, because staff and teachers could testify personally to the results or because the writers could cite the experience of another park or museum in implementing the same type of program.

All the partnerships took advantage of circumstances and serendipitous events that brought together key organizational leaders. Cuyahoga, New Bedford, and Lowell benefited from the work of well-placed, experienced legislators, park officials, university leaders, or Friends organizations who worked together to pass enabling legislation or to obtain start-up funding. The retirement of Massachusetts Senator Tsongas created the opportunity for a legislative aide and Park Superintendent Chrysandra Walter to obtain a base increase in the funding of Lowell National Historical Park to finish its Boott Mill restoration and educational exhibits. Rock Creek had the support of NPS leaders and local foundations. Golden Gate benefited from the vision and funding of two large local foundations, but the earlier success of its partnership with the Conservancy made this new project possible.

Strong Initial Visions

Each of the initiators of the six partnerships had a compelling, but general, educational vision it articulated to teachers, administrators, community groups, legislators, and potential funders. These visions were specific enough—a new hands-on education center, a residential environmental education center, the community as a classroom, a national park as environmental laboratory—to engage the imagination of key stakeholders, but skeletal enough to allow each person to flesh the vision out in the context of his or her own experience and goals. Teachers and parents saw an education center as a wonderful hands-on activity center, a more engaging and more authentic experience for their students than they could create in the classroom. Preservationists and conservationists could see that the educators would help them convey their stewardship messages. Community planners relished the idea of young people talking to parents and kin networks about coming back to the park and community, stimulating economic activity.

Aim for a Larger Vision That Is Appropriate to Resources and Share the Risk

Based on the experiences of these six partners, the vision of a proposed educational program should be ambitious, but appropriate to the partnership's size and history. In the cases presented here, the scope of the visions caused staff in the partnering organizations to be both nervous and excited. The leaders felt the risk, expressed partly in expectations of the stakeholders and partly in the resistance or outright opposition from some members of their staffs. They made calculated judgments that they could manage the opposition and scale back the project if they needed to. They sought the cutting edge but shrank back from grandiose scale that would put their organizations at risk.

In Washington, D.C., the Chief of Interpretation at Rock Creek Park saw the potential for a consortium of Washington, D.C., parks to link up with area high schools, and a grant from the Toyota USA Foundation through the National Park Foundation provided the catalyst to expand an existing collaboration with the Alice Ferguson Foundation. At first, the Foundation was not interested in applying for the grant because of past experiences working with large bureaucracies and limited experience with the target high school audience, but the commitment and experience of other key players convinced the Foundation's director to seize this opportunity.

The well-established Golden Gate NRA and Conservancy partnership had built the partnership infrastructure and trust to mount a major Crissy Field capital campaign and to define an ambitious strategy to extend their partnership to include organizations serving low-income urban schools and neighborhoods. But in taking this ambitious step, they had the active encouragement of two major foundations. A smaller partnership or a newer partnership would not want to overreach its capacity.

The Pi Beta Phi/Great Smoky Mountains partnership represents a risk of a very different sort. The principal of the school believed that interdisciplinary, experiential education programs in the park would produce more student learning than staying in the classroom. His vision ran counter to the postures taken by many educational peers in response to education reform, which emphasized more classroom time on task, standardized testing, and remedial programs. The park superintendent took a different risk — to devote a tremendous amount of staff time to plan and implement three programs per year for every grade, K-8, in a single school. The tradeoff was lower numbers of students impacted through deeper, more intensified experiences. Though visitation statistics are the standard measure of success, the park chose the social, educational, and political benefits that would result from a strong local partnership.

Finding a Partner and Growing a Partnership

Parks can partner with different kinds of organizations, including a university (Lowell), a K-8 school (Pi Beta Phi Elementary School), a nonprofit educational organization (Alice Ferguson Foundation), a museum (New Bedford Whaling Museum), or a cooperating association or Friends group (Golden Gate Parks Conservancy and Cuyahoga Valley National Park Association). Either the park or the partner can initiate the partnership. In both Lowell NHP and Cuyahoga Valley NP, the park staff and superintendents had already created educational programs and identified the need for Education Centers. In New Bedford and at the Pi Beta Phi School, the partners took the initiative. The New Bedford Whaling Museum played a major role in bringing the national park to New Bedford and in providing facilities and staff support for educational programming and community networking in the park's start-up work. The principal of the Pi Beta Phi School approached the superintendent of the park about using the park as an interdisciplinary classroom in every grade. The strong history of collaboration within the Golden Gate NRA-Parks Conservancy and Rock Creek Park-Alice Ferguson Foundation partnerships grew out of earlier cooperative efforts.

Indeed, each newly forming partnership shared certain characteristics which proved essential to success. The nonpark partner needed to

- have educational credibility with teachers, school administrators, and educational funders;
- commit to park-based learning as an integral part of its organizational mission;
- have legal authority to apply for educational grants and major gifts (be a nonprofit organization or institution of higher education) and have the organizational infrastructure to write and administer grants; and

 make an organizational investment of leadership time and organizational resources for at least three to five years before expecting to see substantial return on its investment (increased programming, increased numbers, revenue generated, etc.).

In turn, the park partner needed to

- be prepared to make a substantial commitment of staff, space, and funds to expand the quantity or improve the quality of school programming;
- give priority to NPS grant and contract work (Parks as Classrooms®, combined call or fee demonstration project funding requests);
- share control for educational programming with a partner organization; and
- make the commitment to demystify park culture so that the partner's work can complement the work of the park.

Starting Up

Visions eventually had to be brought into practical reality. The partners needed to

- assign staff from the partnering organizations to a working group;
- hire others to provide needed expertise;
- create a structure of governance between the staff working group and the partner hierarchies;
- divide the roles among the staff and between the two partners;
- decide what specific programs they would create for students and make sure the programs met the needs of teachers and engaged students, while addressing park resources and interpretive themes;
- create curriculum materials;
- · work effectively with teachers; and, finally,
- publicly unveil the program.

We can see from the six case studies that no two educational partnerships are alike in their start-up phase, but, taken together, they reveal common principles and typical problems. One of our authors, on reflecting about the lessons she learned, noted:

> I didn't anticipate the challenges involved in collaborating so closely with a partner. Over the past few years, I've gained an understanding of the culture of the Conservancy. Perhaps more importantly, working alongside Conservancy staff helped me gain a new perspective on the culture of my own organization. This knowledge helps me determine what obstacles are critical, what allies exist in both organizations, and which approaches can help me accomplish my work more efficiently. The road we travel today has fewer bumps and potholes than we faced in those early months, but it is still full of curves. (Golden Gate Team)

Creating an Educational Partnership Culture

By definition, partnerships mix staff from diverse organizational cultures—park, schools, nonprofits, Friends groups, cooperating associations, and academic cultures. The case studies show these "change agents" typically spent one to three years in a planning and innovation

phase of education program development. The case study authors describe how each partner in the six partnerships possessed an organizational "nationalism"—a certainty or "egotism of expertise" about the "right way" to teach students or to develop curriculum materials. Although everyone on the initial education partnership teams shared a passion for working with students and teachers, they used different vocabulary, had different teaching methods, and went about program development in different ways. Indeed, they tended to stereotype each other initially, because they had not yet developed personal trust or a new working culture. Through working with students and teacher advisors, each new partnership team compromised and gradually developed its own philosophy and vocabulary of education. It created its own organizational structure and values that combined the best of both partner organizations.

The partnership case studies suggest that several factors go into the creation of this new organizational culture, a culture that differs from that of either parent culture:

- A critical mass of three to five staff needed to be freed up from other obligations in order to have time to work.
- New approaches to education in the park and in the schools required team members to apply educational theory and philosophy in real park-based activities, which, in turn, required new but common vocabularies to be used.
- The development process was intense ("cauldrons of creativity"), the discussions difficult, but the successful outcomes created a sense of shared triumph and collegiality.
- The need for agreement about logistical procedures required people to work as a team to create the positive learning they wanted students and teachers to experience.
- The need to have top-level leaders and middle managers "run interference," step in at the right time to resolve festering conflicts, and divert funds from other projects meant that the top leaders had to be involved and to commit their organizations to the partnership.

The culture is not simply a compromise or an amalgam of the two contributing parent cultures. It is a transformed culture created by the staff from the two organizations as they have together created new education programs, worked with teachers, grappled with both philosophical and logistical issues, and enjoyed success. The new group culture is somewhat fragile, especially at the beginning and especially during periods of stress, turnover, and budget cuts.

The development of an internal educational partnership culture and the "culturing" of staff leaders is one of the most important products of the partnership, but only at Golden Gate did the partners take the time at the beginning of the partnership to work through the culture issues to create "The Crissy Field Way," a statement of partnership values and a decision-making process. The other partnerships worked out their problems "on the fly" under the pressure and the creativity of the innovation process. Some of the partnerships paid relatively high prices in the loss of staff and in the personal wounds

that festered, got scratched in small ways, and infected other partnership processes at those sites. Some attention to partnership culture and decisionmaking would be beneficial in the early stages of the partnership.

But even with their cultural difficulties, the new working groups transformed organizational thinking, led staff to see new ways to creatively combine forces and resources, and created the capacity to take advantage of serendipitous opportunities. Staff began saying things like "Hey! Why don't we ..." or "Maybe we could help by ...," and the partnership began to reach a "take-off" point.

Problems to Watch Out For

- The partnership does not have the personal and financial support of one or both of the CEOs of the founding organizations.
- One of the founding leaders leaves without formalizing a multi-year institutional commitment.
- The founding CEOs do not stay involved enough in the sensitive planning/start-up period.
- The top leaders are fully committed to the partnership, but they lack sufficient commitment from a mid-management group.
- The partnership is one among many "top priorities."
- The vision is too ambiguous or is not embedded in a larger community/ regional partnership or educational strategy to command the imagination and commitment of stakeholders.
- The partners form the partnership thinking it will save them money and solve budget woes.
- Partners plan too much and don't show sufficient progress to sustain support and momentum.
- Chasing funding distracts from mission objectives and organizational goals.
- Staff from the partnering organizations are unable to resolve organizational conflicts, and their leaders have no mechanism in place to intervene.

Skills of the Initial Planning Group

Successful educational partnerships require at least a dozen "skill sets." The partner organizations provide some of the skilled people by assigning staff to work with the partnership team. One or both of the partner organizations then hires new staff to fill in the skill/function gaps. Usually the core partnership staffing consists of a director, a curriculum developer with teaching experience, a content expert, a park education or interpretive specialist, an administrative assistant or secretary, and a supervisor of new teaching staff. Some of these roles are performed by a single individual, and sometimes the role is played by a part-time person. The teams split up the tasks, drawing on consultants and part-time staff and volunteers as necessary.

The partners had difficulty filling some of these roles, especially the role of director of the new partnership program or learning center. Partnership leaders need to be people with excellent "people" and communication skills. They need to function in the space between organizations—to be great brokers and collaborators. In some of the partnerships, a staff member of one of the parent organizations was asked to fill this role, while in others the partnership hired new staff. Cuyahoga tried both; after several attempts to hire outside directors to operate their educational partnership

program, the Cuyahoga Friends group successfully promoted one of its own staff to run the educational partnership. The lesson is that whichever solution is adopted, the new staff will need time to "acculturate" to the parent cultures and to foster the new culture of the educational partnership.

Educational Partnership Functions and Skills

- Organizational leadership (planning, budgeting, organization change theory and practice, political skills, entrepreneurial thinking, strategic planning, etc.)
- Clerical and bookkeeping skills
- Knowledge and experience of teaching and learning in non-school environments: supervisor and front-line staff
- Knowledge of/relationship with the community(-ies) served by the park
- Curriculum/materials development
- Training and supervision of staff and volunteers
- Knowledge of school structures, classroom teaching, and designs for effective teacher workshops
- Content knowledge (facts, concepts, seminal works, and research skills in the relevant disciplines)
- Presentation skills
- · Marketing and educational outreach strategies
- · Grant writing, membership development, and fundraising
- · Evaluation and assessment
- Web design and maintenance
- Graphic design
- · People skills

Dividing Roles

Dividing the roles initially between partners is complex. In the startup period, the partners have not yet developed full trust; they have yet to work out their decision-making processes, and the staffs are touchy about their prerogatives and expertise. Both the nature of partnerships and the requirements of education programs require everyone to be extremely versatile and flexible, but staff members seek the stability of formally defined position descriptions and clear decision-making.

The partners' most difficult decision is whether the working group will be headed by (I) a nonpark partner employee such as the director of the education center (the most common model), (2) a park employee such as a supervisory park ranger (as was the case with the Cuyahoga partnership in its initial phase), or (3) both a nonpark partner employee and a park employee who co-chair a partnership steering committee (the model used by Great Smoky Mountains NP and Pi Beta Phi). Partnerships seemed more successful when their structures were built around concepts such as:

- balancing of power and authority on the basis of trust, rather than relying on literal power-sharing parity at each level of staffing (such as having co-directors);
- effective communication; adequate opportunity for input and review of policy, program design, and budget; and the opportunity to revisit decisions as the need arose;

- assigning functions to partners based on practical rather than theoretical or abstract principles (for example—operations could be handled by the park staff if the partnership used a lot of park resources or by the nonpark partner if the program was relatively self-contained away from other park functions);
- consensus decision-making at the leadership and management levels, rather than relying on retaining "veto" power (although both partners clearly understood that they had the legal right to veto some decisions);
- remaining flexible to respond to change and to take advantage of opportunities.

The nonpark partner organizations tended to take on the grant-writing and fundraising, but park staff often had excellent national political contacts, which in turn led to federal grants and appropriations.

Observations about Dividing Staff Functions

Dividing staff functions can create challenges for the partnership if issues such as those listed below are not addressed.

- Because some members of the educational working group will be supervised by the park superintendent/designee and others by the partner director/designee, the educational group must clearly define how decisions will be made at each level of the organization.
- Partners need to spend enough time clarifying role definition, structure, and decision-making but balance it with more concretely productive work, such as the development of a new program. But they must be wary of the "planning to plan the plan" syndrome and equally aware that complete consensus about the partnership structure and educational program design from everyone in both organizations will stall the process.
- Splitting leadership for a function between a park ranger and the nonpark partner equivalent doubles the amount of complexity to get anything done, increases friction, and reduces accountability. A better alternative is for one person to be in charge of the function and delegate clearly defined activities or projects to others.

The First Legal Agreement

Partners have difficulty writing the first legal agreement (i.e., cooperative agreement, general agreement), visually representing the partnership within the organizational charts of the parent organizations, and delivering the mission messages of each organization to students and teachers. These documents and issues force partners to distill something quite complex down to a simple graphic or a short document. The creation of these documents requires the participation of organizational officials whose job it is to prevent liability. Either or both partners believe that a legal document can and will resolve every foreseeable issue. In reality these documents are better at describing solutions to past rather than future problems.

An agreement is a legal necessity, because it establishes a framework and addresses issues such as liability, approvals, transfer of funds between partners, and reports. But it need not spell out all of the details of a structure that will change quite continuously. One alternative is to keep

the agreement to the essentials. The document outlines the commitments each partner is making in general terms, the agreement about how financial matters will be handled, the contingency to amend or terminate the agreement, the caveat that all agreements are contingent upon adequate funding of the parent organizations, the identification of the authorizing officials for each organization, etc. The agreement could then remain in force for the required number of years. The key leaders of the partnering organizations would delegate responsibility to their key education staff to spell out the more specific details of the partnership agreement. An accompanying (simple) organizational chart could visually portray the structure of the partnership within the parent organizational structures and be changed as the partnership structure evolves. As part of the annual partnership planning and goal-setting process, this operating memo would be reviewed and updated at the operations level with review by the park superintendent and the authorizing official of the partner organization or his/her designee.

Proactively Managing Resistance through Participation and Communication

Other work groups will question the resources and priority status given to the new education partnership. Staff assigned to the work group from the partner organizations will feel torn loyalties particularly in times of financial stress or staff turnover. Successful partnerships invite input, communicate how and why they are doing things, create opportunities for many staff to participate in activities, and share success.

Partners needed to solve issues and personality conflicts before they festered. Most of the partners had not developed a clear problem-solving process in anticipation of really serious disagreements. The enthusiasm generated by the creative process carried them through most difficulties, but the pressure of deadlines worsened partnership and personality issues. Those partnerships that anticipated problems and developed a process for resolving differences had an easier time. For example, the Golden Gate "Crissy Field Way" specified that the partners would first try to reach consensus. If unable to compromise, they would see if they could resolve the issue through experimentation and evaluation. In Lowell, the partners agreed that the Dean of the Graduate School of Education and the Superintendent of the park would be the arbiters of issues that could not be settled within the education work group or between the education group and other work groups.

Researching the Educational Niche

The broad visions and commitments to partnering in the six partnerships provided the guiding philosophy of education, allowed for a variety of more concrete programmatic avenues to be developed later to implement the vision, but set some parameters and limits for the development of specific program applications. However, the working groups still needed to research their educational market niche—to discover the "best fit" between their themes and resources and the curriculum at specific grades in the most important school districts to serve.

Involving Teachers

Teachers and curriculum leaders must have ownership of the park/partner educational program; their involvement ensures that programs will meet state and school instructional mandates. A teacher must be convinced that the program will be worth spending time to prepare the students, to get the parents to contribute the money for the buses and program fees, and to take the risk to take them to the park. To accomplish this high standard, the partners must collaborate with teachers and administrators and form ongoing partnerships with the schools. Successful park-based partnerships utilized different forms of collaborations with teachers and schools, but all engaged teachers as adjunct staff and fostered teacher ownership of the program. When budget cuts threatened the programs, the teachers and parents advocated for them.

Once they gathered information from teacher and curriculum advisors, partners then had to decide how to create the kinds of programs that met teacher needs and engaged students at the level of program intensity required to achieve the park/partner objectives and at a fee that schools and parents could afford. Each of the partnerships arrived at different levels of program intensity and measures of success. Issues that gave partnerships difficulty in their start-up phase included:

Standardization: Parks have a culture in which individual rangers develop and present their own educational programs and adapt the program to the needs of different audiences. Rangers used to developing their own programs often resist standardizing programs (even if the standard is high). Teachers wanted programs to be the same from year to year, highly participatory, and tightly correlated with the learning standards they must teach. In general, the partnerships tended to narrow the range of programs they offered, to create standard curriculum materials and program teaching strategies (but leave rangers/teachers flexibility in teaching style), and to link those programs with more specific grades in the districts they serve. Standardization promotes greater consistency and increases the ability to meet the stated objectives.

Timing and Audience Involvement in Piloting Activities and Programs: Partner organizations felt pressure to get up and running. In some cases the opportunity or need to get a grant caused the partners to omit some planning steps or to increase the speed with which a program needed to be developed. Where a new education center or activity had to be designed and built, parks were used to two- to three-year planning timelines, design provided from either the NPS Denver Service Center or Harpers Ferry Center with limited staff and teacher involvement, construction specifications designed to last 20 years, and relatively high cost-per-square-foot. In the majority of cases, a park's partnering organization opted for a quicker pace of development that included greater staff and audience involvement in pilot-testing programs. Activities tended to have lower design and construction costs because park and nonpark partner staff managed the contracts, got materials donated, or designed the activities so they used inexpensive equipment that could be easily replaced.

Fee and Free: Free park programs competed against nonpark partner programs for which the fees charged paid for the costs of hiring staff to teach them. Park staff felt strongly that fees would bar needy districts from participating; their partners argued reasonably that they needed fees to pay costs, that most schools were already paying fees to visit area cultural sites, and that they could raise money to underwrite the costs of serving low-income districts. The most common initial solution was simply to add new fee-based partnership programs to the park's existing menu of programs and to justify the fee by citing the higher level of hands-on experience or staffing than the park offered as part of its core or base-funded programming. As the new programs attracted a growing audience, as partners succeeded in raising funds to reach out to underserved audiences, and as Congress initiated the fee demonstration pilot program, conflicts over fee and free programming tended to recede. Parks and partners tended to meld their school programs into a single menu.

Finding Your Niche

- Assessing your target audience requires you to look at the content related to your resources, at grade-level curriculum requirements, and at delivery methods. While teachers in grades 3-8 are more likely to visit the park than high school teachers, your story might be more appropriate for high school. If that is the case, you may need to look at a web-based program to reach this audience that often finds it difficult to participate in a field experience, or you may need to adopt other measures that make it practical and worthwhile for the high school audience to visit your site. Special target audiences may require more customization.
- Most states now publish curriculum standards which define the grades in which the park's science, English, or/and history content should be taught, making it easier for the park/partners to reach out to teachers in those grades in target school systems. Develop your outreach strategy to work with all the history or science teachers at a particular grade in a school system.
- The partners need to decide whether there is a market for very intensive programs (multiple visits) for a lower number of students, or a more compelling need for a less intensive program to serve a larger number of students, or some balance of the two.
- Partners need to assess what their competition is already providing and at what cost, and then either create a better or a different program or develop a collaborative program with one or more of the organizations already providing programming.
- The partners need to develop a strategy for seeking funding to reach low-income and minority audiences in their market area.

Communicating Partner Mission Messages

Here, too, there was no one formula for success in conveying the mission messages of the partnering organizations. Partners used several different strategies.

- All teaching staff were trained to introduce and conclude each educational program by conveying both partners' mission messages.
- In some partnerships, partner teachers outnumbered uniformed rangers, but parks provided enough rangers to create a "sufficient uniform presence" and of course all the programs occurred in the park.

- Programs were designed to have students visit both park and nonpark partner spaces when possible and to encourage progressively greater involvement by students and teachers with the partner organizations through special events, service projects, volunteer activities or other strategies.
- Partnership logos illustrated visually that both organizations had created the educational programs and repeated the message in words. These logos appeared in all publications and on the signage in key education activity spaces.
- Publications and products carried the NPS arrowhead and the nonpark partner logo and wording that credited both organizations for the creation of the product, along with other individuals and organizations that had contributed funding.
- Graphic materials included both park and nonpark partner staff.
- Park and nonpark partner web pages were tightly linked or even combined.
- Each partner promoted the other partner's programs and calendar of events.

Final Thoughts on the Start-up Period

Partnership start-up periods are often confusing and frustrating, but always stimulating, as the partner staff try to sort out what each partner should keep doing, stop doing, or start doing. Most importantly they had to do something of very good quality, had to have a good time working together, and had to develop trust and respect for one another. Keeping the focus on student learning and enjoyment and on teacher needs kept the teams grounded in the right realities and helped avoid turf wars. They argued constructively, compromised, experimented, and, when in doubt, tried it out. Partners worked together to develop a common vocabulary, a common rationale for why and how to teach in the park environment, a common definition of success, and ownership of the program by all the stakeholders. They made teachers full partners.

The top leadership of the partners stayed involved, provided active support, intervened when "meltdown moments" occurred, and expected results. They needed to ensure that both the partnership processes and the educational programs developed simultaneously and that as many people as possible took credit and pride in the partnership's successes. Everything took longer than planned and cost more. A partnership added a layer of personal and organizational complexity, particularly in the start-up phase. It was common for one or another of the partners to feel they could and should "just do it ourselves." One way or the other, the partners needed to take enough time to build their partnership processes and to test the programs with students and teachers. The initial investment paid off later on.

Recurring Issues in **Educational**

Partnerships evolve and change in response to internal and external forces. It is tempting to think that as they evolve, they become more sophisticated and advanced, but the case studies suggest that partnerships move through **Partnerships** periods of growth and smooth sailing followed by rough patches that

require re-examination of the partnership. However, partner responses to new challenges built on prior experiences and benefited from the relationships established during the start-up period. But new challenges also tended to allow old issues to re-surface. Many of these recurring issues are predictable, allowing new partners to put procedures in place to reduce their severity. Each recurring issue springs from the essential fact of partnerships—that they are a blending of two organizations to administer a program different from any other program that exists in the parent organizations. Under stress, the blend of staff drawn from the parent organizations can tend to retreat to the comfort and support of their home organizational cultures and hierarchies.

Unfortunately, partners have had few opportunities for professional development in the skills of partnering and have few peers to draw on as mentors. Additionally, educational programs are constantly changing in response to changes in schools or to the desire to improve the program. Educators are never satisfied with the quality of what they do, are constantly trying to serve more students, and tend to undercharge for the quality of program they offer. For all these reasons, partners rarely set aside enough time or budget enough resources to allow for the professional development of their managers, for reviewing the health of the partnership, putting in place a specific process for hiring new leadership staff and orienting them to the culture of the other partner, considering strategic alternatives, collecting assessment data, or seeking external review and consultation.

We see from the case studies that the sources of stress include:

- staff issues, turnover, and transitions,
- resistance to the idea of partnering from within the partnering organizations,
- structural division of functions and roles,
- · determining and measuring success,
- money matters, and
- sustaining the partnership through fundraising, re-invention, and other strategies.

Difficulties are magnified exponentially when two or more of these forces occur simultaneously.

Staff Issues, Turnover, and Transitions

Partners forming a partnership worked intensively in a "creative crucible" to create their educational products and strategy. They entered the process with enthusiasm and vision and emerged from it transformed and charged up to ensure its success. The process of converting the vision to reality was quite consuming, pressured usually by the need to meet short deadlines. The implementation and accompanying success brought up a whole host of unanticipated demands that had to be addressed. As in the start-up period, with the exception of the partners at Golden Gate, partners rarely took the time out to write down their evolving philosophies and practices of partnering or pedagogy, "market" the approach to peers in their respective organizations, and to make it part of the organizational cultures.

At various times in the case studies, key visionaries left each park and/or partnering organization and were replaced either by other people in the organization or by outsiders who hadn't been there in the beginning and therefore lacked (I) "deep" understanding of the ideas, philosophy, pedagogy, or vocabulary, (2) the same level of passion or commitment to the vision, or (3) the deep understanding of, or commitment to, the partner culture that emerged from the visioning/implementation process. New staff at either the top or middle management level can have a strong impact on the partnership. Therefore, it is critical that the partnership leaders develop a succession strategy and a process by which to communicate the vision, goals, and mission of the partnership to a candidate being considered for the key position, to gauge the ability of the staff person to work in a partnership culture, and to keep others in the organization informed and involved.

This process is particularly important when a park superintendent or the head of the nonpark partnering organization leaves or retires. Unless that leader has developed a strong cadre of colleagues supportive of the partnership, the negative results can be either quite immediate or they can lead to a subtle weakening of the foundation structures over a longer period. The withdrawal of support takes the form of efforts to return to earlier models of instruction or logistics, the diversion of staff or resources to other priorities, confusion about roles and decision-making, or misunderstanding about terminology. Partners who formalized their partnership structure in written documents (cooperative agreements, strategic planning documents, budget and fundraising commitments, documentation of the positive effects of the partnership, etc.) provided new leaders with a history of the partnership and the reasons for continuing it and thereby lessened the disruption of top personnel changes.

Partnerships necessarily move through phases of creativity and consolidation, each with its dominant challenges, each benefiting from different kinds of leadership. Visionaries and managers need one another but need help learning this lesson. Creating a partnership requires risk-taking, experimentation, and divergent thinking—an idea a minute. Sustaining a partnership requires standardization, growth in staff and budget, and predictability. But too much sameness leads to stagnation, while too much creativity can lead to exhaustion.

The transitions from creativity to the management of a growing program are tricky. The dominant "personality" of the partnership staff group is appropriate to the phase just past, not to the one on the horizon. For example, when the new Education Center opens or the pilot program is offered every day for several groups, operational issues become paramount. Partners spend time managing personnel issues, creating standard operating procedures, standardizing curriculum materials, marketing the regular menu of programs, and assessing and refining programs. The creative people may get bored or frustrated and look elsewhere for their challenges. If they stay in their leadership roles, their subordinates get frustrated by the leaders' failures to address management issues.

Assuming that innovators become successful managers (or give way to new manager staff), managers can be faced with de-stabilizing factors (positive opportunities or negative budget cuts). The manager-stabilizers may feel threatened, seek the security of tradition, or resign. When storm clouds loom, some managers tend to batten down the hatches; other managers are the risk-takers and look for the waves to ride.

Successful partnerships require a balance of creators, managers, and consensus-builders. In some periods of program development, the creative leaders will need to be in ascendance, in others, the stabilizers and marketers will need to take the lead. Successful partners recognize what kind of leadership is most needed to maintain the partnership's balance and its edge. When staff depart, unsuccessful groups tend to replace the leaders with people like themselves, which produces homogeneity. If this happens, the groups lose flexibility to respond to change or, alternatively, lose the capacity to convert creativity into regular programming. Wise partners invest in staff development and program revision to nourish creativity and innovation even during periods of consolidation; during periods of innovation, they ensure that someone is minding the stability store.

Resistance to the Need for a Partnership

Organizational resistance to the partnership waxes and wanes as the partnering organizations experience staff turnover or respond to organizational changes. One source of resistance is from the "traditionalists" within each organization who were lukewarm or actively opposed to the partnership when it was first formed. People in a park with a long history, strong values, a history of educational programming, and a consistent way of training staff in its culture of interpretation/education sometimes resist the idea of forming an educational partnership with an "outside" organization. Philosophically and personally, staff believe that education is the park's job, and no one can do it as well. If the leadership suggests that partnerships expand the park's capacity to carry out its mission, staff believe that the park should provide only the level of service it can afford. If the public objects, they say, more funding will be made available. As organizations experience stress, these people's voices can sometimes become more influential. The same forces can be at work in the park's partnering organization.

Another source of resistance to change might come from within the partner-ship itself. In the early "visioning" and "start-up" years, the pace of change is quite hectic. Staff yearn for quiet waters so they can renew their strength before facing another bout of rapids. But changes in school curriculum, a need to seek funding to sustain programs, or the need for the partnership to take on additional functions can meet resistance from within the partnership staff. All organizational structures tend to get top-heavy or to become inflexible and therefore less able to respond to changes. Partnerships need to reorganize to remain efficient and to seek new sources of funding.

Circumstances cause partnership change, reorganization, and re-invention. Sometimes partnerships should grow, and sometimes they should grow smaller. Changes in staff, challenges of maintaining creativity while managing

a program, serendipitous events, and periods of re-invention for sustainability are key turning points in a partnership. They are points at which the partnership can flourish and move to the next level or slide back into previous ways of doing business. But turning points are obvious only to those watching out for them. In the partnerships portrayed here, organizations managed resistance by:

- celebrating the successes and keeping everyone focused on the advantages of partnering,
- broadening staff participation during each stage of implementation to persuade staff that the organization would gain resources and capacity,
- building the new program on the staff's previous programming, and
- sharing success widely to encourage everyone to take credit for it.

In all the partnerships, these strategies proved successful enough to build a critical mass of support in the partnership organizations. But in several of the case studies, the leadership of the partnership was prepared to go ahead despite the objections of some key staff at all levels of the organizations and indeed to accept resignations or to encourage resisting staff to change positions. They recognized that if they expected everyone to get on board, the educational programs could not change or grow fast enough to meet external needs.

Division of Roles and Structure

The case studies suggest that as a partnership begins to serve a larger number of students and hires additional staff, or as the partnership becomes involved in more intensive curriculum-based collaborations, the size of the staff increases, and certain skills and functions become more important. The growth in the staff creates the opportunity or the need to assign staff to specialized functions. For example, as a program moves from its start-up period into ongoing operations, the management issues increase. Logistics, differences in policies, pay, evaluation, and procedures demand greater administrative attention from staff and greater skills in dealing with ambiguity and negotiation. The need to manage budgets and to write grants also expands. The partnership might expand its teacher workshop offerings or experience demand by schools for new curriculum materials. These changes create a need for periodic review of the roles and functions, with reorganization as needed.

Just as the partners experienced difficulty in allocating roles to either the park or the nonpark partner organization, the partners experienced a new round of difficulty in creating a new staffing structure. With a history of trust and cooperation under their belts, often the partners were able to make decisions based on whether the park staff member or the nonpark partner could best fill the new or larger function. At the Tsongas Center in Lowell, the teaching staff expanded significantly as the number of students served reached 60,000, requiring the hiring of part-time staff through the university. These new staff were supervised and trained jointly by park and university staff. For the Pi Beta Phi project, the need for a coordinator of the project was not identified in the start-up phase. It was only after the partnership had been in place for five years that a coordinator was hired to handle all matters relating to

project implementation and planning, and a decision was made that it was beneficial to base this person at the school. The *Bridging the Watershed* partnership identified a need for additional staff both at the foundation and from the park to support the program.

Determining and Measuring Success

Every educational partnership identifies ways it knows that it has been successful. Whether that success is measured in numbers of students and teachers impacted by a program, in the amount of funding that can be raised to get the project off the ground, or in how well the project promotes the vision, some criteria for success are identified in the start-up phase of the partnership. How success is measured is determined by what is being measured.

Quality v Quantity

Reporting the numbers of people impacted by a program is a relatively straight-forward method of data collection. Good record keeping will provide this information. In Lowell, the increase of the number of students participating in programs grew from 17,000 in 1991, to 60,000 in 2003. While numbers alone might have been an indicator of success in the past, today increasing numbers may not be a sufficient indicator of a program that meets the needs of teachers and students.

Student Learning

It is much more difficult to quantify student learning outcomes. Most of the case studies collected some data concerning the effect of their projects on student learning. Lowell used teacher evaluation forms to gather data on what the teachers thought students had learned. It is very challenging to develop instruments such as pretests and posttests to assess student learning. Golden Gate used grant funding to evaluate their programs using data collected from both students and teachers. In addition to feedback forms, the case studies illustrate a mix of methods such as observation, staff focus groups, outside review of materials, and exit slips.

Most of the partnerships collected primarily qualitative data rich in description but did not focus on the measurement of student learning outcomes. In New Bedford, feedback from teachers attending an institute in the form of answering an open-ended question is a good example of the type of data collected concerning the quality of the program. Case study analysis suggests a need to use quantitative measures to document student learning outcomes in the future to satisfy the requirements of schools to meet education reform mandates. The Pi Beta Phi Project used both qualitative and quantitative evaluation in their project from the beginning. They developed and implemented a pretest for all students in every unit, and used a variety of posttests to assess both the achievements of the project and the growth of individual students. These data benefit both the school and the park. However, collecting this level of data takes both time and expertise to adequately analyze and compile statistics from this data. Partnerships will need to allocate new funds to hire this kind of expertise, which, in turn, will require them to either increase fundraising or cut other administrative or programmatic expenses.

Assessing Partnership Processes

Assessing program outcomes is one type of evaluation; another type is the evaluation of the partnership itself. Often the partnership evaluation is neglected until a crisis arises. During a crisis, partners try to figure out what went wrong or where the breakdown in communication occurred. When a crisis situation occurs, it often requires the partnership to ask for help from an outside source so that an objective view is obtained. A major crisis can have long-term impact on the partnership. While some crises are probably unavoidable, they might be much more minor if the partners were to develop a pattern of taking the pulse of the various elements of the partnership on a regular basis. Time for review and reflection is critical in any organization but especially true where two distinct cultures have formed a partnership.

Outside Review

Outside review can be helpful as a regularly scheduled procedure. Too often partners fail to see the need to change direction until it is too late. Partners hold fast to past success—to their new partnership pedagogy and culture. Park partnerships rarely have boards of trustees. The nonpark partner may well have a board, but the partnership lives at the organization's edges while still existing within the guidelines for both park and nonpark organizations. No regular external review occurs unless the partners create one. The case studies reveal that at key transition points, partners need outside perspectives—consultants, visiting teams, a facilitator in the long-range interpretive planning process, teacher advisors—to solve an organizational crisis, to take on a new and larger fundraising function and a new organizational structure, or to stop offering one program to free up staff to create a new one. Outside voices can strengthen staff voices that have been crying in the wilderness for change. Partners are wise to make external reviews—by teachers, peers, and outside evaluators—a regular and required part of their planning and budget process. Both Lowell and Cuyahoga benefited from an external review. (NPS staff may want to check out Director's Orders 20—Agreements, 21—Donations and Fundraising, and 32— Cooperating Associations for additional information.)

Money Matters

Through partnering, the national parks gained access to money that could be obtained only by the partners to support the partnership programs. Partner organizations contributed valuable resources such as staff time, facilities, maintenance, administrative functions, supplies, and materials. Parks and partnering nonprofit organizations gained access to NPS sources of funding, as well as space, staff time and expertise. They worked out creative ways to manage funds and obtain grants. The parks found funds by working for a base increase, as Lowell and Rock Creek did, or by applying for a National Park Foundation Grant such as the National Park Labs Program at Golden Gate, a Parks as Classrooms® grant like the one that provided seed money for the Great Smoky project and like the one that supported the teacher institutes at New Bedford, or like the Challenge Cost Share grant for Rock Creek Park. Their partners sought a number of ways to fund the partnership: donations, grants, state funding, school district

funding, revenue generation from sales, etc. They were successful because individually they were worthy of funding, but together they presented an even more compelling case. The financial whole far exceeded the sum of the parts.

As the partnerships moved from the start-up phase into their operations phase, partners had disagreements and felt tension about whether and when to charge fees, who should collect the fees, and how the money would be distributed among the partners. Partners brought substantial experience with earning income and fundraising to the partnership, more than did park staff, whose organizational tradition was to provide free, high-quality interpretive programming to visitors. Although all parks have charged fees for special uses and Congress has authorized selected parks to charge fees, the tradition of free programming is very strong in the NPS. Fees continued to be a thorny issue even after the start-up phase. In all the case studies, the park initiated its educational partnership after it already had developed interpretive and education programs for which no fee was charged.

Once the partnership, including the park, began to charge fees for some school programs and not others, they risked confusing teachers and creating competition between park and park/partner programs. The partners tried a variety of strategies to solve this dilemma:

- At Golden Gate, the nonpark partner programs were offered for a fee, but the existing partnership programs were offered to schools at no charge.
- Cuyahoga charged a fee for its programs, but the partnership raised funds to provide scholarships for 25% of its students in the resident programs. Funds came from foundation grants, individual donations, special fundraising events, and interest from endowment funds.
- In its early days, Lowell charged schools a fee for the 90-minute handson activity taught by staff assigned to the Tsongas Center but provided
 the ranger-led portion of the program at no charge. Subsequently, after
 Tsongas Center teachers began teaching the tours and the park decided
 to make all educational programs linked to specific school curriculum
 objectives, the partners agreed to offer one menu of educational programs and charged a fee for each program. More intensive programs
 (the need to contract with boat captains to do water quality testing in
 the canals or on the river) cost more than the standard tour/workshop
 program. A policy was adopted to seek grant funding to reach out to
 low-income urban schools in the region and waive the program fees for
 any school that requested the waiver in writing.

Park and nonpark partners need to clearly and consistently articulate the policy and the rationale for the fees to staff. Convincing staff of the rightness of the fee structure within the mission values of the organization will require substantial time and effort by the leadership. The staff must be willing and able unapologetically to communicate the policy and the rationale to teachers, regardless of their personal feelings about fees. Staff will be able to do this if the following conditions exist:

• The partnership leaders clearly articulate how they will reach out to low-income schools and define in writing how they will ensure that schools who truly cannot afford to pay can still participate in appropriate

- numbers. The partners can give free or reduced admissions initially and then subsequently work with the teacher and school to raise funds to pay for the program in future years. Note also that free and reduced-price admission costs are an expense that can affect the sustainability of the partnership.
- The rationale for fees is clearly stated and logical, so that it is easy to understand why certain programs are offered free and others carry a fee. The fee charged for intensive programs should be proportionally greater than the fee for a less-intensive program. The fee structure must be reasonable relative to the fees charged for similar programs by other organizations in the area.
- A policy should specify the conditions and procedures for determining fees for new and existing programs. The fees should be based on expense budgets developed for each fee program and reflect non-NPS staff training expenses, direct teaching expenses, supplies and materials, marketing costs (including design, printing, and mailing), clerical support, and the indirect or overhead expense, minus the NPS contribution.

If a program costs more than schools can pay, then, by definition, the program is not economically sustainable. The partnership then needs to decide whether to further subsidize the program from internal budgets, to raise funds from outside sources, or to change the program staffing, strategies, equipment, etc., to make the program break even at rates teachers feel are affordable. In decreasing program cost, care must be taken to sustain educational quality. If a decision is made to further subsidize a program, it should be done only when there is a compelling, mission-driven reason, since the time and resources will be coming out of some other existing educational offering.

The hard fact about educational programs is that the financial support provided by the partnering organizations in cash or in kind will not be sufficient to cover the costs of offering these programs. Partners must think about the long-term financial implications of each educational decision, and they must incorporate grant writing, fundraising, and revenue-producing activities into their staffing and long-range planning.

Even on the nonpark partner side of the equation, however, educators are altruists and not accountants; they almost always underestimate actual costs. For example, they do not include the overhead costs of administering the partnership. They also underestimate what teachers are already paying for programs of less quality offered by museums or other educational providers. In most of the case studies presented here, the partners decided to charge a fee to cover a portion of the direct expenses for the educational programs offered through the partnership and relied on a combination of grants from NPS sources and from private sources and fundraising to cover partner operating costs. Grant funding also covered expenses of outreach and program fees for lowincome schools, obviating the need by the park or nonpark partner to waive fees and absorb the expense.

Over time, the need to increase or even sustain funding for the partnerships became a constantly recurring issue. The issues have taken a variety of forms:

- The differing philosophies between the partnering organizations with respect to charging fees for school programs and/or other forms of generating income led to compromises in which partners tended to undercharge for the quality of programs they presented. They could raise the fees gradually, but not quickly enough.
- Initial funding streams through the parent organizations decreased quite suddenly because parks, schools, foundations, and universities all experienced budget cuts during the recession in the first years of the 21st century.
- The partnership staffing increased to manage their larger programs, in turn increasing operating costs because of increased salary and benefit costs, utilities and other costs.
- The partnerships have not reallocated enough staff time to grant writing and revenue generation to fill the gap between revenue and expenses.

Each of the partnerships is developing a plan to diversify its funding and to sustain the partnership financially. The leaders of the partnering organizations believe that the educational partnership will be successful because:

- funders recognize the increased quality and uniqueness of both the product and the collaboration;
- teachers, schools, and parents have demonstrated their willingness to
 participate in fundraising activities to participate in these unique programs
 by not only paying program fees, but also paying for the ever-increasing
 costs of buses;
- through reorganization and economies of scale (numbers served, larger amount of revenue), partners can lower operating costs; and
- in times of economic downturn or major turnover in staff leadership, each partner serves as a kind of conscience to the other partner. Each feels a responsibility to the other and is able to use the partnership agreement as leverage in its argument with its top leadership to minimize the cuts or to sustain the commitments.

Conclusion

These six partnership case studies provide many lessons for people interested in starting or sustaining educational partnerships between national parks and other organizations, lessons we have attempted to identify. As with learning of all kinds, the lessons are not literal formulas for success, but rather a series of general principles to apply to the specifics of a particular park and its partners, a set of issues we believe every educational partnership will face, and some methods individual partners have used to respond to the issues.

Circumstances caused these partnerships to change, reorganize, re-invent. These external forces took many forms in the partnership—a state changed the grade level in which a park's content was taught, school budget cuts caused a freeze in field trip funding, the fear of terrorism reduced school visits to Washington-area parks, major shortfalls occurred in a park or partner's budget—all forced change. The partnerships had to come up with creative ways to address these events:

 In response to changes in the state standards, Lowell created a new program for younger students and linked existing programs to the middle-school level.

- In Washington, the BTW project funded transportation so students could get to the field trip sites.
- Cuyahoga uses funds raised to support programs for those who cannot afford to come to the Education Center.

Each of the partners is re-inventing itself in response to both internal and external changes. The Cuyahoga partnership has been a kind of chambered nautilus of re-invention. The nonpark partner took on a new education function that grew so large that the Friends group spun it off as an independent nonprofit organization. A later reorganization once again merged the two groups into a new organization with a new board and an integrated staff designed not only to operate the education program but also to expand fundraising efforts. The character of the Friends group has changed from a small, grassroots style to a professional organization, a change that was not welcomed by everyone initially.

Most of the case studies presented here tell the stories of an upward development curve—the excitements of starting up, dealing with success, resolving differences in partner values and organizational cultures. But, at the time of this writing, many of the partnerships are experiencing reductions in financial support, the departure or retirement of key players, or other staffing changes that have caused the partners to look anew at the partnership financial support and organizational structure. In Lowell, where both the park and the university have experienced a 25-35% negative budget impact, the park is initiating a Friends group, and the university has significantly expanded both its fundraising and its grant-writing efforts. The Tsongas Center has developed plans to expand its own grant-writing and fundraising capacities as part of its parents' initiatives.

The Golden Gate partnership suggests that Cuyahoga's reorganization and Lowell's initiatives can succeed. The long-standing partnership between the park and the Conservancy had already created a staffing structure and a diversified income strategy that included federal and state grants and contracts, corporate and individual fundraising, and significant earned income through gift shops operated for the large tourist market. The creation of this income-generating partnership structure made it feasible for the partnership to take on a project on the scale of the Crissy Field restoration and education center. But, to succeed, partner staff need to adjust to new realities.

The other partnerships are addressing sustainability in other ways. The BTW partnership is grappling with issues related to the complexity of managing several partnering parks and schools, the difficulty of attracting students to Washington- area parks during heightened terrorism alerts, changes in school staff, and the need to institutionalize the partnership into the parent organizations. While this process is just in its infancy, this case study provides a good example of the need to move from a dependency on personalities to a focus on structure. The Pi Beta Phi/Great Smoky Mountains partnership continues to face the challenge of supporting its project coordinator position, but an equally important challenge is to prepare for changes in key staff who have been part of

the project since its inception. The parent support for the project and the publication of its demonstrated record of success should stand it in good stead. The New Bedford partnership is at an exciting turning point. The park has opened its new Visitor Center, providing additional programming space for both students and teachers. The park and the Whaling Museum are now engaging in a new strategic planning process to see how to broaden the partnership beyond the *Portraits of a Port* teacher institute and to re-engage other local partners.

The authors of the case studies had to stop, analyze the state of their own partnerships, and write the history of their partnerships and their approaches to the immediate future. The opportunity to come together over a period of three days to discuss the specifics of their educational partnerships was eye-opening, as the Cuyahoga team stated at the beginning of this section. Later, the Golden Gate partners summed up the experience:

As Sam Goldwyn once remarked, 'For your information, let me ask you a few questions.' As educators, we take this sentiment to heart and encourage our students to frame their own essential questions. Well, these case studies gave us the opportunity to be the students once again, asking each other questions about ourselves, our partnerships, and how we envision moving forward together. Our conclusions were surprising, exciting, and challenging. And, as you might expect, we now have new questions to frame our thinking.

The Rock Creek team took some heart from the experience of several of the partnerships that had worked through several phases of partnership development:

It was serendipitous that we were able to attend the case study workshop in 2003 and to hear the evolution of other similar programs and partnerships. It became abundantly clear, and at the same time reassuring, that programs evolve and change is expected. Such a simple concept, and yet, when you are in the middle of organizational growing-pains, it's difficult to see the beauty of what is unfolding and taking shape. The Bridging the Watershed program has been a wonderful learning experience in seeing first hand that when organizations of people with similar goals share their resources, trust in each other, stay focused on the mission and take measured risks—we accomplish more!

We have called attention to issues of organizational culture and to a partner-ship attitude at all levels of a partnership, summarized very neatly by the Pi Beta Phi/Great Smoky Mountains team:

Patience and persistence, with common goals in mind, set the stage for positive development eventually. 150 Lessons Learned

We noted the critical importance of the long-term commitment to the partnership from the top levels of an organization, a belief in collaboration with schools, and the commitment to successful learning experiences for children. The Dean of the Graduate School of Education at UMass Lowell stated it well:

> UMass Lowell and Lowell National Historical Park have been working together for twenty years to bring the Tsongas Industrial History Center into life, to guide it through its early years, and to support its continuing evolution in response to changes in schools, in teacher education, and in the National Park Service. The partnership structure has proven to be flexible in adjusting to changes and robust in responding to challenges, more so than would have been possible by either partner working in isolation. Though the specifics of the Tsongas Center have changed, the original vision, educational approaches, and commitment to excellence of the Park and University still guide, sustain, and energize the partners.

Finally, we join the New Bedford team in calling attention to the fact that partnerships are a long-term investment that will be extraordinarily productive.

> Working collaborations are a process. Producing in partnership inevitably leads to a better project. Partnerships are money in the bank. They are a shared intellectual capital that you can tap into and are clearly an investment with an incalculable return. Besides, working within a partnership is fun and much more pleasurable than working alone. These case studies show how working together makes the content of the public services stronger, the implementation easier, the funding possible, and the administration of the programs a learning experience for all involved.



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