

UAACCE Community Education Forum Position Paper/ March 2004

Introduction. Community education programs offer diverse, lifelong learning opportunities for people of all ages. Successful community education programs involve collaboration among business, government agencies, neighborhoods, and schools. These programs ensure optimum use of public education facilities by community members and offer a cost effective means of delivering community educational services.

Community Education sees education as a lifelong endeavor, setting aside traditional and limited curriculum, classes, schedules, the conventional instructional day, the week and month, the age of its participants, instructional procedures, and any other restrictive condition which may prevent individuals from reaching their full potential. Community education classes and programs can be customized to fit the needs of any group and are housed at locations convenient to target audiences.

The Community Education authority and purpose is stated in the Utah Constitution:

“Community Education” means a philosophical concept based upon a partnership between the community and education where each views the other as a valuable resource in developing the community, improving community living, and developing a common process toward the end of individualized education. It consists of two parts: public involvement in education decision-making, and community school as a delivery system of educational services.

Community Education Values. Community Education professionals provide lifelong learning support services that strengthen the character, competence, and personal fulfillment of community members. Community education’s foundation can be seen in the following value statements:

- Learning is a lifelong process. Learning is a fundamental human need.
- Education is a fundamental right.
- Every individual has worth. Every individual can learn.
- Cultural diversity strengthens society. There is strength in community.
- The family is the predominant influence on growth and development.
- Human needs form the basis for educational change.

Community Education Issues. Dwindling resources and growing needs have resulted in a variety of creative partnerships. Partners include schools, businesses, social service entities, cultural and recreational organizations, local citizens and other organizations to which these partners belong.

Who are We? Community Education is offered by numerous organizations throughout Utah. The school often has been the physical or symbolic center of a community – an institution owned by the community, open to its citizens, and, ideally, offering learning and services to all who seek to better themselves. Communities and schools form partnerships to enhance the educational environment for children as well as the quality of life for the community.

21st CENTURY COMMUNITY LEARNING CENTERS. These federally-funded programs provide a safe haven where, during out-of-school time, children engage in academic enrichment. Many of these students are at-risk children who attend at low performing schools. Activities help students meet local/state academic standards in subjects such as reading and math. In addition, 21st CCLC programs provide youth development activities, drug and violence prevention programs, technology education, art, music, and recreation programs, counseling and character education. Many Community Learning Centers also provide educational opportunities for the children’s parents and other interested adults.

AFTER SCHOOL PROGRAMS. Utah’s 124 after school programs offer extended academic and enrichment opportunities, in a safe, drug-free environment, for traditional school-age students.

LIFELONG LEARNING/ENRICHMENT PROGRAMS. Classes are offered in a wide variety of areas including general education, vocational, recreational, and avocational.