

---

# Balsz Community Scan

Epilogue: Bridging Two Approaches

December, 2012  
Minor Edits: October, 2013

Balsz Community Scan Lead Investigators:

- ❖ Dr. Richard C. Knopf  
Arizona State University
- ❖ Mikulas Pstross, Doctoral Candidate  
Arizona State University
- ❖ Craig Talmage, Doctoral Candidate  
Arizona State University
- ❖ Kendra Smith, Doctoral Student  
Arizona State University



## Bridging Two Approaches

The *Balsz Community Scan* was developed to serve as a tool for energizing conversations around how children and youth in the community can be helped in the journey toward success. The first parts of the scan (Parts A and B) were designed to help community members and organizations with the development of community visions and strategic planning. The third portion (Part C) was created to serve as a reference or resource for community members, organizations, and leaders through its presentation of community vital signs and asset mapping. The complete Scan, which includes detailed analysis of its context and purpose, is posted on the website of ASU's Partnership for Community Development ([pcd.asu.edu](http://pcd.asu.edu)). As a visioning and strategic planning process, it stands as a grass-roots, bottom-up approach to community mobilization. In other words, it is the community itself that defines the issues, the needs, the assets, the visions, and the potential action steps needed to move the community forward.

The *Scan* was conducted with aims to open new ways of thinking for creating the right conditions for youth – and, in turn, for the community as a whole – to thrive. At the same time, an objectives-driven approach to achieve the same goal was orchestrated by Valley of the Sun United Way (VSUW) as it championed application for a U.S. Department of Education Promise Neighborhoods grant. In the process of applying for the grant, the *Balsz Promise Neighborhood* stakeholder group (see Part B of the *Scan*) under the guidance of VSUW decided to adopt seven key solutions related to the well-being of youth in the Balsz community. The seven key solutions, which drove the framing of the grant proposal, were outlined as:

- Solution 1: Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed
- Solution 2: All K-12 students will become proficient in academic content
- Solution 3: All students will achieve success in post-secondary education and career
- Solution 4: Parents and community will support all children and youth in achieving successful academic and developmental outcomes
- Solution 5: All children and youth will be healthy
- Solution 6: All children and youth will live in stable environments
- Solution 7: All children and youth will have access to 21st century technology

Each of the solutions comes with one or more strategies that are already being considered for implementation depending on grant funding. A process for beginning to pursue each solution through implementation of the identified strategies has already been launched by the Balsz Promise Neighborhood group as both a supplement to, and in anticipation of funding of the proposal that was submitted to the U.S. Department of Education in summer of 2012.

While the solutions do reflect preliminary findings of the *Scan* that have periodically been presented in the bi-monthly Balsz Promise Neighborhood stakeholder group meetings (particularly during a grant planning session on June 22, 2012), it is inherent in the process that the solutions-oriented approach represents a more top-down, “planner-centric” approach to community mobilization.

Both approaches are powerfully constructive, and can play transformative roles in indentifying, assembling and mobilizing assets for community change. Community development

specialist William Easterly, whose book is cited in Part B of the *Scan*,<sup>1</sup> calls these two approaches *searching* and *planning*. While Easterly gives a strong preference to the former (and that is the strategy we adopted in community conversations), we believe that both approaches are necessary and can be used simultaneously. Combining both approaches provides an empowering combination of top-down and bottom-up community mobilization. The purpose of this Epilogue is to acknowledge that interplay, and provide a framework for further discussion as each process deepens within the community over time.

### **Interplay Between PBN Solutions and Scan Findings**

One way to conceive of the interplay is to recognize that an objectives-driven approach designed by “delivery system experts” must be anchored in appreciation for what community members value, are concerned about, and are willing to be mobilized around. As is made clear in Part B of the *Scan*, the most creative and storied list of best or promising practices imagined by these experts will not gain traction in the community without being embraced by the community and aligned with the community’s capacity to respond. Even the most promising of technical solutions cannot be accomplished if fundamental community needs (e.g., hunger, shelter, basic sustenance, language), perceptions (about school climate, curriculum, power and authority), attitudes (relevance of school, attitudes toward youth), environmental variables (crime, domestic violence, lack of parks) and myriad of other confounding factors that stunt the growth of young people are not addressed. Everyone needs to be engaged – not just the “delivery system experts”. As the *Scan* nicely summarizes, “It takes the whole community to make the community whole”.

While the grass-roots, bottom-up approach by the *Scan* is imperative, the objectives-driven, solutions-oriented approach developed by the *Balsz Promise Neighborhood* stakeholder group provides needed structure and has utilized that structure for creating an action-oriented network of collaborating institutions and neighborhood leaders. What the *Promise Neighborhoods* solutions approach and the approach of the *Scan* have in common is the core goal of improving the conditions for children and youth in the community. As a collective, both approaches provide holistic guidance for the community development efforts in the community.

A framework illustrating the potential interplay between the findings of the *Scan* and the objectives-driven *Promise Neighborhood* solutions is offered in Table 1 below. Solutions selected to be pursued by the *Promise Neighborhood* stakeholder group regardless of the outcome of federal grant funding are italicized. Notably, and as expected, significant blocks of the *Scan* have direct connections to the seven *Promise Neighborhood* solutions and the strategies identified for each solution. And, it is important to remember that *all* portions of the *Scan* are relevant to the capacity for the solutions, and their surrounding strategies, to succeed. As noted above, success will not be actualized without appropriate anchoring in community voices (needs, attitudes, perceptions, perceived challenges), vital signs assessment, community asset mapping, and insights from the national best practices literature on school, family, and community partnership building.

---

<sup>1</sup> Easterly, W. (2006). Planners versus searchers. In W. Easterly, *The White Man's Burden: Why the West's Efforts to Aid the rest have done so much Ill and so little Good* (pp. 3-25). Kirkwood, NY: Penguin Press.

Table 1. Relationship Framework between *Promise Neighborhood* Solutions and *Scan* Findings

Promise Neighborhood Solutions	Relationship to Findings from Community Conversations (Parts A and B)	Relationship to Vital Signs Assessment and Asset Mapping (Part C)
<b>Solution 1: Children enter kindergarten ready to succeed</b>		
<i>1.1 Early Learning Network</i>	<u>Chapter 8</u> There is lack of enriching activities for children and youth	No direct link in this portion of the scan. Consider pursuing other quantitative approaches or other relevant research.
<i>1.2 Increase the number of children in high quality care</i>	No direct link in this portion of the scan. Consider pursuing other qualitative approaches or other relevant research.	<u>Table 6</u> 12% of children are raised by their grandparents  <u>Table 69</u> There are four early education and/or childcare centers nearby
1.3 Provide training and support for family, friend and neighbor providers	<u>Chapter 11</u> Support for leadership should be created	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
1.4 Provide accessible, culturally sensitive literacy education for parents and other caregivers	<u>Introduction</u> The district is very diverse - some have referred to it as the “United Nations”  <u>Chapter 3</u> Parents want the best for their children but often cannot help  <u>Chapter 4</u> Many parents struggle with English and with the topics their children learn in school	<u>Table 3</u> This table presents the ethnic distribution in the neighborhood.  <u>Tables 10, 11, 12, 13, &amp; 14</u> Almost 27% of the Balsz neighborhood is foreign born. These tables outline place of birth, citizenship, year of entry, and ancestry.
<i>1.5 Identify and address developmental delays</i>	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
1.6 Prepare children for Kindergarten transition	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	No direct link in this portion of the scan.

Promise Neighborhood Solutions	Relationship to Findings from Community Conversations (Parts A and B)	Relationship to Vital Signs Assessment and Asset Mapping (Part C)
<b>Solution 2: All K-12 students will become proficient in academic content</b>		
2.1 Systemic reform and teacher professional development	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
<i>2.2 Early warning systems and integrated supports</i>	<u>Chapter 5</u> Teachers and parents want to collaborate but there are sometimes communication barriers	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
<i>2.3 Support student transitions Pre-K through Post-secondary</i>	<u>Chapter 1</u> Parents point out difficulties surrounding a child’s transition into being a teen. After 5th grade, there are misunderstandings and challenges in school.	<u>Table 7</u> For those over 25 years of age (about 75 of the population), 12.7% have less than a 9 <sup>th</sup> grade education, 8.8% have had some high school but no diploma, and 23.7% have a high school diploma only. 29.7% have at least an associate’s degree, 24.4% have at least a bachelor’s degree; and 6.7% have a graduate or professional degree.  <u>Tables 45 through 66</u> These tables document the educational demographics and AIMS test scores in the Balsz neighborhood.
2.4 Decrease chronic absenteeism	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	<u>Tables 47, 50, 53, 56, 59, 62, &amp; 65</u> These tables provide information if state attendance standards were met by each school. Attendance figures are not contained in this portion.

Promise Neighborhood Solutions	Relationship to Findings from Community Conversations (Parts A and B)	Relationship to Vital Signs Assessment and Asset Mapping (Part C)
2.5 Extend formal learning for BESD students	<p><u>Chapter 6</u> Schools in the Community are seen as points of pride</p> <p>Chapter 8 Some activities, sports, and tutoring programs are available in schools and are appreciated by residents</p>	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
2.6 AVID training for all teachers	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
2.7 Teacher lateral teams	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
<i>2.8 Academic parent teacher teams</i>	<p><u>Chapter 5</u> Teachers and parents want to collaborate but there are sometimes communication barriers</p>	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
<i>2.9 Parent and community liaisons</i>		
<b>Solution 3: All students will achieve success in post-secondary education and career</b>		
<i>3.1 FAFSA for all eligible high school students and PSAT for all sophmores and juniors</i>	<p><u>Chapter 9</u> Community members want to see more gathering places: ‘hubs’</p>	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
3.2 Increase enrollment in and completion of AP, Dual and concurrent Enrollment courses	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
3.3 Increase post- secondary recruitment and retention for GCC and ASU	No direct link in this portion of the scan.	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
<i>3.4 Career Development Center</i>	<p><u>Chapter 9</u> Community members want more gathering places, where they can, among other things, learn new things</p>	<p><u>Tables 84 &amp; 85</u> These lists of nonprofits and businesses (respectively) may provide possible partners.</p>

Promise Neighborhood Solutions	Relationship to Findings from Community Conversations (Parts A and B)	Relationship to Vital Signs Assessment and Asset Mapping (Part C)
<b>Solution 4: Parents and community will support all children and youth in achieving successful academic and developmental outcomes</b>		
<i>4.1 Parents obtain and utilize the skills and knowledge necessary to support their child's success</i>	<u>Chapter 4</u> Many parents struggle with English and with the topics their children learn in school	<u>Table 7</u> This table contains the level of education statistics already described.
<i>4.2 Increase access to and quality of out of school time activities</i>	<u>Chapter 8</u> There is lack of enriching activities for children and youth.  There is excitement about the coming of the Boys and Girls Club but residents want to see family-oriented activities even sooner	There are three parks and/or recreation centers within the Balsz community.
<i>4.3 Create physical community hubs at Educare, UMOM, Boys and Girls Clubs and other key locations</i>	<u>Chapter 9</u> Community members want to see more gathering places: 'hubs'  Schools, Educare, and UMOM already serve as hubs	<u>Tables 84 &amp; 85</u> These lists of nonprofits and businesses (respectively) may provide possible partners.
<i>4.4 Creating a culturally responsive Balsz Promise Neighborhood Community</i>	<u>Introduction</u> The district is very diverse - some have referred to it as the "United Nations"	<u>Tables 3, 10, 11, 12, 13, &amp; 14</u> These tables outline ethnicity, place of birth, citizenship, year of entry, and ancestry.
<i>4.5 Civic engagement for community development and neighborhood enhancement</i>	<u>Chapter 11</u> The community has passionate and dedicated leaders  More leadership needs to be built that represents the diversity of the community  Support for leadership should be created	No direct link in this portion of the scan.

Promise Neighborhood Solutions	Relationship to Findings from Community Conversations (Parts A and B)	Relationship to Vital Signs Assessment and Asset Mapping (Part C)
<i>4.6 Increase student volunteerism and engagement in extracurricular activities</i>	<p><u>Chapter 12</u> Children and Youth have many gifts but their energy is not being guided effectively</p> <p>Some children in the community are already engaged in volunteering</p> <p>More opportunities should be created – a key example being the Youth Advisory Council</p>	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
<b>Solution 5: All children and youth will be healthy</b>		
<i>5.1 Promotoras model to coordinate and implement comprehensive health education, network and wellness program in partnership with the community</i>	<p><u>Chapter 7</u> Residents and other community stakeholders wish for more collaborations</p> <p><u>Chapter 10</u> The flow of information about the community should be strengthened</p> <p><u>Chapter 11</u> The community has passionate and dedicated leaders</p> <p>More leadership needs to be built that represents the diversity of the community</p>	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
5.2 Increase access to fresh fruits and vegetables and build awareness of healthy eating habits	<u>Chapter 4</u> Many families in the community struggle financially	No direct link in this portion of the scan.



Promise Neighborhood Solutions	Relationship to Findings from Community Conversations (Parts A and B)	Relationship to Vital Signs Assessment and Asset Mapping (Part C)
<b>Solution 6: All children and youth will live in stable environments</b>		
<i>6.1 Increase educational attainment of parents</i>	<u>Chapter 4</u> Many parents struggle with English and with the topics their children learn in school	<u>Table 7</u> This table contains the level of education statistics already described.
6.2 Civic engagement – Refer to Solution 4.5	<u>Chapter 11</u> The community has passionate and dedicated leaders  More leadership needs to be built that represents the diversity of the community  Support for leadership should be created	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
6.3 Financial coaching to improve financial management practices of parents and families	<u>Chapter 4</u> The effects of low income affects self-esteem, the ability of parents to spend time with their children, access to medical care, access to healthy food choices, and the capacity to provide a stable housing environment.	<u>Table 17</u> 70.1% of occupied housing units are rentals. 79.3% of owner-occupied housing units are paying a mortgage.
<i>6.4 Volunteer Income Tax Assistance site</i>	<u>Chapter 9</u> Community members want more gathering places, where they can, among other things, learn new things	No direct link in this portion of the scan.
<b>Solution 7: All children and youth will have access to 21st century technology</b>		
7.1 100% of students will have access to computers at school, at home or at community hubs	<u>Chapter 4</u> Many families in the community struggle financially	No direct link in this portion of the scan.

## **An Example of Bridging in Action**

A powerful testimony of the synergy between these two approaches that is already transpiring in the Balsz community is demonstrated in the community's creation of a *Balsz Youth Advisory Council*. The *Youth Advisory Council* fulfills the spirit of Solution 4: “*Parents and community will support all children and youth in achieving successful academic and developmental outcomes to strengthen youth participation and development.*” At the same time, it addresses the community's expressed desire through the *Scan* to provide conditions for expanded engagement of youth in volunteering and in the community building (see Chapter 12, Parts A and B of the *Scan*). Core findings from the community conversations of the *Scan* were utilized to frame discussions at the first *Youth Advisory Council* meeting on November 15, 2012, and continue to be discussed today. With this framing, the youth developed an action plan for growing youth leadership and action within the Balsz community.

While creation of the *Youth Advisory Council* is perhaps the earliest manifestation of the confluence and interplay between the grass-roots, bottom-up and the objectives-driven, planner-driven approach, Table 1 provides the framework for creation and articulation of action plans to help the children and youth of the Balsz community succeed.

## **Conclusion**

The interplay of the two approaches discussed in this Epilogue and captured by Table 1 reveal the energy that has emerged and the wealth of resources being infused into the Balsz community. The possibilities for community transformation and the bolstering of success for the children and youth of Balsz are boundless. Much needs yet to be done, but the impacts will last for generations. Along the way, the Balsz community is taking to heart advice from the old adage: It really does take a whole village to raise a child.