

# Cultivating Community at the School of the Future

**Describe the ISSUES (facts, problems, and opportunities) in the case. Look for underlying issues as well as obvious problems the characters face.**

- What challenges does the community that surrounds the school face? Are these the kinds of issues that the school can help address?
- How is the school taking advantage of community resources to support its students' learning and development?
- What benefits might come from having this school in the neighborhood?
- What seems to be the biggest concern about the school for those in the surrounding neighborhood?

**Consider the PERSPECTIVE of each character or group presented in the case. What is their unique take on the issues? What informs their point-of-view? What insight do you gain into issues by considering others' opinions?**

- Mrs. Lucas comments that, even after a year of operation, there are still skeptics in the community. Of what do you think they are skeptical?
- Describe the relationship between the community, the school and the students.
- What concerns and hopes does Reverend Nock has related to the school?
- Why, despite local opposition, do you think Audrey Johnson Thornton wanted to adopt the school and its students?
- Two second-year students—Iman and Quasan—were actively involved in the Belmont Mansion program. How might their perspectives of the School of the Future differ from other students who were not involved in the program?

**What KNOWLEDGE might inform how to address issues in the case? Which sources of knowledge might you consider (professional, experiential, empirical)? What more would you like to know before proposing any actions or next steps?**

- **The school is a unique experiment in urban education. From what areas of knowledge might the developers have drawn as they planned the school?**
- **School developers drew on the expertise of an advisory board. Who do you think should be on this type of panel? Why?**
- **What types of knowledge do the community members, teachers and students need as they develop projects like the one at Belmont Mansion?**
- **The balance between school and community can be difficult to achieve. Have you seen struggles between these two forces in your own school? Why might it be more difficult in Philadelphia?**

**What ACTIONS might you recommend characters in the case take to address issues? What possible next steps might occur?**

- According to Reverend Nock, certain promises were made about who might attend the school that he feels have not been met. What actions might he take to address this concern?
- How might the school address some of the challenges of the community?
- What actions might the developers of the school have taken prior to its opening to answer the opponents of the school? What ongoing actions would help to address their concerns?
- Kathy Lee, the teacher who coordinates the Belmont Mansion program, is responsible for assessing the students who participate. What actions does she need to take to create this assessment?
- What actions has your own school district taken to engage the community?

**What are the CONSEQUENCES of proposed actions? What might happen, short- and long-term, intentionally and unintentionally, of following your suggestions? What else might you consider as possible results of suggested actions?**

- What general lessons can be learned from the School of the Future, particularly in terms of its relationship to the community?
- What lessons might be learned by both school and community members from the Belmont Mansion program? What actions might they take as a result of those lessons?
- As students move through their education and graduate, what might be the possible consequences—intended, unintended, positive and negative—of being involved in community projects such as the Belmont Mansion?