

# **“Forging Community Alliances”**

## **NEA Safe Schools Now Network Broadcast #4**

### **Discussion Guide**

#### **OVERVIEW**

In the fourth NEA Safe Schools Now broadcast, “Forging Community Alliances,” we will look at two examples of communities that have created school – community partnerships to enhance the overall safety of their students and the communities in general. Our goals are to inspire others to forge or enhance their own community alliances, and to advance the discussion of school safety around the country. Community alliances are built on a foundation of concern, financial support, and involvement by individuals and community groups alike. In this show, we will explore how two different school systems — one in Buncombe County, North Carolina, the other in Mesa, Arizona — have used their community alliances to protect students within their school environments; to equip students to face the challenges to their safety that they may encounter; and, to encourage young people to be resilient, closely tied to their neighborhoods and communities, and ultimately more responsible citizens.

First, we will hear what high school students in Buncombe County, NC, have to say about school safety. A panel of experts from the state describe the “Safe Schools Pyramid,” which illustrates the components of an effective community alliance program. We will look in particular at the school system’s close ties with local law enforcement officials. Next, we consider the innovative Kerr Kids Can/North Center Early Intervention Program that has transformed both a school and an entire neighborhood in Mesa, AZ. We look at why the program was needed, how it was established, its components, and how those involved feel about the program’s success so far.

#### **NOTES/SUGGESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION LEADER**

Make copies of all questions (Sections I, II, and III) and distribute them at appropriate times before and after the broadcast.

If you are watching the taped broadcast, you can stop and start the video at appropriate discussion points.

#### **I. QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT BEFORE YOU WATCH THE BROADCAST**

As you watch the broadcast, ask yourself which elements of the programs featured in it can apply to your own school district and community.

- Why is it important for schools to be involved with their neighborhoods, community agencies, and other “stakeholders”?
- What are the key elements in a successful community alliance?
- What are the main benefits of connecting public schools to their neighborhoods? How do the schools benefit? How does the community benefit?
- How do schools go about finding financial and other support in the community for a community

alliance program?

## **II. QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT AFTER YOU WATCH THE BROADCAST**

As you listen to the panelists and see examples of successful community alliances, ask yourself the following questions:

- Would a program like the Kerr Kids Can/North Center Early Intervention Program work in our community? Are any of its components more suited to our needs than others?
- Which individuals and community groups in our area would be “naturals” to involve in a community alliance?
- Are there elements of the “Safe Schools Pyramid” already in place in our schools and community? What are they? If not, how would we create them?
- How can we get people in the community involved in a school-community alliance, including those who don’t have school-age children?

## **III. NEXT STEPS**

After viewing the broadcast and discussing the subject matter, what are the next steps we need to take?

- Do we want to plan a meeting to continue this discussion? Who else should be included from the community?
- Do we want to watch the next NEA Safe Schools Now Network broadcast as a group? Should we invite others to join us? Who should organize and lead the discussion?
- Are there other steps we might take in light of what we’ve just seen?