

# COMMUNITY EDUCATION DEFINED:

**Community Education is a powerful concept that acknowledges that learning is dynamic and changing, occurs in many forms, and is a lifelong requirement for human development. It is a way of thinking about and organizing public schools for individual and community development.**

Community Education in Kentucky Encompasses Five Components.

**1. Expanded utilization of school facilities:** Community schools serve the entire community. The school's facilities are utilized by people of all ages and at all times of the day, week, and year. The school becomes the center of learning for the community and provides an array of programs and services. A fully-functioning community school provides opportunities for all community members to utilize school facilities creating a belief that the school is the center of community life.

**2. Lifelong learning opportunities:** Learning begins at birth and is life-long. As the basic education agency of the community, public schools respond to both the formal and informal educational needs and desires of members of all age groups of the community.

**3. Volunteers programs:** Whether it is a parent or other family member, a senior citizen or a young professional, volunteers enhance the learning experience of students. Both tutoring and mentoring are examples of effective volunteer initiatives. Research demonstrates that when parents and other community members are engaged in educating students, the schools are better and student performance improves.

**4. P-12 Support:** Community support for student learning takes many forms. One successful strategy is learning through serving, which is a form of curriculum-based, experiential education that engages students in real-life experiences that address issues and needs of the community. The community becomes the classroom, enabling students to integrate academic knowledge and critical thinking skills with real-life issues. Students have an opportunity to become resources and respected leaders in their communities. Service Learning is one way to fulfill this obligation. *(In Harlan County, a Service-Learning grant fulfills this obligation.)*

**5. Collaboration:** Successful collaboration is dependent upon intentional, well-facilitated coordination. Community Education directors assume responsibility for ensuring that continued progress is made in resolving school and community issues. Internally, Community Education directors serve in many capacities with other school-based initiatives, i.e. Family Resource/ Youth Services Centers, dropout prevention, and drug, alcohol and pregnancy intervention programs, school safety, after school and others. Externally, Community Education provides linkage with business/industry, community agencies and organizations, and individuals to resolve community and school issues.