

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:

Transforming Struggling Schools into **Thriving Schools**



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Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools

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Preface

For at least a decade, the dominant idea about how to improve outcomes for children and youth has focused on control and compliance; holding adults accountable for raising test scores. This approach has proved least effective for our most vulnerable students. In our search for silver bullets, reformers and policymakers alike have overlooked strategies that have long shown promise and for which there is mounting evidence of success. Community Schools is one of these strategies.

Community Schools combine challenging and culturally relevant learning opportunities with the academic and social supports each and every child needs to reach their potential. These schools, at their core, are about investing in children, through quality teaching, challenging and engaging curricula, wrap around supports, positive school climate, strong ties to family and community and a clear focus on results.

It's clear the tide is turning, as interest in this vision of schooling is now evident in the nation's major education policy, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA). We note in particular the inclusion of factors in accountability systems that extend beyond test scores, as well as provisions for the use of resources to strengthen school-community partnerships—including needs assessments, teacher development on family/community engagement, and support for personalized learning—reflective of the Community Schools strategy.

This report profiles Community Schools across the country, all which demonstrate consistent improvement in a wide range of indicators of student success. The best of these schools leave nothing to chance. They are as committed to challenging academics as they are to health, wellness and social and emotional learning. They are sustained by the broad support they enjoy from their communities. And they represent the ultimate purpose of our schools: to prepare young people to pursue their aspirations and participate fully in our economy and democracy.

This report intends to shed light on how Community Schools come alive in practice, and the improvements in academic and social outcomes that emerge when these schools are given a chance to work. There are over 90 communities across the country with significant efforts underway.

In low income communities and communities of color, we have not always valued the power of citizen input and the capacities within communities to coalesce around their children. This needs to change. When communities are excluded from our improvement strategies they are not likely to be sustained and children lose. School climate suffers, chronic absenteeism persists, discipline problems push students out of school and learning outcomes suffer.

We hope you will take to heart the lessons from community schools across the country that we profile in this report. If we are to create truly transformative learning opportunities for children and youth, especially the least advantaged, we need to examine closely the strategies this report highlights. We owe our young much more than a basic education. We owe them a genuine opportunity to determine for themselves how they will work and live in this great country.

Kyle Serrette, Center for Popular Democracy

Marty Blank, Coalition for Community Schools

Kent McGuire, Southern Education Foundation

Executive Summary

Community Schools implement evidence-based strategy to bring together the resources of school, family, and community in order to make schools stronger and help young people thrive. With a century-long history in the United States,¹ Community Schools now serve over 5 million students in approximately 5,000 schools across the country.² While Community Schools might take different approaches, these schools generally employ whole-child, research-based strategies and elevate innovative and holistic practices in order to achieve results that go beyond test scores.³ In fact, when Community Schools are able to employ the multiple strategies outlined in this report, their results can be *sustainably transformational*: increasing school attendance, decreasing suspensions and expulsions, creating healthy and safe communities, and improving academic outcomes.

This report outlines six essential strategies for Community Schools and the key mechanisms used to implement these strategies. Next, it profiles Community Schools across the country where these model strategies are being used to achieve transformational results. A close look at these model Community Schools and districts shows that across racial, economic, and geographic diversities in this country, Community Schools work. As the new federal education legislation gives states greater power to implement Community Schools, we recommend learning from the strategies and mechanisms we provide in this report—both from research and from practice—to achieve transformational and sustainable Community Schools across the country.



These are the six research-based Community School strategies that allow for greater student-centered learning, community investment and engagement, and school environments squarely focused on teaching and learning:^a

- 1. Curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging.** Schools offer a robust selection of classes and after-school programs in the arts, languages, and ethnic studies, as well as Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses. Also offered are services for English Language Learners and special education students, GED preparation programs, and job training. Pedagogy is student-centered.
- 2. An emphasis on high-quality teaching, not on high-stakes testing.** Assessments are used to help teachers meet the needs of students. Educators have a real voice in professional development. Professional development is high-quality and ongoing, and includes strengthening understanding of, and professional alignment with, the Community School strategy.
- 3. Wrap-around supports and opportunities** such as health care, eye care, and social and emotional services that support academics. These services are available before, during, and after school, and are provided year-round to the full community. Community partners are accountable and culturally competent. The supports are aligned to the classroom using thorough and continuous data collection, analysis, and reflection. Space for these services is allocated within the building or within walking distance.
- 4. Positive discipline practices,** such as restorative justice and social and emotional learning supports, are stressed so that students can grow and contribute to the school community and beyond. School safety and positive school climate are achieved through these mechanisms. Suspensions and harsh punishments are eliminated or greatly reduced.

^a Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools—a national grouping of community organizing groups, teacher unions and policy organizations representing over 7 million members—evolved the six strategies of successful Community Schools to clarify a set of aspirational goals for all Community Schools

5. **Authentic parent and community engagement** is promoted so the full community actively participates in planning and decision-making. This process recognizes the link between the success of the school and the development of the community as a whole.
6. **Inclusive school leadership** who are committed to making the Community School strategy integral to the school's mandate and functioning. They ensure that the Community School Coordinator is a part of the leadership team and that a Community School Committee (Committee)—which includes parents, community partners, school staff, youth, and other stakeholders that are representatives of the school's various constituencies—has a voice in the planning and implementation of the strategy.

The six strategies we recommend are aligned with decades of academic research on successful schools. Research has found that deeper learning can be achieved through authentic curricula and assessments, wrap-around services that address student social and emotional needs, and supportive, skill-building environments for educators.⁴ Community schools have been found to impact not just test scores, but also attendance and family engagement and a multitude of other indicators.⁵



The mechanisms by which Community Schools can achieve transformational, positive change:

Transformational Community Schools achieve success by implementing the above strategies through the following mechanisms:

1. An asset and needs **assessment** of and by both school and community;
2. A strategic **plan** that defines how educators and community partners will use all available assets to meet specific student needs and get better results;
3. The engagement of **partners** who bring assets and expertise to help implement the building blocks of Community Schools
4. A Community School **Coordinator** whose job is to facilitate the development and implementation of the strategic plan in collaboration with school and community members/partners, and to ensure alignment of solutions to needs.



Community Schools require sustainable funding and resources. This can be realized through a combination of resource provisions leveraged through partnerships; investment at the federal, state, and local government levels; and foundation and government grants. For example, a site coordinator may leverage health and dental care, early childhood programs, before and after school learning programs, and/or restorative justice programs using free school space like an empty classroom, cafeteria, or gym after school hours. Any investment in Community Schools pays off, literally, ten-fold. The findings of Children's Aid Society are that the Social Return on Investment—meaning the broader return to families and the community—can be as high as 14:1.⁶

Funding sources for Community Schools vary from site to site, city to city, state to state. Funding for planning and Community School coordination can come from states (such as Kentucky and Minnesota), counties (such as Schools Uniting Neighborhoods in Multnomah County, Oregon); the United Way, community foundations, and local school districts. Cities, for example New York City and Baltimore, are increasingly finding funding within their city education budgets for Community Schools.



Community Schools that have used these strategies and mechanisms have seen transformational positive change, including improved academic success, decreased discipline incidents, increased attendance, and increased enrollment. In the profiles found in this report, you can read about how Social Justice Humanitas Academy in Los Angeles sends 99 percent of its students to college, or how Wolfe St. Academy in Baltimore had zero suspensions last year. Schools in Austin, Orlando, Cincinnati, Portland, Kentucky, and more are thriving through these model strategies, and we tell their stories in this report.

Recommendations

The model Community School strategies outlined in this report can and should be used in every public school across the United States to achieve transformational results. The new federal education legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), sends much of the decision-making power to create mechanisms for student success to the state level. This report recommends that:

- 1. Embrace Community Schools as a transformational education solution:** state and local policy makers, using the opportunity created by this new law and in collaboration with their education constituencies including parents, school staff, students and community members, tap the power of community to grow the number of effective Community Schools in every state and municipality in the country.
- 2. Codify Community Schools in policy:** community organizing and education advocacy groups, unions, and Community School practitioners join lawmakers to use the policy templates included in this report to pass legislation that will enable a dramatic increase in the number of Community Schools.
- 3. Implement Community Schools by using this report's strategies and mechanisms:** all parties above use the model strategies and mechanisms cited in this report to ensure that Community Schools are achieving the educational and social results that are possible when these strategies and mechanisms are implemented with fidelity.

Introduction

This report takes a close look at Community Schools in every region of the country that use a specific set of mechanisms to implement with integrity a specific set of evidence-based strategies. These model Community School examples—working through, and supported by, every level of government from individual schools to feeder patterns to districts, cities, counties and one state—show that across the racial, economic, and geographic diversities of the country’s populations, the Community School strategy has the potential to transform every school in the country into a sustainable, high-performing, engaging, life changing place to be for children, families and communities.

There are over 98,000 public schools located in 14,000 school districts in the United States. Many of these schools, all over the country, provide a great education to their students, but opportunity gaps remain within and across many more schools, as they do in the broader society. These opportunity gaps are a result of disinvestment in public education, particularly in low-income communities and communities of color, where schools are often under-resourced and not set up to succeed. Students in these schools are not given full *opportunities* compared to well-resourced schools and families in upper-income neighborhoods.⁷

Undoing the racial and socio-economic injustices built into our public education system is a tall order, but there are thousands of schools located in high-poverty communities that have proven that, when the playing field of opportunities is sufficiently leveled, schools can in fact be *transformational*. These schools and communities have intentionally and imaginatively implemented a strategy that has allowed them to transform their schools from low-performing to high-performing, from unsafe to safe, from isolated to engaged, from dismal to joyful.

In one of the most high-poverty areas of Los Angeles, there is a high school where 99 percent of graduates go to college;⁸ the city of Cincinnati was able to shrink its racial and socioeconomic achievement gap from 14.5 percent to 4.5 percent;⁹ in Texas, two schools located in Austin’s most high-poverty neighborhood went from the brink of closure to becoming two of the highest performing schools in their city;¹⁰ a school in Baltimore went from being ranked 77th in the city to 2nd;¹¹ and in Kentucky, the state went

Background on a Sustainable Community Schools Movement

The Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools (AROS) is a national alliance with over 7 million members including parent, labor, youth, and community organizations. AROS’ work focuses on fighting for educational justice and equitable access to school resources and opportunities by advocating and organizing for *Sustainable Community Schools* in cities and states across the country.

The six research-based strategies cited in this document are closely linked to AROS’s definition of Sustainable Community Schools and are an evolution of the concept of Sustainable School Transformation, advocated first by CEPS—the Coalition for Excellent Public Schools in 2010[1]. CEPS had come together to promote Sustainable Community Schools as a fifth option for “school transformation” under the “No Child Left Behind” Act (School Improvement Grant (SIG) funding). The Administration’s four options for transformation, which included school closure, conversion to a charter school, and the wholesale firing of a school’s full staff and administration, were viewed by CEPS as punitive and/or destabilizing of schools and communities.

Sustainable Community Schools, have also been championed by the Journey for Justice Alliance, led by CEPS’s former leader Jitu Brown, (previously of the Kenwood Oakland Community Organization, or KOCO.) Mr. Brown and KOCO have recently been on the nation’s radar as leaders of the Dyett High School Hunger Strike—34 days of parents and community members fasting to keep open and transform an historic Chicago high school. *The Schools Chicago’s Students Deserve*, the report produced in 2012 by a coalition of academics, community and labor organizations, including the Chicago Teachers Union, began using this term to establish the key elements for public school success. The report made clear that these elements were not absent because of a lack of community caring or will but due to government underinvestment in education, particularly in neighborhoods of poverty and color.

from being consistently ranked one of the worst in education in the nation to outperforming half of all states and reducing their socioeconomic achievement gap to the smallest in the nation.¹² Schools in Los Angeles, Austin, Baltimore, Kentucky, and many across the United States have achieved these exciting results by adopting a transformational Community School strategy.

In this report, we review specific research-based Community School strategies and mechanisms as employed across six schools, a city, a district, a county, and an entire state resulting in transformational outcomes. In addition to wrap-around services, they bring a particular emphasis on high-quality teaching, deep learning, restorative justice, and authentic family engagement to Community Schools. In this report, we contrast the results of these schools before and after implementing the highlighted strategies. These transformational Community Schools are also supported and invested in to such a level that they can adhere to these rigorous and comprehensive strategies, allowing them to achieve their positive results. The main finding of this report is that these strategies and mechanisms, when implemented with integrity and with sustainable investment have proven to be successful.

The United States is a large country, especially when viewed through the lens of education. There are many examples of great education offered to many student constituencies by many great educators. In this report we look at both urban and rural turnaround schools and those that began using Community School strategies; almost all, but not all, are traditional public school. As Jitu Brown of Journey for Justice Alliance says, “Great education is not rocket science. We know what works. We just have to make sure all schools have the resources it requires.”¹³ The goal of this report is to help increase the knowledge-base of proven sustainable solutions and policy anchors—found in both practice and research—and to codify these strategies and the investment they require so that more young people may benefit from them and join the growing family of schools that lead to amazing life changing outcomes.

What are Community Schools?

Community schools bring together the resources of school, family and community to help young people thrive and make families and communities stronger.

This report finds that the Community Schools that have achieved the most dramatic results usually do so by utilizing a six-part strategic approach. These model Community Schools utilize:

- 1. Curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging.** Schools offer a robust selection of classes and after-school programs in the arts, languages, and ethnic studies, as well as AP and honors courses. Also offered are services for English Language Learner and special education students, GED preparation programs, and job training. Pedagogy is student-centered.
- 2. Emphasis on high-quality teaching, not on high-stakes testing.** Assessments are used to help teachers meet the needs of students. Educators have a real voice in professional development. Professional development is high quality and ongoing, and includes strengthening understanding of, and professional alignment with, the Community School model.
- 3. Wrap-around supports** such as health care, eye care, and social and emotional services that support academics. These services are available before, during and after school, and are provided year-round to the full community. Providers are accountable and culturally competent. The supports are aligned to the classroom using thorough and continuous data collection, analysis, and reflection. Space for these services is allocated within the building or within walking distance.

4. **Positive discipline practices**, such as restorative justice and social and emotional learning supports, are stressed so that students can grow and contribute to the school community and beyond. School safety and positive school climate are achieved through these mechanisms. Suspensions and harsh punishments are eliminated or greatly reduced.
5. **Authentic parent and community engagement** is promoted so the full community actively participates in planning and decision-making. This process recognizes the link between the success of the school and the development of the community as a whole.
6. **Inclusive school leadership** who are committed to making the Community School strategy integral to the school's mandate and functioning. They ensure that the Community School Coordinator is a part of the leadership team and that a Community School Committee (Committee)—which includes parents, community partners, school staff, youth, and other stakeholders that are representatives of the school's various constituencies—has a voice in the planning and implementation of the strategy.

Transformational Community Schools achieve success by implementing the above strategies through the following mechanisms:

1. An asset and needs **assessment** of and by both school and community; participants in the assessment process include parents, students, community members, and partners and school staff.
2. A strategic **plan** that defines how educators and community partners will use all available assets to meet specific student needs and get better results, specifically through a focus on curriculum, high-quality teaching, wraparound supports, positive discipline practices, parent and community engagement and inclusive leadership as the building blocks through which to accomplish the above.
3. The engagement of **partners** who bring assets and expertise to help implement the building blocks of Community Schools
4. A Community School **Coordinator** whose job is to facilitate the development and implementation of the strategic plan in collaboration with school and community members/partners, and to ensure alignment of solutions to needs.

Over 5,000 schools in the United States reflect the characteristics of Community Schools, which is greater than the number of charter schools in the United States when measured by enrollment and number of locations. While any school can adopt the Community School strategy, most are traditional public schools. The transformational academic and non-academic results of the Community School strategy are clear, dramatic, and sustainable.

Community Schools Have a Long History

Community Schools are not a new concept. John Rogers, Community Schools historian at UCLA, tells us that they have existed at least since the turn of the last century in many forms, but always to address inequities at both school and community levels. Jane Addams' Hull House is an early example:

There were kindergarten classes in the morning, club meetings for older children in the afternoon, and for adults in the evening more clubs or courses in what became virtually a night school. The first facility added to Hull House was an art gallery, the second a public kitchen; then came a coffee house, a gymnasium, a swimming pool, a cooperative boarding club for girls, a book bindery, an art studio, a music school, a drama group, a circulating library, an employment bureau, and a labor museum.¹⁴

Sustainable Funding:

Community schools require sustainable funding and make innovative and efficient use of community resources. Funding sources for Community Schools vary from site to site, city to city, state to state. Funding for planning and Community School coordination can come from states (such as Kentucky and Minnesota), counties (such as Schools Uniting Neighborhoods in Multnomah County, Oregon); the United Way, community foundations, and local school districts. Cities, for example New York City and Baltimore, are increasingly finding funding within their city education budgets for Community Schools.

New York has repurposed existing funding streams—including money previously dedicated to attendance improvement or suspension reduction—to Community Schools. Specific programs are financed through inter-agency partnerships at the city (Austin, Texas), county (Multnomah County, Oregon) or state levels (Kentucky). Health care services are often, where state law allows (New Jersey, California), billed to Medicaid or other state or federal programs.

Underutilized school space can be a key in-kind funding stream. In Cincinnati, Ohio, and Brooklyn Center, Minnesota, schools provide space in which afterschool or health care providers can operate and bill third parties; this relieves them of overhead costs and allows them to provide services at little or no cost. In the case of Oylar School in Cincinnati, the school rents space to a daycare provider, providing income that can be used for other services. Additionally, the day care provides internships for students, teachers and students bring their babies to the day care—everybody wins. Legislation or appropriations designated for school construction or modernization is a great opportunity to include provisions that new schools have dedicated community space, as was recently done in Baltimore.

Policy can also explicitly outline that any new schools function as Community Schools, as does Cincinnati’s Board of Education Policy;¹⁵ or that every school with a specified percentage of students below the poverty indicator receive funding for a Community School Coordinator and more, as in Kentucky’s Education Reform Act (KERA).¹⁶ Weighted state school funding formulas can be used as funding sources for Community School Coordinators as in California. Title I and 21st Century federal grant funding can also be used for this purpose.

The Children’s Aid Society (CAS) of New York cites a “social return on investment” (SROI) formula that calculates an SROI in their Community Schools in New York City ranging between \$10.30

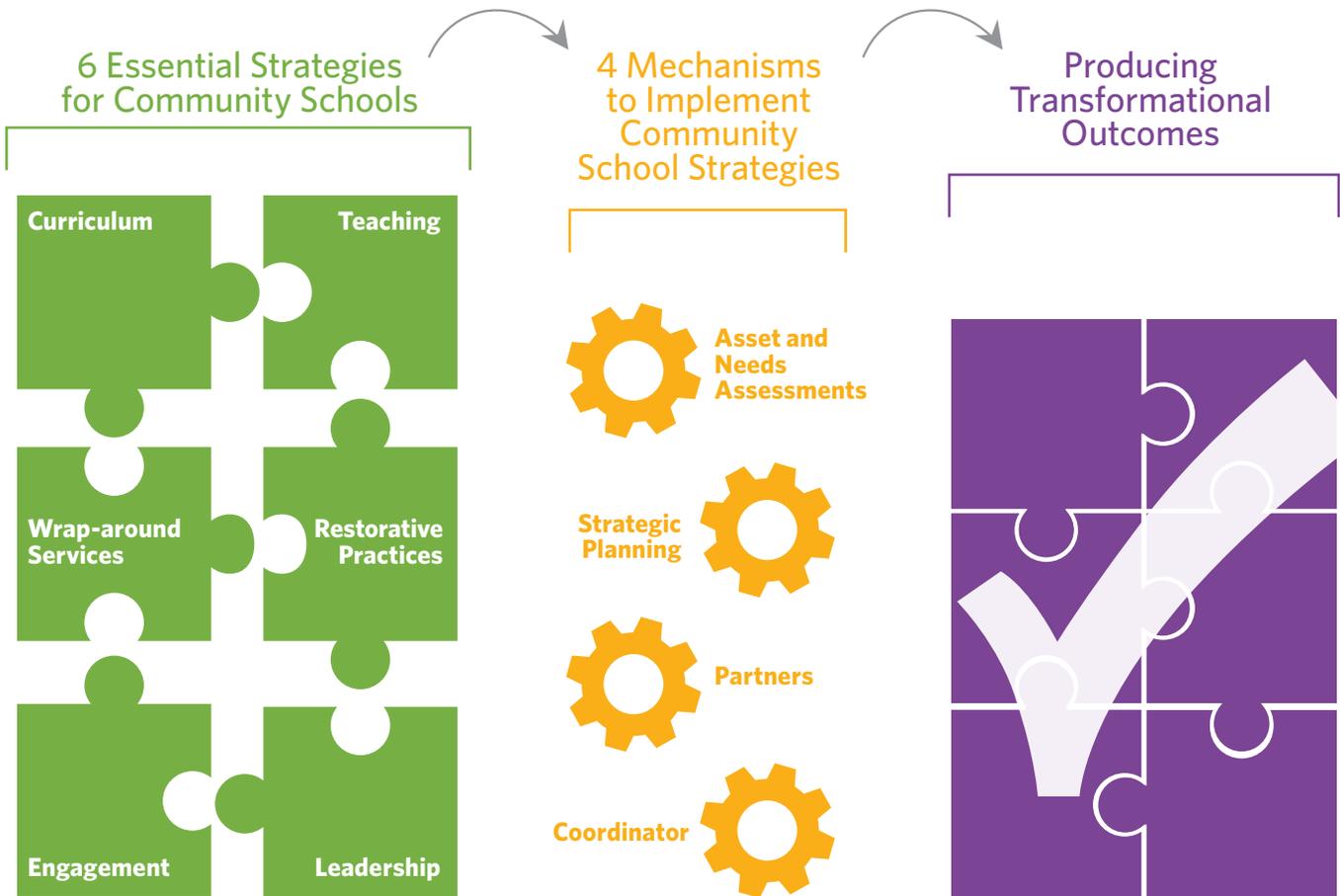
Innovative Community Schools Revenue Streams

In addition to the appropriation and smart use of existing resources, Community School advocates are increasingly looking to new revenue streams to fund this smart investment in children. Schott Foundation’s Opportunity to Learn Campaign published *Investing in the Future*¹⁸ to help public education advocates locate revenue sources that might help pay forward our next generation. Some examples of revenue more smartly invested in our children’s education may include: millionaires’ taxes, progressive income taxes, business tax avoidance, business tax breaks and estate taxes. For example, taxpayers engaged in a unitary business with one or more corporations could be required to do combined reporting, for which the revenue accrued would go toward a state Community Schools fund. Similarly, through adoption of the “throwback rule,” the Legislature can drive improved student and community outcomes by requiring its corporate citizens to contribute their fair share of state tax revenues that would then go toward a state Community Schools fund. New Government Accounting Standards Board regulations (GASB—Statement 77)¹⁹ require states and cities to disclose the amount of school district funding lost to real estate tax abatements. This opens the door for these tax dollars to be reclaimed by school districts if the abatement is determined to not be serving as the job creation mechanism it claims to be. Additionally, banks’ hefty revenue can be redirected from such ill-advised financing mechanisms as debt swaps,²⁰ which charge school districts higher interest rates than the banks themselves are paying to the federal government on loans and bonds.

and almost \$15 to every dollar invested. These results are corroborated by those of a 2012 economic-impact study by EMSI, a leading economic-modeling firm, which showed that every dollar invested in the network of more than 100 schools operated by the nonprofit organization Communities in Schools generated \$11.60 of economic benefit for the community.¹⁷

When schools become Community Schools, they become more than just schools; they become centers of community life. Together, educators and community partners collaboratively address issues traditionally independently addressed by agencies like health and human services, parks and recreation departments, and housing agencies. Community Schools do this in partnership with local non-profit organizations, businesses, faith-based entities and/or institutions of higher education.

Strategies and Mechanisms for Equity and Success



The Moment is Now: Community Schools and the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA)

The signing into law of the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to replace the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, or No Child Left Behind, makes this an opportune moment to embrace Community Schools as a policy framework. While there are, and will continue to be, many challenges associated with the re-distribution of authority to states and local school districts, the law provides an opening to nurture strong school-community partnerships that are at the heart of Community Schools

ESSA presents a significant opportunity to develop transformative, sustainable Community Schools across the country. It empowers state and district leaders to rethink strategies to enable all students to succeed, and to engage their communities as vital partners in that effort. At the outset, the way this new law frames our education system is much more positive than under No Child Left Behind: instead of labeling schools as “failing,” we will now identify them for “Comprehensive Support and Improvement”; instead of the pressure to narrow the curriculum for testing, we are now encouraged to focus on student “enrichment” and “school conditions for learning.” This framing is certainly amenable to the Community School strategy, which focuses on assets over deficits and support over labeling.

This new law projects a vision which recognizes that educators must work in partnership with their communities to help all young people thrive. This is paired with a shift toward a whole-child approach that is evident in several measures including through:

- an additional non-academic indicator which states must include in their accountability systems, such as student engagement or school climate and safety;
- the reporting of chronic absence, school climate, suspensions and expulsions, and other measures on state and district report cards;
- comprehensive needs assessments required for certain funding;
- consultation with parents and community partners in the planning and implementation of various funds.

Added together, these provisions support and reinforce the Community School approach to coordinate resources between schools and

Specific Community Schools funding provisions within ESSA include:

Title I

- *Funding amount:* \$15 billion per year
- *Allocation mechanism:* All states receive the funds by formula based on need as measured by free and reduced-lunch eligibility
- *Allowable uses:* Community School Coordinator, coordination of school and community resources

Title IV

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers**
 - *Funding Amount:* \$1 billion per year
 - *Allocation Mechanism:* All states receive the funds based on a formula; competitive grant process for districts to receive funding
 - *How to Get it:* Districts need to apply to state education agencies
 - *Allowable Uses:* Afterschool programming, Community School Coordinator, and various other uses
- **Student Support and Academic Enrichment**
 - *Funding Amount:* \$1.6 billion per year; goes to all 14,000 school districts
 - *Allowable Uses:* Dollars can go to Community School Coordinators and various other uses
- **Full Service Community Schools** (under Title IV's Community Support for School Success)
 - *Funding Amount:* 10 grants per year (past experience has these grants at \$500,000.)
 - *How to Get it:* FSCS is administered via a competitive grant process. School districts and schools and Community School Coordinators apply to federal government

communities. As states prepare for this law to take effect the 2017-2018 school year, this is an opportune time for state legislators to embrace Community Schools as a transformative strategy for student success, and to encourage their state superintendents to include the strategy in their new accountability systems.

Research Base for Six Key Community School Strategies

Federal law has for decades subscribed to a perspective that all school transformation approaches be research-based. ESSA is no exception.

The six strategies outlined here for successful Community Schools are based in decades of educational research by some of the strongest researchers and research institutions in the country.

These six strategies align almost precisely with the five “essential supports for school improvement” identified by the **University of Chicago Consortium on Chicago School Research (CCSR)** in the mid-1990’s and re-confirmed in multiple subsequent CCSR studies.²¹ They cite: 1) inclusive strategic school leadership, 2) parent engagement, 3) professional capacity, 4) student-centered and safe learning climate, and 5) ambitious learning environment. Studying hundreds of Chicago schools over a six-year period, the CCSR found schools with these five supports are at least ten times more likely than schools weak in most of the supports to show substantial gains in both reading and mathematics. Schools with these supports were also very unlikely to stagnate. In contrast, schools demonstrating weakness in any of these supports were four to five times more likely to stagnate.

In other words, the **CCSR** found that school success aligns with a school community’s “social capital.” For example, schools in more affluent communities—in which parents and the surrounding community and can afford and feel entitled to participate in the decision-making support for and life of the school, where teachers are valued, paid decently and treated to substantial and relevant professional development, where curriculum reflects the lives of students and challenges and engages them, where businesses fund ball fields and sports teams, in which the facilities reflect pride in its students and stake in the school’s success—are, in fact, more successful.²² Unsurprisingly, they found that within the status quo, these conditions existed almost exclusively in communities of affluence. However, if conditions of social capital were created in communities of poverty, measures of academic success, school climate, and community cohesion all shifted dramatically.

Other reports over the past several decades had similar findings. In the 2010 **Communities for Excellent Public Schools (CEPS)** report, *A Proposal for Sustainable School Transformation*,²³ CEPS called for a comprehensive assessment of each school’s individual strengths and challenges, as well as identifiable impediments to student success. This assessment would then guide the development of a transformation plan that addressed the school’s specific circumstances making sure to include: 1) a strong focus on school culture, 2) dynamic curriculum, 3) adequate staffing, 4) wrap-around supports for our students, and 5) collaboration to ensure local ownership and accountability.

The 2015 *Equal Opportunity for Deeper Learning*,²⁴ by **Linda Darling-Hammond, Diane Friedlaender, and Pedro Noguera**, found that equity in teaching and learning are achieved when schools provide:

As states prepare for this law to take effect the 2017-2018 school year, this is an opportune time for state legislators to embrace Community Schools as a transformative strategy for student success, and to encourage their state superintendents to include the strategy in their new accountability systems.

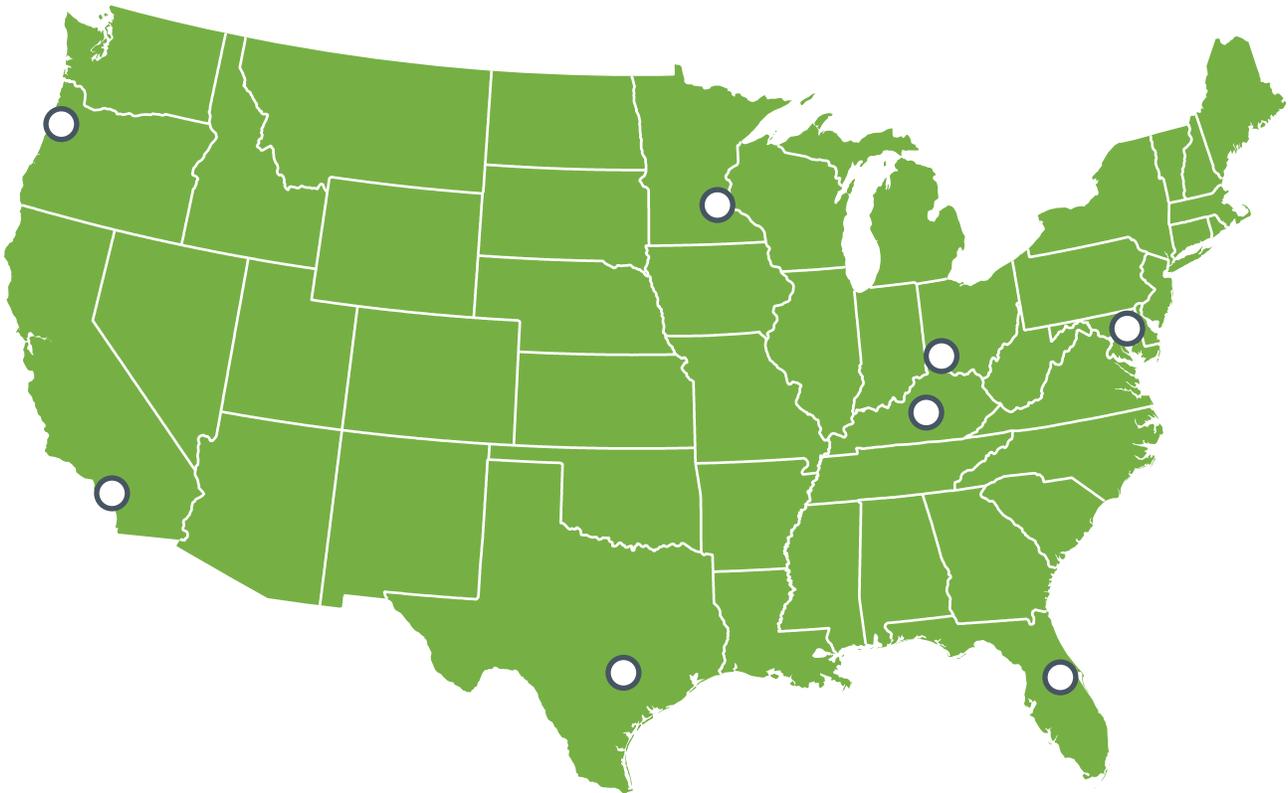
1. Authentic instruction and assessment in the form of project-based learning, performance-based assessment, collaborative learning, and connections to the world beyond school.
2. Personalized supports for learning in the form of advisory systems, differentiated instruction, and support for social services and social-emotional learning along with skills.
3. Supports for educator learning through opportunities for reflection, collaboration, and leadership, as well as professional development.²⁵

The report recommends dramatic policy change for provision of these elements.²⁶

A 2014 **Child Trends** report, *Integrated Student Supports: a Summary of the Evidence Base for Policy Makers*,²⁷ shows the impact of Community Schools on multiple dimensions of student learning and development including test scores, attendance, and family engagement. It finds that the integrity of implementation is key to success.²⁸ Finally, in Tulsa, Oklahoma, an evaluation of the **Tulsa Area OK Community Schools Initiative** (TACSI), found that TACSI students significantly outperformed comparison students in math by 32 points and in reading by 19 points in schools where the Community School model was implemented most successfully. Low-income students in high implementing TACSI schools performed on par with non-free/reduced lunch students and significantly higher than free/reduced lunch students in the comparison schools.²⁹

Model Community School Profiles

Below we profile six individual schools, one school district, one city, one county and one state that are currently implementing many of the six strategies of successful Community Schools. Their stories describe what these schools and districts were grappling with prior to becoming Community Schools, how they began to use a transformational strategy, what elements were implemented in what specific ways, and the amazing results that accrued.



Austin, Texas—Webb Middle School

Austin, Texas—Reagan High School

Orlando, Florida—Evans High School

Baltimore, Maryland—Wolfe Street Academy

Baltimore, Maryland—The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School

Los Angeles, California—Social Justice Humanitas Academy (section below by permission from the Coalition for Community Schools 2015 Awards for Excellence Profiles)

Minneapolis, MN—Brooklyn Center Full-Service Community Schools District

Cincinnati, OH Public Schools' Community Learning Centers—District-Wide Model

City of Portland and Multnomah County, Oregon—Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Community Schools

Kentucky's State-wide Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSKY's)

Webb Middle School AUSTIN, TEXAS

In 2007, the superintendent of Austin Public Schools informed students, parents, teachers, and community members that the Walter P. Webb Middle School would close. Their students would be sent to two other middle schools in the Austin Independent School District, both of which were struggling academically.³⁰ Webb was the lowest performing middle school in Austin.³¹

At the time, the community was only minimally involved in the school, enrollment was slipping year after year, the graduation rate was just 48 percent, and the school lacked a strategic plan to turn itself around. Although residents were not satisfied with the state of Webb, they resisted the closure and convinced the superintendent to give them one month to develop a turnaround plan. The ultimate plan, developed by a school and community stakeholders group, called for Webb Middle School to implement the Community School strategy. The superintendent and the school board accepted the plan.³² Over the course of the next two years, hundreds of community members, teachers, students, and other stakeholders developed an expansive vision for Webb; they also determined the assets and needs of the school, and developed a strategic plan to fill those needs.

Today, after 5 years of utilizing the Community School strategy, Webb is the highest performing Title I Middle School in Austin, now better serving the same students in the Webb community.³³

Webb's Students & Families:

Many parents at Webb are construction workers, day laborers, and housecleaners, and not many have an education that extends beyond high school. Some of Webb's parents attended elementary school, but had to drop out to work in the fields in Mexico. Because many parents hold low-wage service industry jobs with little stability, the school has an extremely high mobility rate: 25 percent of students who begin the school year at Webb leave before the year end. While Webb's daily attendance rate has improved dramatically since becoming a Community School (average attendance is around 95 percent), Community School staff have to work hard to make that happen.³⁴

Needs Assessment Findings & Solutions



What the school/community stakeholders' team learned during their initial needs assessment was that there were not enough programs and services in place to adequately service their current student population. And while the school had multiple partnerships, they were poorly coordinated. Margaret Bachicha, academic dean of student support services, recalls, "there was one child [at Webb] who had three mentors and one child who had none."³⁵ Webb needed more services, and a better system to coordinate them.³⁶



Today at Webb, the Community School Coordinator ensures all programs are well coordinated, aligned with student and community needs, and sufficient to meet those needs. These partnerships enable students to access a range of programs and services, including afterschool programs run by the Boys and Girls Club, a college mentoring program offered by Breakthrough Austin; free immunizations and physicals, thanks to a mobile clinic that visits the school; and various other programs that were put in place to address the needs identified in their needs assessment.

Filling the Need Gaps

Raul Sanchez, principal of Webb Middle School:
"Whether it be mentoring, wrap-around services for families, direct counseling, someone is stepping in to fill that gap," he says. Such partnerships "allow teachers to focus on what they do best. And that is to teach, to develop and plan lessons that matter."³⁷

Partnerships also extend to supporting students' families. The school works with nonprofit organizations that help parents with legal, employment, health, and housing issues. To coordinate these services, a family resource center is located next to the school and is run by Austin Voices for Education and Youth (AVEY).³⁸



Physical & Mental Health: Webb's needs assessment found that most Webb families did not have medical insurance so could not access care. Students were coming to school with toothaches, unable to see the blackboard, and with emotional trauma as a result of difficult home situations. Children at Webb have parents and family members who are victims of violence, being deported and are incarcerated.

At the mobile clinic located at the school, students can receive free physicals. One interesting and beneficial outcome that Webb experienced by adding the mobile clinic was much greater participation on the school's athletic teams. Before the mobile clinic, few students participated in afterschool sports at Webb because the district required that students receive a physical prior to participating in sports, which most students could not afford. The district only offered free physicals once a year and not on school grounds, making it difficult for families to access the service. Now participation rates on Webb's athletic teams have soared, and their teams are winning.⁴⁰



Because of Webb's health partnerships, physical conditions are diagnosed and treated. Partners provide trauma-trained mental health counselors to the school. The counselors also provide training to the entire school on Social Emotional Learning (SEL). SEL has provided teachers and others at Webb with the skills necessary to identify symptoms of distress, such as certain forms of acting out. This allows teachers to connect students with counselors proactively.



Academic supports: Webb has over 100 tutors and mentors, and nearly 90 percent of the school's 705 students receive at least one type of service through more than 30 community partners. Austin Partners in Education (APIE) is a key academic partner at Webb. They coordinate professionals—researchers, engineers, and retired teachers, among others—who volunteer to help sixth- through eighth-graders in their math or reading classes. Before Webb became a Community School, the volunteers would come up with their own lessons. Upon learning that was the case, the Community School Coordinator aligned the work of APIE volunteers to the lesson plans of the classroom teachers.⁴¹



Engaging curriculum: In addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, the needs assessment found that families wanted music and art back in the curriculum. In response, Webb created a band, orchestra, and dance troupe. All have become world-class ensembles with members rising to state level competitions—an accomplishment not seen at Webb for decades.

Annual Needs Assessment

Allan Weeks, Executive Director, AVEY

At the beginning of the school year, the family resource center asks that families fill out a survey to gauge the school's current needs. The family resource center keeps those surveys on file and then pulls them when families seek out the center's help. Approximately 75 percent of families return the surveys each year. On a given day, anywhere from one to eight parents will walk into the center asking for help with domestic violence, housing, or legal issues, among others. At Webb, parents don't just fill out surveys; their surveys are listened to, creating an atmosphere of trust that is apparent as soon as you walk in the door. As a matter of fact, at Webb, everyone is listened to.³⁹



Shared Leadership: Webb is part of a grant-based pilot working to develop a new supervisory model for the district.⁴² Under this model, teachers, administration, parents, and students are part of a team. Teachers have more input into both the academic and non-academic life of the school and into their own professional development. At a recent community meeting coordinated by the school/community stakeholders' team, teachers, parents, and students reflected together in facilitated groups on a draft plan for the next five years.⁴³



Transformational Parent Engagement: Because English is not the native language of most Webb parents, the school now has English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) classes for parents three days a week for 2 ½ hours a day. They also have a bilingual education organizer provided by AVEY, whose job is to go out into the community and further increase family and community engagement and leadership development through home visits and other mechanisms.

Future of Webb



Using the Community School strategy, Webb is continually searching for needs, and developing programs to meet those needs. The school is working to update its vision. Recently the school's stakeholder leadership group created a new five-year plan for the school that includes building on the school's diversity by creating a World's Culture Academy. Families and educators at Webb believe their rich diversity of cultures and languages are assets. They want their curriculum to reflect that diversity so that children experience their learning as culturally relevant.⁴⁴



Funding sources (Austin-specific: includes both Webb MS and Reagan HS):

The Austin Public School district has made a strong commitment to funding the Family Resource Centers at both Webb Middle School and Reagan High School, with the City of Austin, Travis County and Austin Voices also contributing. The local children's hospital commits \$200,000 per year to support pregnant and parenting teens and their children with a mobile health unit that comes to the high school. Here at Webb, Community School Coordinators are repurposed assistant principal positions paid by the district. Parent liaisons are supported through district and city funding. They get much of their funding by piecing together existing programs and finding additional money for coordination and filling gaps. Volunteers also play a huge role, from mentoring and tutoring, to providing food for dinners and celebrations. The schools work very closely with local public libraries, police, parks and recreation departments, and the health and human services department through monthly planning to coordinate programming.

Webb school receives more than \$350,000 each year from the United Way for Greater Austin to implement wraparound services for students and families.⁴⁵ For students who can't afford eye exams or glasses, the family resource center provides them with a waiver for a free exam and a free pair of glasses, thanks to a grant from the Boys and Girls Club.⁴⁶ The city of Austin enables the center to give families up to \$1,000 each year to prevent electric bills from going unpaid.⁴⁷ Austin's school superintendent understands that a low-performing school is much more expensive to run than a school that is academically strong. State monitoring is expensive, both in personnel and time. The money saved by not being in crisis provides funds to dedicate to growing Community Schools.



In a nutshell, below you can view Webb’s transformational outcomes and the mechanisms and strategies they used to achieve them.

Webb Middle School—Austin, TX (5 years as a community school)		
Transformation	2010	2015
Enrollment	485	750
Attendance	91 percent	96 percent
Student mobility	35 percent	25 percent
Graduation rate	48 percent	78 percent
Academic performance	Lowest performing middle school in Austin on verge of closure	Highest performing Title 1 middle school of 14 campuses
Community engagement	Active community not engaged with the school	Community-based needs assessment and plan developed by parents, teachers, and community; Monthly community partner luncheons
Capacity to engage community	Little	Community School Coordinator whose job it is to match community assets with needs ⁴⁸
Support coordination	None	Full-time Community School Coordinator providing partner coordination; Twice-weekly meeting to coordinate student support referrals
Discipline referrals	ISS and Alternative Learning Center referrals high	Student-led Youth Court (in partnership with UT-Austin Law School) and restorative justice efforts on campus have reduced referrals
Services for ELLs	Space for 125 ELLs in English Language Development Academy (ELDA) program on campus; Others placed in regular classes once ELDA is full	All ELLs are offered space in expanded ELDA program
Family support services/ Adult Ed	Occasional ESL or computer class; No support services for families	Full-time Family Resource Center with bilingual social worker offering adult and parenting classes; 300 families served per year and 70 case-managed with housing, employment, health and other services
Mental and behavioral health services	Very limited services provided by district	Strong on-campus partnerships provide mental health services through United Way grant
Volunteers	>30 mentors and tutors	100+ volunteers providing mentoring and tutoring weekly
Sports & extracurricular programs	Struggling arts and sports	Award-winning band, orchestra and dance; Strong sports program, supported by volunteers who provide sports physicals

Reagan High School AUSTIN, TEXAS

Reagan High School is located in northeast Austin. In the late 1990s and early 2000s, Reagan's student body became increasingly poor as middle-class families left the area. In 2003, a student was stabbed to death by her former boyfriend in a hallway of the school. The incident made headlines and scared away neighborhood families. Students left Reagan in droves. Enrollment at Reagan High School dropped from over 2000 students in its heyday to a new low of 600 students, and the graduation rate hovered just below 50 percent. In 2008, the district threatened to close Reagan. In reaction, a committee of parents, teachers, and students brought together by Austin Voices for Education and Youth (AVEY), formulated a plan to turn Reagan into a Community School. The district accepted their plan.⁴⁹

Today, five years after adopting the Community School strategy, Reagan is graduating 85 percent of their students, enrollment has more than doubled, and a new Early College High School program has allowed many of Reagan's students to earn two years of college credits (their Associate's Degree) from a nearby community college during their time as Reagan students.⁵⁰

Reagan's Students & Families:

Reagan's student population is much like Webb's (see above): close to 80 percent Latino, and about 18 percent African American. Eighty percent are identified by the state's indicator of poverty and 30 percent are English Language Learners. In 2010, before becoming a Community School, 25 percent of female students were pregnant or parenting, among whom barely any graduated; Reagan now has a 100 percent graduation rate among pregnant and parenting teens.

Needs & Solutions:



In order to determine a new vision for Reagan, school stakeholders asked three key questions: 1) What do you like about your school? 2) What does your school need in order to be the school you want it to be? 3) What resources would make that happen? Before Reagan became a Community School, the curriculum was not challenging. The graduation rate was below 50 percent and most students couldn't afford to attend college even if they graduated.



Engaging and Challenging Curriculum: The community-engaged needs assessment model used at Reagan encouraged members to "think big" about their dreams for their school. Their young people needed affordable access to higher education. They noted that Austin Community College had a campus right across the highway. Following discussions with community college leadership, Reagan leaders and members of the community decided to adopt the Early College High School curriculum. This curriculum allows any Reagan student who can pass the community college placement test to take courses at the community college for free. If a student passes the placement tests before the beginning of their junior year, all their courses after that can apply as dual credit, meaning they

Allen Weeks, Executive Director, Austin Voices for Children and Youth (AVEY)

"Recently I was in a classroom taught by a community college professor. There, mixed in the classroom were several special needs kids, maybe with an aide, working on the same subject matter, perhaps with differentiated texts or materials. But they are part of those classes... It's awesome to see."



receive both high school and college credits simultaneously. This allows students at Reagan to graduate with both a high school diploma and an Associate's Degree. This option is available to all students. Academic support to achieve this is available to all including students with Individualized Education Plans (IEP's). In 2014, a dozen students received Associate Degrees and another 150 took college classes.⁵¹ This solution allows for a cost-free higher education for the Reagan community.

In 2014, a dozen students received Associate Degrees and another 150 took college classes. This solution allows for a cost-free higher education for the Reagan community.



Coordination: In the case of Reagan, their vice principal serves as their Community School Coordinator. The Coordinator works with both academic and non-academic leadership teams to ensure alignment between students' needs and the services and programs provided. Once a student has outgrown a particular support, it is removed. Students get the supports they need, whether academic (tutoring or mentoring) or non-academic (help with attendance, social-emotional issues, language issues, or enrichment through a reinvigorated arts and music program and many other activities during and after school).⁵²



Restorative Justice Practices: Reagan's needs assessment revealed that the school needed to change its approach to discipline. Before instituting major changes to their discipline policy, students were suspended frequently. Chronic attendance issues landed students and families in courts that then imposed fines families could not afford. Rather than solving problems, this led to high drop-out rates. Today, a full-time bilingual social worker works to diagnose chronic attendance problems, connecting students and/or their families with appropriate supports. In addition, if these problems persist, new strategies have been agreed upon with local civil courts that allow for service referrals rather than fines. A student-led youth court has been developed in partnership with the University of Texas-Austin Law School. The youth court and a restorative justice program have together reduced discipline issues dramatically.⁵³



Wrap-around supports: Long before Reagan became a Community School, it housed a daycare for the babies of student mothers so they could continue their education. Today, that daycare still exists and about 20 babies are enrolled. But because Reagan is now a Community School, more supports are provided for moms through the on-site daycare program. For example, when school social workers noticed student moms were missing school in order to take their babies to doctors' appointments, the social workers applied for and won a grant for a mobile clinic to visit the campus once a week. Student moms can now make appointments for their babies to receive checkups without having to leave school and miss classes. Reagan also enables parents to eat lunch with their babies in the daycare and attend parenting classes. As a result of this supportive alignment of services, students in Reagan's Pregnant and Parenting Teen Program now have a remarkable 100 percent graduation rate.⁵⁴



Funding sources:

The Austin Public Schools has made a strong commitment to funding Family Resource Centers at both schools, with the City of Austin, Travis County, and Austin Voices also contributing. Their local United Way provides a \$300,000 grant per year to support mental health needs. The local children's hospital commits \$200,000 per year to support pregnant and parenting teens and their children with a mobile health unit that comes to the high school. Community School Coordinators are repurposed assistant principal positions paid by the district. Parent liaisons are supported through district and city funding. Much of their funding is through piecing together already existing programs and finding dollars for coordination and filling gaps. Volunteers also play a huge role, from mentoring and tutoring



to providing food for dinners and celebrations. The schools work very closely with their local public libraries, police, parks and recreation department, and health and human services department through monthly planning to coordinate programming.



In a nutshell, below you can view Reagan’s transformational outcomes and the mechanisms and strategies they used to achieve them.

Reagan Early College High School—Austin, TX (5 years as a Community School)		
Indicator	2010	2015
Enrollment	600	1250
Attendance	88 percent	95 percent
Student mobility	41 percent	30 percent
Graduation rate	48 percent	85 percent
Pregnant and parenting students graduation rate	25 percent of girls pregnant and parenting, with low graduation rate	100 percent graduation rate in 2015 for Pregnant and Parenting Teen program members; On-site medical services and child care for parents and children
Students earning dual college credit	0	150+
Seniors earning Associate’s degree in HS	0	12
Community engagement	Community not engaged with the school; school on verge of closure	Community-based plan developed over two years by 150 people, with continuing dinners, festivals and school-community partnership events; HopeFest Resource Fair attracts 4,000+ annually
Support coordination	None	Full-time Student and Family Support Coordinator providing partner coordination.
Family support services/ Adult Ed	Occasional ESL or computer class	Full-time Family Resource Center with bilingual social worker; Adult and parenting classes
Volunteers and mentors	>10	100+ annually
Discipline referrals	High number referred to courts; In-School Suspension ineffective	Low number referred for attendance; Personal Responsibility Center provides tutors and student support services
Sports and extracurriculars	Struggling band program; Poor participation in sports	Award-winning band program; Football team featured on Sports Illustrated; New baseball field provided by Houston Astros

Evans High School ORLANDO, FLORIDA

Evans High School is located in the Pine Hills community of Orlando, Florida, a community that gets a lot of attention for its crime and poverty. Just five years ago, Evans received a “D” rating from the state of Florida. Their student population was in severe decline, their graduation rate was only a little above half, and the school hardly had any services or programs to help the struggling population that the school served.⁵⁵



Now, five years later, Evans High School is thriving Community School. It is part of a four-way partnership program, through which the school, The University of Central Florida (UCF), the Children’s Home Society and True Health, a community health care provider, have developed a strategic plan to meet the school’s needs. In only three years as a Community School,⁵⁶ Evans has dramatically increased their enrollment from 1,975 to 2,495, while at the same time halving their disciplinary incidents, more than doubling their industry certifications, tripling their International Baccalaureate diplomas, and raising their graduation rate by 15 percent.⁵⁷

Evans’ Students & Families:

Eighty-five percent of Evans’ students qualify for free or reduced price meals. Twenty percent are English Language Learners. In 2011-12, 73 percent and 66 percent were “below proficient” in reading and math respectively. During that same year there were 768 Abuse Hotline calls in Evans’ zip code.⁵⁸ Pine Hills is familiar with trauma. Many families have experienced domestic violence and abuse. Hunger is not unfamiliar. Lack of stability is the norm. Mobility is common. Homelessness is a serious factor.⁵⁹

Needs & Solutions:



Needs Assessment: Listening to and understanding the needs of the students and the community has been key to Evans’ success. The school performs an annual needs assessment to ensure that services and programs do not grow outdated.⁶⁰ The school’s strategic plan called for the creation of many stakeholder councils and teams to ensure a constant flow of feedback and response. A Community School leadership team was created. It meets monthly to make sure that the school’s strategic plan is on track and programs and services are coordinated. Administrators sit on the team to make sure there is alignment between the services and in school academic programs.⁶¹ A student leadership council meets monthly and keeps leadership updated on the needs and assets of the students and how to target and direct services. A parent advisory council meets monthly where the needs of the parents are shared.

Jarvis Wheeler,
Evans’ Community
School site
coordinator:

**“We meet
everybody where
they are.”**



Engaging and Challenging Curriculum: In 2009-10 Evans’ academic achievement was declining dramatically. The school had a 64 percent graduation rate and a “D” rating from the state of Florida. To change that, a decision was made for Evans to open their International Baccalaureate (IB) program to all students and then to make sure that students had the support they needed to succeed. In just three years they had quadrupled the students graduating with an IB diploma.⁶²

In addition to the IB program, Evans also provides Industry Certification program offerings including Multimedia Technology, Engineering, Culinary Arts, Early Childhood Care, Digital Video Production, and Technical Theatre, with internships that provide students with valuable experience and

opportunities for job placement after graduation and college acceptance in that course of study. The Industry Certification program is a dual enrollment program. It offers students credit toward an industry certification in over 50 fields of study, a test for certification and preparation to enter a career while simultaneously earning their high school diploma. Almost 600 students achieved this at Evans in 2015, more than doubling the number since becoming a Community School.⁶³

Evans has a robust afterschool program that is aligned with the regular school day. Regular day teachers stay after school twice a week to tutor 800 students, or a third of Evans’ population. Evans’ curriculum also includes afterschool enrichment programming which a third of students access twice weekly. Enrichment programs include college prep, career exploration, anger management, yoga, health, drama, arts and more.



Positive Discipline and School Climate: Disciplinary incidents had been high at Evans before the implementation of the Community School. Evans has been able to cut such incidents in half even though the population of the school has grown significantly. Anger management and yoga are taught as part of the after-school program. Students say that if they are feeling stressed out before they have a test, they will want to come to yoga and calm down so they can focus. Students feel more respected and successful and when they don’t, they have coping strategies and resources they can call on when they feel stressed or aggravated.



Educator Supports: Evans has a core partnership with the UCF education department, which supports high-quality teaching. The department provides pedagogical professional development with doctoral students as well as UCF speech pathologists embedded into classrooms.



Health Supports: As a result of Pine Hills’ poverty, many of Evans’ students have gone without health care of any kind. Students come to school with many health needs unmet. With the help of their health and social service partners, Evans has been able to implement full service physical and mental health services located in their Wellness Cottage, a separate building on campus that is connected to the school.



Coordination: Senior Administrator, Jennifer Eubanks, is the core link between the academic and non-academic services at the school. “True Health,” she says, “is on our campus in the wellness cottage. They are open to the community as well as our students. Students have slotted times, so the clinic can’t fill up with community visits. They have dental services as well as medical. The nurse sits with students at lunchtime so they can make appointments, turn in consent forms, and confer if needed.”⁶⁴ This eliminates the need for students or their parents to take time off from school or work to deal with dental, physical, or mental health services. This equals more instructional time-on-task and the school’s improved reputation as a caring partner with the family and community.



Another partner, Children’s Home Society, provides Evans with two mental health professionals with offices in the school building. Much of this medical and mental health support is paid for through **Medicaid**. The school provides assistance to students and families to fill out applications.⁶⁵



Services providers at Evans are intentionally culturally competent. A third of Evans student population is Haitian-Creole speaking. To adequately serve these students and their families, Evans employs a Haitian-Creole speaking access worker, parent coordinator and mental health professional.⁶⁶



Parent and community engagement on school grounds is normalized through their participation in medical and mental health services, as well as educational opportunities, workshops and PTSA meetings which are significantly better attended than before Evans was seen as such a trusted community partner.⁶⁷

Evans is now a popular school. Their enrollment has increased by 500 students since 2012.⁶⁸



Funding sources

Evans Community School, located within Evans High School, has received nearly \$1 million in state and federal monies for an on-site wellness cottage that will provide health and dental care to Evans students.

The most recent funding was allocated during the 2013 Florida Legislative Session, as state leaders voted to direct \$400,000 of the education budget toward the wellness cottage's operating expenses.

The state funding comes on the heels of a \$500,000 grant awarded to Evans Community School by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Health Resources and Service Administration (HRSA).⁶⁹ The HRSA monies will enable Evans Community School to purchase and install a 2,520 square-foot portable building as well as durable medical and dental equipment.



In a nutshell, below you can view Evan's transformational outcomes and the mechanisms and strategies they used to achieve them.⁷⁰

Evans High School—Orange County, FL (3 years a Community School)		
Transformation	2012	2015
Enrollment	1975	2485
Graduation rate	64 percent	78 percent
Rating	D	B/C
International Baccalaureates	47	198
Industry Certifications	223	595
SESIR Discipline Incidents	1240	690
Community Engagement Coordination	No capacity for structured, coordinated process to build community engagement	Greatly increased coordinated community engagement addressing and aligned to the needs of the school
Afterschool involvement	Little afterschool activity other than clubs and sports	Over 700 students enrolled in tutoring and enrichment alone; Tutoring on Saturdays; Others continue enrollment in clubs and sports
Parent engagement	Very low numbers of parents involved with school; Few workshops offered for parents; Low PTSA numbers (total of 5 parents attended PTSA meetings)	Increasing number of parents involved with school; Ongoing workshops and parent opportunities available; over 40 members attend PTSA meetings regularly
Food insecurities addressed	No food pantry or snack cabinets to address food insecurities; Lunch offered to students	Food pantry and snack cabinets; Breakfast, lunch and supper offered to students daily
Student Job program	None	175 Juniors/Seniors learn employability skills and are offered paid internships that return \$200k to community each summer
Wellness services	Basic medical services through school clinic (RN); One full-time mental health counselor offered to students	Basic medical services through school clinic (RN); Wellness cottage provides additional primary care (ARNP/MD); Dental; Two full-time mental health counselors offered to students, staff, and community

Wolfe Street Academy BALTIMORE, MARYLAND⁷¹

Nine years ago, when Wolfe St. Academy became a Community School, 90 percent of its students were living in poverty, 60 percent of students spoke a language other than English in the home, and not even half of their students remaining at the school for more than three years (46.6 percent student mobility). Wolfe Street Academy was ranked 77th in the district in academic measures, and only half its children reached reading proficiency in 5th grade. It had no library and only sporadic parent or community engagement.

In 2014, after eight years as a Community School, Wolfe Street ranks an astonishing 2nd in the city academically, its mobility rate has gone down to 8.8 percent, 95 percent of 5th grade students are at proficiency in reading, and its average daily attendance rate is 95 percent. They have a library with a book club and a volunteer retired librarian. An incredible 40 parents attend a “Morning Meeting” every morning before school while the students are eating breakfast, where the school and community share news, both good and bad. And importantly, this transformation has taken place while the school serves *more* students living in poverty and more students speaking a language other than English in the home than in 2005.

Wolfe St. Students & Families

In 2015, 96 percent of Wolfe Street’s students qualify for free or reduced price meals. 79 percent are Latino, speaking Spanish in the home; 66 percent are English Language Learners. Of the remaining students 11 percent are Caucasian, 8 percent African American, and 2 percent Asian. Wolfe Street has the largest percentage of Latino students anywhere in Baltimore. The community as a whole suffers from food scarcity and scarcity of medical services. Recently a new immigrant population has started moving into the neighborhood from an indigenous area of Mexico, where the Mixtec language is spoken. The school has begun to identify tri-lingual parents so that those families who speak only Mixtec can find their place within the community.



Needs & Solutions

Wolfe Street staff pay attention to the needs of students and their families. Every morning at Morning Meeting parents, teachers, and students see each other before the academic and behavioral demands of the classroom are made. Each party is able to see the strength of the entire community and know that they are not alone in their desire for the best education for the children.



The deep trust that is central to transformational relationships, developed through activities like the Morning Meeting, provides the school staff and leadership with a deep and dynamic understanding of the needs and strengths of the community. The school leadership uses this information to “engage” the school community where they are. As in Brooklyn Center, the first step to successfully engage children in learning is to be sure that they are physically and emotionally available to learn.



Physical Health: Many Wolfe Street students come to school hungry and can’t be sure of a meal at the end of the day. For this reason, Wolfe Street feeds students three meals a day at school. They provide annual dental screening and referrals to pediatric dentists. These services matter. In the course of a first-ever dental screening, one child previously thought to have a speech impediment was discovered to suffer from a tongue that had never fully separated from the lower palate in his mouth. He had great difficulty speaking as a result. After a quick and easy outpatient surgery, the child began to talk normally and his chances for a successful future were changed forever.





Mental Health: Similarly, many children at Wolfe Street are either victims of trauma themselves, have witnessed trauma or are the children of trauma victims. Wolfe Street’s lead agency, the organization that is charged with primary leveraging of partnerships into the school, is the University of Maryland’s School of Social Work. The site coordinator, the person at that organization with primary responsibility for creating systems and partnerships to address needs of the community, is a licensed social worker and supervises multiple social work interns who provide case management and referrals. Through this lead agency relationship the school has recently begun to view student behavior through a “trauma informed” lens. Thus when a student is having a difficult time in class, rather than solely imposing punitive discipline, staff employ supportive practices that allow for more effective interventions with students.



Literacy: Gaither says, “if a school community needs ELL, Special Ed, GED services or Extended educational opportunities, based on its needs, then the Community School needs to work to provide it, assess it, adjust it, and to do all of this, basically, forever. It needs to be stressed that this is not a medicine that you take to fix an illness. This is an exercise regimen that you do every day so that you get healthy and stay healthy.” The school community is severely impacted by adult illiteracy, both in English and Spanish, so part of the school’s “exercise regimen” explicitly addresses literacy. It is an identified need with which the school community must engage for success. As in so many urban settings, rich and robust Out of School Time experiences are essential for students. 84 percent of Wolfe Street’s students stay at school until 5:40PM. They receive homework help, academic instruction and educational enrichment. Between the Day School and After School programs the school provides a rich curriculum, including music, art, science, physical education and extension clubs.



Curriculum: Teachers need support to succeed. The school gets curricular support from another partner, the Baltimore Curriculum Project. BCP provides professional development in Direct Instruction, a research effective curriculum developed at the University of Oregon. BCP also supports the school with teacher recruitment and retention. The Baltimore Curriculum Project connects Wolfe Street Academy to a larger network of relationships that make sure Wolfe’s educational offerings are among the best practices throughout the country.



The Baltimore Curriculum Project and Wolfe Street Academy recognize that every member of the community, from principal through the teachers, to the parents and students, all need regular development, reflection and discussion of how to become better every day. BCP and Wolfe Street actualize this realization by providing full time professional coaching to teachers and administrators.



These are educational thought partners who gather and consider data and in concert with school staff to help direct school-wide and individual student instructional strategies. But, as we saw at Reagan and Webb, this vulnerable work is done within an atmosphere of trusting relationships in which blame has no role. The work is to figure out “the new best” solution and employ it as a team. This type of trust opens the door to creativity and energy to come up with new exciting ideas for teaching and learning. Uncertainty does not impede success. This ability to trust and to try new solutions over and over again is what the administration of Wolfe Street is looking for when they hire teachers. And that is a reason they succeed.



School Climate: The bottom line at Wolfe Street is respect. As a matter of fact the school has one overarching expectation: “All Wolfe Street Academy community members will be respectful and responsible at all times.” This encompasses the attitude toward and among students, parents, community, and staff, and it reduces the need for punitive discipline. Instead it embraces a mutual responsibility for each other’s success in all things.



Funding

Baltimore has put together a quilt of funding sources to accomplish the funding of 52 Community Schools in the city. The responsibility for funding has fallen in Baltimore to year-to-year allocations from the Mayor's office. These allocations are on the increase recently, but are never assured from year to year or from administration to administration. Philanthropic resources have also been leveraged to support the work of Community Schools. In its most basic form a full time community site coordinator costs approximately \$90,000 per year. This includes salary and benefits and a small materials support budget for use in the work. This number has been funded in the past several years by a \$70,000 contribution from the Mayor's office and a \$20,000 contribution from the general funds controlled by the school principal.



In a nutshell, below you can view Wolfe St.'s transformational outcomes and the mechanisms and strategies they used to achieve them.

Baltimore, MD—Wolfe Street Academy (8 years as a Community School)		
Indicator	2010	2015
Average daily attendance	94 percent	97 percent (2014)
Chronic absence	10 percent	1.5 percent (2014)
Student mobility	46.6 percent	8.8 percent (2014)
Academic ranking=	77th in city (MSA)	2nd in city (2014, MSA)
5th grade reading proficiency	50 percent	95 percent (2014)
Suspensions	8 (2012)	0 (2014)
Coordination of community engagement	none	Full time site coordinator specifically tasked with identifying community assets and needs; Partnerships established to address needs are developed and nurtured to meet the needs of the community
Community engagement	Regular school staff provide yearly opportunities for family and neighborhood engagement, such as back-to-school night, academic nights, and parent conferences; Morning Meeting with students, teachers, and around 40 parents; Translation of key documents into Spanish; Telephonic interpretation of conversations	A greater number of staff members hired that speak Spanish and are able to provide face-to-face interpretation of conversation; Regular school staff provide yearly opportunities for family and neighborhood engagement, such as back-to-school night, academic nights, and parent conferences; Morning Meeting with students, teachers, and around 40 parents; All communications with parents are presented bilingually; Telephonic interpretation of conversations
Capacity to engage community	Regular school staff engaged with the community in the course of their individual role as an educator	Regular school staff engaged with the community in the course of their individual role as an educator

Baltimore, MD—Wolfe Street Academy (continued...)		
Indicator	2010	2015
Afterschool programming	50 percent of K-5 students attending until 5:40PM; Clubs and activities; Part-time director at hourly rate	84 percent of K-5 students until 5:40PM: Academic tutoring 3 days a week; Homework help Private tutoring for identified students by Johns Hopkins volunteers; Robotics, chess, gardening, sports, music, writing Field Trip experiences; Full-time director with salary and benefits
Library access	No dedicated library space and out-of-date collection	Fully stocked and welcoming Reading Room; Book clubs and lending program; Library development guided by volunteer retired librarian
Hunger and poverty	Breakfast and lunch provided at school; Case-by-case support for families when identified as in-need	Breakfast, lunch and dinner provided at school, reducing hunger and saving families money; Maryland Food Bank Emergency Food Pantry Site; Quarterly fresh food distribution; Support in maintaining families in Federal Food Stamp programs.
Social work services	Part-time school district social worker for students identified by the Special Education Department; Full-time mental health clinician to support non-special education students in need	Part-time school district social worker for students identified by the Special Education Department; Full-time mental health clinician to support non-special education students in need; Community School Site Coordinator trained as a social worker and on the faculty of the University of MD School of Social Work; Multiple social work interns from University of Maryland School of Social Work provide case management, referrals and program development
Physical health	Yearly screening of incoming students through the school district and city health department including vision, hearing, and dental	Yearly screening of incoming students through the school district and city health department including vision, hearing, and dental; Through partnership with University of Maryland School of Dentistry, all students receive annual dental screenings with follow up referrals to pediatric dentists

The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School BALTIMORE, MARYLAND⁷¹

The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School (HSCT) sits in one of the hardest hit neighborhoods in the city of Baltimore. Just down the street is where Freddie Gray was killed and where the community rose up in protest at that killing. In McCulloh Homes (public housing), where most of HSCT's students live, just getting to school is an accomplishment, made difficult by nightly gunshots heard through apartment windows and rats scampering across the floor all night.

HSCT is part of Promise Heights, a place-based neighborhood strategy conceived by the University of Maryland-Baltimore School of Social Work. All five public schools in the neighborhood (three elementary, one middle, and one high school) use the Community School strategy to implement a two-generation pipeline of supports for families. The Community School strategy here is based in a trauma-informed social emotional learning model and a community “pull in, push out” strategy to build trust and community cohesion.

The Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School Students & Families

Promise Heights is a neighborhood-based initiative with the goal of addressing neighborhood, as well as individual school needs. According to 2010 U.S. Census data, the Upton/Druid Heights neighborhood is home to approximately 10,342 residents, 28 percent of whom are children. There is little racial and economic diversity in the community. 93 percent of the population is African American and 53 percent of households have an income less than \$14,999. Nearly three of five children (58 percent) live in poverty, as compared to 28 percent in Baltimore City and 10 percent in Maryland overall. As in the case of many poverty-stricken communities, rates of educational attainment for Upton/Druid Heights residents are low, with 49 percent of the residents 25 years of age and older having obtained less than a high school diploma or equivalency. Nearly six out of ten adults were either unemployed or not in the work force during the last census.⁷²

Health and crime indicators reveal Upton/Druid Heights is one of the sickest and most dangerous neighborhoods in the city, where life expectancy is nearly 10 years shorter than the citywide average and the lowest life expectancy of all neighborhoods citywide. Deaths from diabetes are more than twice that of the rest of the city, while those from heart disease are 1.7 times higher. At the same time, the murder rate is 1.8 times higher than the whole of Baltimore, which already has the fifth highest homicide rate among major US cities. Of 22 health outcomes tracked by the Baltimore City Health Department, Upton/Druid Heights ranks in the least healthy third of the city's 55 neighborhoods for all but three outcomes.⁷³

Needs & Solutions⁷⁴

Social and Emotional Support: To meet the needs of the community, Promise Heights staff use a Vanderbilt University-developed social-emotional learning and support framework called Social Emotional Foundations in Early Learning (SEFEL). They use a specifically trauma-informed variant of the model, to ensure that the work does not trigger children whose backgrounds or current situations include elements of trauma. Community School Coordinators at each school—licensed social workers—train teachers and Community School partners in this methodology of working with





children and families. At HSCT, for example, this means that dental students who come in to do screenings, tutors, and after-school practitioners are all SEFEL-trained.



Teachers can access much needed social-emotional as well as conflict resolution supports. Ultimately, social workers assist teachers with their relationships among themselves and with administration in the same way that social workers nurture and navigate their relationships with parents and care-givers.



Parent-Community Engagement: The Community School strategy at HSCT aims to connect to students and families either through service provision or program participation. A family may come to a Literacy Learning Party with their kindergartener and then, once there, connect to staff and share some information about struggles with health care or barriers to attendance. Conversely, a family may come to the school because a neighbor shared that staff can assist with an electric bill, and that positive experience leads to the parent’s willingness to come back for parent-teacher conferences or make improvements in their child’s attendance. The goal is to have families see the school in a positive light, as a warm, caring, and helpful place. They call it “pull in and push out.” They pull the community in to support the school-based work and push out into the community by using the school as a way to connect, support, and uplift the broader community.



Health: HSCT families often struggle to access health care in a regular and timely manner because of issues with transportation, resources, and systemic barriers. Since Promise Heights is part of the University of Maryland professional campus, school staff members have access to a wide array of health partners, such as the Schools of Dentistry, Medicine, and Nursing. Graduate students have community hours to complete, which means the Community School Coordinator at HSCT is able to facilitate school-based health service. The Breathmobile provides mobile asthma care, including monthly check-ups and inhaler refills. Student nurses offer weekly health education and a lunch group for students. Doctors and nurses volunteer their time to provide on-site immunizations to students so that they meet state guidelines and can remain in school. Dental services are provided by dental students from the University of Maryland School of Dentistry. They do assessments, evaluations, fluoride treatments, and parent education. The Community School Coordinator monitors all these services and makes sure that needs are being filled.



Attendance: Volunteers operate a “walking school bus” that gathers children in McCulloh Homes and walks them to school twice a week. Simply getting kids to school in McCulloh Homes is a challenge. Attendance is the most impressive before-after change at HSCT. Chronic absence has fallen from 25 percent to 10 percent.



Academics: All of the social-emotional work with students, parents, and community lays the groundwork for learning to happen. But this doesn’t address all of students’ academic needs. HSCT also works to improve students’ academic performance by aligning what goes on after school with the school day. The after-school curriculum matches the curriculum of the regular school day. In the case of HSCT, that curriculum is Success for All, developed by Johns Hopkins University, a community partner. They also work hard to utilize HSCT teachers to teach in the after-school for optimal continuity, understanding of the curriculum and relationship with students. This way they base after-school learning on the needs that teachers see throughout the day. If a student is having trouble with fractions in math class, then fractions are reinforced after school. The afterschool teacher communicates consistently with the day-time teacher to maintain this alignment.





Funding sources

The Community School strategy in Baltimore is funded, in part, through a partnership with the Family League of Baltimore and Baltimore City Public Schools. Each lead agency receives a grant from Family League and a small contribution from the specific public school. However, that only covers the salary of the Community School Coordinator. Therefore, depending on salary levels and program needs, each lead agency is responsible for raising additional funds. Promise Heights brings a set of core competencies that enhance and complement those of the school. In their role as resource developer, they bring knowledge and experienced grant-writers to facilitate the acquisition of public and private funding streams for which schools or other partners may not have the capacity or eligibility to apply. One of the main premises of this initiative is that sustainable, population-wide change can be achieved when a broad group of stakeholders works together directing resources towards creating a system to address a common goal. Resources are raised from federal, state, local, foundations, and private funders.



In a nutshell, below you can view Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor’s transformational outcomes and the mechanisms and strategies they used to achieve them.

Baltimore, MD—Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School (4 years Community School)		
Transformations	2011	2015
Chronic absence	25 percent	10.7 percent
MD School readiness scores	71 percent	79.4 percent
Infant mortality		11.8 percent drop community-wide
Community engaged needs assessment	Unknown	Site leadership team that works with school administration to assess needs of school and what programs and practices can meet those needs
Capacity to engage community	Unknown	Site coordinator whose job it is to match community assets with needs
Service pipeline	Unknown	B'more for Healthy Babies; Parent University; Community Schools; Family Stability
Early childhood	None	Judy Center, with social-emotional training component
Social-emotional teacher training	None	Trauma-informed behavior management training for City agencies, community organizations, and Baltimore City Public Schools staff
Mental health support in wake of Freddie Gray		Social workers available through UMD School of Social Work
Parent university initiative	None	7 cohorts
Staff and partner home visits	Unknown	100 this year

Baltimore, MD—Historic Samuel Coleridge Taylor Elementary School (continued...)		
Transformations	2011	2015
Health access	Unknown	Asthma, nutrition, obesity clinics, vaccinations, dental services and education
ExpandED afterschool learning	N/A	120 slots
Playground	None	KaBOOM! (4000 sq. ft.)
Library	None	\$1 million investment

Social Justice Humanitas Academy LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA

(section below by permission from the Coalition for Community Schools 2015 Awards for Excellence Profiles⁷⁵)

Social Justice Humanitas Academy began as a Community School in partnership with the Los Angeles Education Partnership (LAEP) in 2011. It was created as part of an LAUSD facilities plan through which 4 new schools were built. Social Justice Humanitas Academy in Los Angeles (SJHA) has a different story than most other schools described here, because it began as a Community School and as a “teacher-led” school. Teachers, in partnership with LAEP, created the design for the school and the curriculum, which is fully social justice focused. This focus, along with a deep understanding of the importance of student-centered pedagogy, has created remarkable levels of engagement on the parts of students.



In just the past year, Social Justice has raised its graduation rate from 83 to 93.9 percent and its suspension rate remains at only .2 percent of students in the last two years. This is thanks to its model practices around restorative justice, interdisciplinary teaching, relevant curriculum, and relationship building. Students are supported by Individualized Pupil Education Plans (IPEP) that determine how teachers and partners involved in the Community School can best help struggling students and reflect the close relationships between students and teachers. By graduation day, 99 percent of the Class of 2014 had enrolled in college.⁷⁶

Social Justice Humanitas Academy's Students & Families

SJHA is in a neighborhood of San Fernando in which 90 percent of its students qualify for free or reduced lunch, 95 percent are Latino, 11 percent are English Language Learners, and 54 percent English proficient.⁷⁷

At Humanitas Social Justice Academy, most students know more folks who have gone to prison than have gone to college. Many students don't have access to books at home, and may have caretakers who are unable to read to them regularly. They face food scarcity, they come to school without lunches or backpacks, they are all too familiar with violence and fear. They come from homes where desperation is not uncommon. The impact of lack of documentation, racism, and poverty plague students and their families.⁷⁸

Needs & Solutions

Use of Data for Coordination of Supports: At SJHA, Jennie Carey, the Community School Coordinator, is a graduate of Harvard Education School and self-described data geek. It is part of her job to support personalization by helping to create Individualized Pupil Education Plans (IPEP) similar to IEPs for every student. The concept was developed about four years ago and pulls together detailed information on students' needs as well as their strengths. The profile includes common indicators, such as test scores, but also covers information such as whether parents attend conferences and where students compare on the Search Institute's list of 40 Developmental Assets for Adolescents.



Every five weeks, when teachers review student data, the IPEPs are used to determine how teachers and partners involved in the Community School can best help struggling students who face the most obstacles. The IPEP

“I am the California teacher of the year, the LAUSD teacher of the year, the L.A. County teacher of the year, and I am National Board certified. Based on these accolades I am one of the most effective teachers my students can have,” Navarro says. “Yet I still have students who fail. I still have students who have needs I can't meet. We can't do it alone. My students need all the resources their community can offer. Good teaching alone cannot mitigate the effects of poverty.”



process is also a reflection of the close relationships between students and teachers that are part of the Humanitas model. This is another example of the Community School principle that it is not enough to have lots of partnerships; partnerships are only as effective as their thoughtfully targeted coordination and impact. The school's governing council helps to ensure that the work of community partners is aligned with, and in support of, the school's core curriculum.

Says Jennie Carey, site coordinator: "Our students constantly talk about Humanitas as a family, and that feeling is almost tangible as you walk through the hallways, classrooms, and offices."



Educator Supports: The intensive nature of the work at SJHA puts a lot of pressure on teachers. Because of Los Angeles Education Partnership's emphasis on teacher leadership, Carey, the Community School Coordinator says the partners play an important role in helping the faculty be more effective. "We have to support our teachers as much as our students," she says. "When they are doing their very best, and [a student] is still failing, something else is going on. We know we have to have these partners."



The school's "adoption" process, in which teachers take added responsibility for following up with a few students to continually encourage them to keep working toward their goals, is further evidence of the bonds formed between students and teachers. Daily advisory classes provide another structure through which students can receive support from teachers and peers. It's "these relationships with teachers that help students achieve self-actualization," says Carey, who was previously a coordinator at Sylmar High School and involved in writing the plan for the SJHA. Teachers put "the IPEP into the hands of students," and ask them what is going on in their lives and what they need to succeed.



Student One-on-One Supports: "Adoption" has been a strategy for supporting students since the school began and involves not only teachers, but also community partners and AmeriCorps members working on campus. Through those relationships, student attendance and performance has increased. Over the past three years, the attendance rate has climbed from 62 percent to 80 percent, and the graduation rate has increased from 83 percent to 92 percent, compared to the Los Angeles Unified School District average of 67 percent.



Curriculum: Humanitas is an instructional model in which teachers collaborate to provide rigorous, interdisciplinary instruction that engages students in relevant, real-world learning. Embedded into the school's curriculum is a focus on social justice, which has been strengthened through the school's partnership with Facing History and Ourselves (FHO). FHO is an international education and professional development organization that engages students in understanding the Holocaust, discussing other social justice issues and understanding how history is connected to the moral choices people face every day. With a predominantly Latino population, a lot of lessons focus on exploring identity and culture, and the entire school reads "Enrique's Journey," the Pulitzer Prize-winning story of a Honduran boy searching for his mother in the U.S. SJHA is considered one of Facing History's model schools because it takes a whole-school approach, weaving the core themes throughout the school's curriculum, climate, and mission. Samantha Siegeler, who teaches 10th grade English with a history focus, says it's "a blessing to have the opportunity to develop interdisciplinary curriculum with social justice-minded folks who bring a critical lens to our curriculum."



College Preparedness: High expectations include the need to intentionally create a college-going culture where there may not otherwise be one. While Community Schools often work with partners to build students' "college knowledge," as it's often called, those efforts are often still separate from what is happening in the classroom. But not at Humanitas. Topics such as completing college applications and understanding the Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA) are being integrated into the curriculum to help all students take steps in the right direction.





School Climate: SJHA sets high expectations for students and creates a positive school climate. Case in point: in an Ethnic Studies class, students start each class with multilingual group recitation of a poem reaffirming their respect for one another and themselves. The English version goes: “You are my other Me, if I do harm to You, I do harm to Myself, if I Love and Respect You, I Love and Respect Myself.” As a result, there is far less need for disciplinary strategies than in many other schools.



Their discipline strategy is leadership-development. A strong partner, Youth Speak Collective, gives students opportunities to improve their communities and develop leadership skills. Eight Youth Speak interns, four of whom are SJHA students, help facilitate after-school programs such as digital arts and the “Womyn’s Circle,” which gives girls a safe place to express themselves and talk about women in society. Interns receive stipends and students can earn service-learning hours for participating in Youth Speak programs.



Additionally, a restorative justice process is teaching students how to take responsibility for poor decisions and is having an impact on behavior trends at the school. For the past two school years, only two students have been suspended.



The EduCare Foundation, a youth development organization, also is an effective SJHA partner. At the beginning of every school year, instead of jumping immediately into assignments and quizzes, students at the school participate in EduCare’s ACE (Achievement and Commitment to Excellence) workshops. The experience focuses on self-reflection and bonding between teachers and students and starts the school year off “on a positive note,” Carey says. “They’re all going through something and it’s very real and they learn they’re not alone.”



Through the 9th Grade Leadership Academy—an out-of-classroom experience required for graduation—students also focus on building character and positive relationships. Additional support and wraparound services are available to both students and families as part of the Los Angeles Promise Neighborhood grant provided by the U.S. Department of Education to the Youth Policy Institute (YPI), an anti-poverty and community empowerment organization. Parents can receive financial literacy programs, referrals to housing and health care services and legal support.



Funding

SJHA uses a combination of public, private and school funds. The coordinator is funded by philanthropic dollars. Other federal and philanthropic funds support the services overall, and the school funds any additional needs it has to the extent that it can.⁷⁹



In a nutshell, below you can view SJHA’s transformational outcomes and the mechanisms and strategies they used to achieve them.⁸⁰

Los Angeles, CA—Social Justice Humanitas Academy (founded as a Community School 4 years ago)	
Transformation	At end of first four year of operation in 2015
Attendance	From 62 percent to 80 percent
Graduation rates	From 83 percent (in 2013) to 94 percent (compared to LAUDS average of 67 percent)
College enrollment rates	Now 99 percent
HS exit exam first time pass rate	From 68 percent to 78 percent

Los Angeles, CA—Social Justice Humanitas Academy (continued...)	
Transformation	At end of first four year of operation in 2015
Individual graduation plan	Now 96 percent
Students passing college pre-requisite classes	Now 75 percent
Suspension rates	Down to 0.2 percent
Feeling of safety	Ninety-three percent of students and 95 percent parents feel safe
Community engaged needs assessment and strategic plan	Site leadership team that assesses needs of school and what programs and practices can meet those needs
Capacity to engage community	Community School Coordinator whose job it is to match community assets with needs
Social justice frame for curriculum	Facing History in Ourselves
Restorative justice	Restorative justice, YouthSpeak, Womyn's Circle, Youth Policy Institute, and EduCare
Parent/community support strategies	Financial literacy, housing assistance, health care referrals, and legal support

Brooklyn Center Full-Service Community Schools District

MINNEAPOLIS, MN

In the early 2000's, Brooklyn Center Schools were starting to see increases in their enrollment of populations with high needs, especially immigrants and refugees. The school did not have the resources to respond to the needs that were evident daily. Attendance rates were dropping, the achievement gap was stagnant, and the community itself showed signs of distress such as poverty, lack of employment opportunities and crime. The school district had faced statutory operating debt for years with its inability to pass a levy due to lack of community support, as residents feared increased taxation. As a Brooklyn Center resident himself, former superintendent Keith Lester was aware of the needs of the students, families and the community. He decided to dedicate himself to increased social responsibility collaboration efforts thereby gaining support of vital partnerships. With key relationships built, he then conducted a needs assessment in all three schools in the district.



Lester was the visionary force behind the Brooklyn Center Community School initiative. He understood the critical role space plays in the Community Schools model. At a community meeting when the district was in its planning phase, he told the assembled potential partners: "I'll give you two classrooms if you bring me a clinic." A medical practice partner happened to have a warehouse full of surplus materials from their clinics and they volunteered to renovate the classrooms using leftover tile, furniture, etc. When they were finished, they had a real clinic with medical and mental health spaces, a lab station, and a lobby. Lester also had the prescience to make sure these elements were enshrined in policy. A Community School policy was passed by the Brooklyn Center Board of Education in 2009.⁸²



Brooklyn Center's Students & Families

Brooklyn Center has 2200 students in their district. The demographics are 83 percent free or reduced price meals, 60 percent African American, 20 percent Latino, the other 20 percent being white and Asian. Many students are immigrants and refugees from Latin America and Africa. Brooklyn Center has a substantial homeless student population. Brooklyn Center School District includes three schools: a high school, an elementary school, and an area learning center.

Needs & Solutions

Needs Assessment and Strategic Plan: In Brooklyn Center School District, "the implementation of the Community Schools model required intensive planning that included a democratic process; allowing non-school stakeholders the autonomy to plan and execute its infrastructure. Stakeholders continue to be a part of planning and meet regularly with district administration for continued input and evaluation."⁸³



Health & Social Services: Brooklyn Center school district has 6 health partners on site at schools. One of their partner health practices donates two days a week of doctors' services. Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1:30 to 5:00PM, the practice brings a full staff to do everything from physicals to immunizations, to lab work, to birth control to prescriptions. If a child has a broken leg, the practice will transport the child to their larger clinic about a mile away, where leg will be set free of charge. Prescriptions are free, and if they don't carry the prescription at the school-based site (for example narcotics), the patient can access them for free at the main clinic. An optometrist volunteers his time on Fridays. None of these providers bill insurance providers or Medicaid because, regardless of good intentions, within the delicate nature of the situations of many students and their families these low levels of bureaucracy are perceived as barriers to service.





One Brooklyn Center school houses an onsite community clinic that serves not only its students, but all NW Minneapolis community members, ages 0–19. Medical, dental and mental health services are provided both free and at low cost. The clinic also offers free social support services, such as housing and immigration rights counseling. Large populations of new refugees or immigrants are served by the clinic.



Parent Engagement: Brooklyn Center schools find that immigrant parents in particular often want to pay the school back for these services—or kindnesses, as they are often perceived. Some parents do this by volunteering their time at the schools. In this way, a sense of family is created. Because of this mutually supportive environment, many parents, at this point, are becoming advocates, rather than mere service recipients or just coming to school for parent teacher conferences. Through Community School partners, parents are being trained to be leaders. Because of the democratic nature of Brooklyn Center’s approach and the coordination provided by a Community School Coordinator, they can work with parents and flexibly respond to new ideas from the community.



They are able to act on them without going through unnecessary bureaucratic structures. For example, in the community there was nowhere for adults to participate in enrichment or wellness activities, so partners worked with the coordinator to figure out how, when, and where would be most effective to deliver yoga and nutrition programs that focused on obesity prevention and diabetes awareness.



Partnerships: Brooklyn Center currently works with over 100 partners, 50 of which are co-located in a school, all coordinated through the Community School Coordinator’s team. All of these critical health and social services and programs meet a need beyond the health and wellbeing of the students. In Brooklyn Center schools, teachers can teach. Supporting and protecting teachers are primary goals of their Community Schools. The Community School framework allows teachers to have the time to engage in effective instruction because they are not doubling as social workers or providing other social/emotional care functions. If a child comes to school sleepless or with shoes two sizes too big, an appropriate referral can be quickly made. The student is not put out of class for punitive reasons, but to get her or him the help she/he needs. On the third time a particular student was disruptive, the teacher walked the student down to the clinic and discovered that the young person had been mistakenly prescribed the wrong medication for attention deficit disorder and was thus unable to concentrate. The medication was corrected and the student was able to learn.



Discipline & School Climate: Minnesota has implemented a statewide initiative on alternatives to suspension. Brooklyn Center has a dedicated truancy program and an “alternative to suspensions” coordinator. Suspension rates have gone down and truancy has gone down. Positive behavioral interventions and supports (PBIS) are supported by a 21st Century Learning Center grant. Young people having difficulty participating in the classroom join leadership development groups and leave with skills that teach them options for responding to emotional triggers. They have a number of youth-led, youth-driven activities and over 50 enrichment programs, many of which were suggested and/or developed by young people.



Funding sources

Currently, all three feeder pattern schools in the district are “full service Community Schools” and receive in-kind support from onsite partnerships. Today, Brooklyn Center Community Schools is still the only full service Community Schools district in the state of Minnesota.

A school clinic served a kindergartner who was undocumented. The child had been having chronic headaches. After arranging for him to be seen by a dentist, it was discovered that almost all of his teeth were rotten and the infection was spreading to his head. His mother was afraid that even if he was treated at no cost, she might get a bill and their immigration status would be discovered. Through partnerships, Brooklyn Center requested that the family not receive a bill. All this boy’s teeth were extracted for free.

A federal 21st Century Learning Center grant allowed them to serve over 2700 people (in a community where the schools serve only 2200), providing resources beyond the school for free and paying for 80 percent of their enrichment activities.



Two Family Resource Rooms are furnished through partner donations and an onsite community clinic where the United Way and Park Nicollet Foundation support the costs for medical, dental, vision, mental health, and social support services. The model is sustained through partnerships and has been a coordinated effort of one full-time staff person, funded and supported through the district’s general budget.



In 2015, Minnesota passed a law approving funding for a small number of Community Schools. Brooklyn Center will apply to have a site coordinator for each school rather than their current district coordinator being stretched over three schools.



In a nutshell, below you can view Brooklyn Center’s transformational outcomes and the mechanisms and strategies they used to achieve them.

Minneapolis, MN—Brooklyn Center Full Service Community Schools District (5 years as a Community School)		
Transformation	2009	2014
Secondary school enrollment	723	964
Secondary school college enrollment	61 percent	78 percent
Secondary school student absences from one class period or more	9,000	6,500
Student mobility	35 percent	26 percent
Secondary school graduation rate	74 percent	87 percent
District-wide behavioral references	5,113	2,495
Community engaged needs assessment and strategic plan	none	Former superintendent brought community stakeholders to table to assess needs and assets
Coordination of community partners	none	Community school site coordinator for all three schools; New funding will allow for one per school
Afterschool involvement	Low student involvement in afterschool programs	80 percent of middle and highschoolers involved in at least one afterschool activity
Health resource center	None	Serves over 2000 students
Youth recreation center	None—not enough space to offer enrichment and physical activities	Recreation center opened in 2013, a shared partnership through the city to offer a number of activities to engage youth
Health clinic	Gap in services; Disparities in asthma treatment, vision and mental health needs	The Health Resource Center opened in 2011, providing medical, dental, vision and mental health services free or at minimal cost; Since 2011, over 7,500 have received services onsite
Early childhood	No program for teen parents; Teen parents began to drop out because of lack of services	Baby Steps Child Development Center opened in 2013, providing onsite services and supports for teen parents; In 2013, 13 teen parents re-enrolled at Brooklyn Center Schools Dist., accessing services that supported graduation and parenting
Family Resource Rooms	None	Two onsite Family Resource Rooms opened in 2011, providing onsite assistance with clothing, food, energy assistance, employment services, etc.

Cincinnati Public Schools' Community Learning Centers—District-Wide Model CINCINNATI, OH

Before Community Learning Centers were embedded in Board of Education policy in Cincinnati; before 43 out of 55 schools within Cincinnati Public School (CPS) had site coordinators, CPS schools had a bad reputation. The city had sprung a leak among its middle class who were flooding to the suburbs. CPS had gone from an enrollment of 90,000 students in the 1970's to what was projected to be 28,000 in 2010. Academic results were poor, as was family engagement. Cincinnati's facilities, in particular, were judged to be some of the worst in the country. In 1999, the schools attempted to pass a levy to fund school renovations, which failed. Only 19 percent of voters have school age children and only about half of those children were being sent to public schools. It was clear that there was a need to convince the broader population that good schools were in their interest.

Enter Darlene Kamine, currently Executive Director of the Community Schools Learning Centers, and a number of other Cincinnati leaders, with the idea that good schools were not only good for the children and families served by those schools but that good schools anchored healthy, thriving communities. These leaders first toured the country looking for school models that accomplished this and took bits and pieces from the versions that they saw. Then they created a plan to go neighborhood to neighborhood asking folks not only what kind of school they wanted, but what kind of community they wanted to live in. If you were to get a new school building, what kinds of programs and partnerships would get you to your goals? When the levy went back up in 2001, it passed with the commitment that the money raised would go into construction of new school buildings as Community Learning Centers, and a mission to create great communities around them. This meant involving current teachers, students, and families, as well as unlikely allies like the parochial school pastor who wanted parishioners to move back to the neighborhood and the business folks who needed consumers.



PLAN



PARTNERS



By 2006, the first nine schools hired site coordinators and brought partners into the schools based on the needs assessments that had been so carefully crafted with the communities. The next step was to take the community buy-in and turn it into a community governance process. The Local School Decision Making Committees (LSDMCs), which had been in official existence since the 1970's, were repurposed to govern. These entities were defined within the by-laws of the Community Learning Centers.

Also important to know about Cincinnati's model is that no program has an impact on the public school system budget. All services are leveraged and fully sustainable within themselves. Federal government Title One funds do, however, currently fund a portion of the Community Learning Center site coordinators.

This work is already turning around the previously declining enrollment. Over the past five years it has climbed and stabilized around 34,000; reversing the trend that was predicted. They have not only reversed the decline but are bringing large numbers of families back into the public school system. Their most recent levy passed 70 percent to 30 percent, numbers that are a clear indication of renewed confidence in the city's schools and unheard of previously in the region.

Cincinnati Students & Families

CPS had gone from an enrollment of 90,000 students in the '70s to 28,000 in 1999. By that time about half of Cincinnati's parents were sending their children to private or parochial schools. Only 10 percent of voters had school age children who were attached to Cincinnati's public schools. It was clear that there was a need to convince the broader population that good schools were in their interest.

Needs & Solutions



The key need for Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers (CLC) was to create a true, deep and rich community engagement process. They had been unable to pass a much-needed levy because the larger community of the city had "disengaged" from the school system. The large majority did not have students in the schools. To reengage them, the CLC staff had to think big. They had to think beyond the confines of the school building.



They began in each neighborhood asking the same two questions: "What kind of school would you want for your child?" and "What kind of neighborhood do you want to live in?" While the goal was, without question, that young people should be academically successful, the focus was not exclusively on academics. Annie Bogenschutz, Director of Training and Development at the Community Learning Center Institute, told us that this needed to be a comprehensive approach: "We want to know what your vision is for your community learning center as the hub of you community, not just inside the school walls. Because you can have the greatest school academically, but if [...] families don't have sustainable and affordable housing, they can't live there... We have to engage and change the community as well." This is Community Schools as a community revitalization mechanism. As a matter of fact, more recently, as a result of increased student homelessness or unstable housing, the CLCs are working toward incorporating solving the housing issue within the context of a Community Schools vision.



Community engagement, neighborhood by neighborhood and site by site, from the very beginning led to Local School Decision-Making Councils (LSDMC) which constitutes the schools' current governance.



Because Cincinnati's goal was to do this work at a district level, rather than school by school, it became necessary to embed the concept in policy to protect it for future generations. "To have a school board policy that states: 'All of our schools are Community Learning Centers; all of our schools will have Local School Decision Making Councils (LSDMCs) as the governing body', is to bullet-proof the work. We're now up to 43 schools [out of 55]. This has lasted through four superintendents. Then we go out in the community asking, 'What kind of community do you want to live in?' It keeps us from being liars. It allows us to be able to honor our promises," says Bogenschutz.



At Oylar School, when the community was asked this question, they said they wanted a high school. For many years, the insularity of the community had prevented families from wanting their young people to go out of the neighborhood for high school and students had stopped attending school in 9th grade. Oylar School was rebuilt to include a high school and dedicated space for world-class health and mental health services and a day care center. Their high school graduation rate has skyrocketed.



Health: Cincinnati's communities have a need for medical and social services. The CLC's work to fill this need. Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers schools have more school-based health centers than in the rest of the state combined. They are now at 24 health centers which all include primary health, and some include dental and vision. Every single CLC school has a co-located mental health partner.



When it comes to health centers, the scope depends on the needs and desires of the community. For example, Roberts Academy decided from day one that they wanted their health center open

"If they suddenly got a new superintendent who said: 'We're done with Community Schools", the communities would revolt... it's so embedded in the neighborhoods and in the families and that wouldn't have happened if we didn't do those processes in the beginning and continued on.



extended hours and to the full community. Then they determined the number of visits they needed to be sustainable through Medicaid reimbursement or private insurance? Other schools may start out making the clinic available to the students in year one, the families in year two, and then to the full community. It depends on their vision. Clinics don't necessarily close down in the summer if that's what the school decides. "That way," says Bogenshutz, "they can get more billable hours and stay sustainable. Federally Qualified Health Centers' reimbursement rates are higher. The rates vary from state to state. But, for example, at Oyler, we know that we need 19 billable visits per day for dental to stay sustainable. But, remember, the clinic is not paying rent as they might otherwise, so that helps with sustainability, as well."



Community engagement and Extracurricular Activities: Many schools have adult and teen programming, both for the families of the students as well as for the full community. For example, after after-school, at 6:00PM, many schools open to the community for book clubs or women's groups, Zumba, yoga classes, or walking clubs. They have custodians in the building by contract until 10pm. The school district contributes lights and custodial, but the rest of staffing is provided by the partners who see the free space as an in-kind contribution.



Academics: While health and wellness services help "remove barriers to learning" for students and provide needed support for the health and well-being of the community, CLC's also include specific academic mechanisms to help students succeed in their college and/or career goals.

"We need to know each year how each partner is aligned with the goals and needs of the school and to make sure they are doing what they said they would do. It's reevaluated annually so if a need is met or if the partner is not aligned and accountable, maybe the next year we don't need them. This is a strategic piece; it's not just about volume and numbers of partners."



Cincinnati Public Schools has recently adopted a new curriculum, so CLC's make sure that all programming is aligned. They also align wrap-around supports with AP and honors classes in all high schools to help kids succeed. Elementary school supports prepare all students to be able to attend "test-in" high schools; they want students to have that choice even if they decide not to utilize it. My Tomorrow, a new high school initiative, aspires to the goal of every student graduating with a 3.0 GPA, 22 ACT score, and a plan for college or career; partner afterschool, tutoring and mentoring supports are aligned to make this happen.



Partners are also accountable for enrichment activities they provide; they have to fit into the goals and the needs assessment of the school. "It's not random," says Bogenshutz. For example, in a school where students need to work on geometry, they may combine tennis and geometry so that in addition to learning the game they are measuring the court and learning about right angles.



School Climate & Discipline: School culture and disciplinary approaches are positive and consistent. The Community Learning Center approach strives for alignment. If they find disciplinary problems in 5th grade, they bring partners together and say, "What's going on here? How can we address this as a team? What can each of us bring to the table?"



Partners help create a culture that enhances, as opposed to interferes with, learning, conditions which reduce contributors to discipline problems. If a kid has a "freak-out," instead of sending him to the principal's office or suspending him, they send him to talk with a mental health provider who will work with him to get to the root of the problem. They offer yoga, mindfulness training, and mentors in the building who can take a time out with students rather than send them home as they may have done in the past.





When a visitor once asked Bogenschutz, “How did you get them all to drink the kool-aid?,” she knew they meant that the environment of the school was positive; people appeared to want to be there. They have created an atmosphere in which no one feels that they are doing it alone. In many schools, teachers have no one else to turn to when they are having issues with students. “Here, difficult emotions don’t escalate to where they used to because students have the services that they need.”



Funding sources

- All partners are sustainable on their own. They have either figured out a sustainable billing model, or they have their own outside funding which in many cases already existed but as been realigned or re-allocated. Some partners receive grants or private funds (from a wide variety of sources) to do special programming.
- Community Learning Center Site Coordinator funding is blended funding that ranges from private dollars to United Ways to family foundations to Title One



In a nutshell, view below Cincinnati Community Learning Center’s transformational results since beginning the planning process and community engagement in 1999/2000 and implementation of Resource Coordinators in 2006 to the present.⁸⁵

Cincinnati School District, OH—Community Learning Centers		
Transformation	2006	2015
Number of Community Schools	0 out of 55	43 out of 55
Achievement gap	14.5 percent	4.5 percent
Graduation rate	51 percent	82 percent
Performance index score	72.1	87.3
Academic emergency	14 schools	3 schools
Excellent, effective, or continuous improvement	NA	82 percent
Effective rating	NA	In 2010, became the highest rated urban district in state of Ohio

Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Community Schools

CITY OF PORTLAND & MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON⁸⁶

In the late 1990s, Multnomah County community members and leaders recognized a need for a new approach. The environment posed multiple challenges including shrinking budgets, a significant racial achievement gap, growing poverty, a severe shortage of affordable housing, and an increase in the number of children being left unsupervised during out-of-school hours. Demographic changes were dramatically increasing the cultural and linguistic diversity in the region, requiring schools and social service organizations to develop new skills in order to educate and support these populations effectively.

The effect of family poverty on school success was also clear, as barriers such as homelessness, mobility, hunger, illness, and trauma made it impossible for many students to come to school ready to learn. It became clear that one couldn't talk about alleviating or eliminating poverty without talking about education.

With leadership from elected officials in the City of Portland and Multnomah County, the decision was made to partner together to support schools. The initial goal was two-fold: (1) to support education and school success and (2) to improve the way resources for students and their families were delivered by developing a school-based service delivery vehicle. After researching various potential options nationally, they chose the full-service Community School strategy.



Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Community Schools have a unique breadth of approach. They encompass an entire county, Multnomah County in Oregon, and serve the six main school districts. They have spread into 85 schools in those districts and they engage all county and city agencies that focus on all of its children and families. So, in the planning and governance of SUN Community Schools, at the table are agencies tasked with human services, health, housing, equity, and employment, as well as education. Partner organizations which are indigenous to cultural and geographic communities are also members of the leadership and governance teams.



Multnomah County's Students & Families

Annually, the 85 SUN Community Schools serve a student population of over 54,000 with a wide array of services and supports. Each year over 24,000 of those children and youth are served in extended-day activities. In alignment with SUN's commitment to equity and its target populations, the majority of those children and families are living in poverty and are from communities of color or immigrant/refugee communities. In 2013–14, for instance, 72 percent of youth were of color or from a culturally-specific community compared to the six districts' composite average of 48 percent. 76 percent of the students qualified for free or reduced price meals, compared to the districts' average of 56 percent.

Needs & Solutions



Wrap-around services: Multnomah County in which Portland resides is the victim, like so many communities cited in this document, of gentrification. This process pushes poorer families out of the center of the city into neighborhoods which then are overwhelmed by need. Through SUN Community Schools, the Community School is there to remove the "barriers to learning" that come as a result of the baggage students bring with them to school.



Coordination: Coordinators work to connect schools and families to the providers that will help them deal with issues of poverty and safety. They have also raised the bar for holding themselves accountable for providing "culturally specific" services. They want to make sure that interventions are



equitable in order to be successful. For this reason, they try to make sure students and families see people who speak their language and look like them and that any assistance is offered in culturally appropriate ways, especially to their most vulnerable populations. They are also committed to investing in those communities and in the organizations developed by those communities to meet the needs of their populations. The broader SUN Service System, to which Community Schools belong, allocates 2/3 of funding to culturally specific services. This includes their choice for lead agencies working with individual schools.



Restorative Justice Practices: Positive Behavior Interventions and Supports (PBIS) and restorative justice practices are two ways in which SUN schools implement culturally responsive solutions at many of their schools sites. The six districts they work with are actively looking at the issue of disproportionality in discipline both through rules and regulations as well as support for teachers, through professional development and other mechanisms of support. Portland Public Schools has a significant effort underway to implement restorative practices and support services in schools with the greatest disproportionality in suspension and expulsion rates for students of color. SUN makes sure that all partners have the skills they need in knowing positive discipline approaches. Site coordinators are included as staff in training on PBIS, restorative justice and other school-wide approaches. Other community partners, such as youth advocates are trained, as well, and provide bridges between the young person and the disciplinary system.



Parent Engagement: Parent engagement is a need that must be met to ensure school success, as research has shown time and again. Since its early years, SUN has utilized Joyce Epstein’s “overlapping spheres of influence” [1] approach to engage parents in a variety of ways. This approach views parents not just as recipients of services or attendees at events but as partners in their mission of educating their children, making decisions, developing policy, and more.



Currently, in an effort to redefine parent partnership as even more “real,” they are reshaping their “advisory” teams for Community Schools from broader community influenced teams into parent-only leadership teams. This laser focus allows them to raise their capacity for developing parent leadership and decision-making outside the context of a broader group of community stakeholders who might come with potentially conflicting needs, skills and interests.



To make this refocus successful district-wide requires support from district leadership. SUN initiative staff engages in significant cross-school building with site coordinators and principals in partnership with SUN district liaisons. They conducted an annual spring training session on family engagement using a modified version of the PTA assessment tool, assessing where they are on a variety of key indicators around parent engagement such as equity and diversity. Hall tells us, “We found, because of the breadth of work people are doing in our schools, that most folks haven’t had capacity to go deep. One principal shared ‘I’m embarrassed that we’re not even on this one scale yet. We’ve been so focused on curriculum that we haven’t gotten to thinking about this deeply.’ It was a good opportunity to get them thinking about including this in their annual plan, as we are currently requiring.”



In an attempt to make sure parents are heard and valued, one school invited parents in just to talk and get to know each other. Out of this came input on the families’ experiences at the school and eventually an ongoing group of Latino parents who wanted to keep meeting and take on projects and weigh in on school decisions. The principal eventually hosted a summer leadership training for these parents at her house. Parents began to impact the life of the school by welcoming other Latino parents, many of whom were recent immigrants, and teaching them to advocate for their children.



Strong curriculum: Students in any school with high poverty rates need academic support for achievement within a high-quality strong core instructional environment. In cases where English and



math remediation or ESOL is needed during the school day, SUN schools use afterschool time to provide AP and honor classes, as well as electives, for young people who may not have room in their schedules for these types of classes as well as to further infuse cultural relevance into the curriculum. All sites are required to offer a robust array of complementary extended-day programs and support services that align with the school day curriculum and approaches including educational support, skill development, recreation and enrichment for students and family members. SUN Community Schools track race/ethnicity and gender of students and monitor participation and outcomes data as part of their equity practices. These disaggregated data are also analyzed and monitored at the initiative level.



Academic support and leadership development: One example is Franklin SUN Community School which offers a wide array of extended learning opportunities including a tutoring center, focused ELD tutoring, pathways to manufacturing, MESA and culturally specific youth leadership activities such as Black Student Union. Franklin recognized that students of color were not enrolling or being successful in Advanced Placement and other advanced course work, so they built in peer mentors to encourage students of color to enroll and successfully complete these advanced classes. They call the effort Advanced Scholars and attribute to it Franklin’s becoming the first school in Portland Public Schools to have student success not be predictable by race. The Pathways to Manufacturing program provides skilled job training and professional connections, including internships with some of Portland’s largest manufacturers such as Vigor Industrial and Daimler-Chrysler.



Funding sources

SUN Schools are funded through Multnomah County, the City of Portland, Portland Children’s Levy and grants from Centennial, David Douglas, Gresham Barlow, Parkrose, Portland Public and Reynolds School Districts as well as 21st Century Community Learning Center grants.



In a nutshell, view below SUN School’s transformational results after 16 years as a Community School district with 85 schools and over 24,000 students participating:

SUN Community Schools—Portland, OR/Multnomah County (Community Schools since 1999)		
Transformation	2010-11	2013-14
Chronic absence rate*	17 percent	9.2 percent (46 percent reduction since 2010-11 across the initiative)
Reading scores*	N/A—measured on annual versus longitudinal basis	75 percent increased state benchmark scores State benchmark score gains were equal to or higher than expected in the majority of grades
High school credits*	N/A	6.8 credits per student (as opposed to 6 needed to graduate on time)
Graduation rate (4 year cohort)	Parkrose High School(2010-11): 65 percent Jefferson High School (2010-11): 55 percent	High school sites have increased overall graduation rates by 9–15 percentage points over the last 3 years. A few examples include Parkrose and Jefferson High Schools: Parkrose High School (2013–14): 78 percent Jefferson High School(2013–14): 66 percent
Improvement in interim academic behaviors (homework completion, classroom participation, behavior, etc.)	N/A	For those students who needed

Kentucky's Statewide Family Resource and Youth Service Centers (FRYSCs)

Kentucky's program is one of a kind, as it encompasses the entire state and has been functioning for 25 years.

Students & Families & FRYSCs (pronounced "friskies")

Prior to the implementation of this landmark educational solution, Kentucky—especially rural Kentucky—had a long history of economic decline, partly a result of the demise of the coal industry which had left its education system in dire financial straits. Kentucky had the most illiterate adult population in the country in the 1980s, with Appalachia at 48.4 percent. It was 43rd in the country in per-pupil education spending, 47th in per capita state and local spending, 49th in post-high school college enrollment, and dead last in rates of adults having a high school diploma.⁸⁷

In 1989, vast disparities existed across Kentucky, with local funding for schools ranging from as low as \$80 per pupil, to as high as \$3,716 per pupil across the state.⁸⁸ At that time, the State Department of Education was faced with a legal challenge. In *Rose v the Council for Better Education*, the State Supreme Court declared the "entire system of common schools" unconstitutional on the basis of inequity and inadequacy, and called on the General Assembly to establish an "efficient system of common schools."

It's now been 25 years since the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) was passed. The 1990 law paved the way for a statewide effort not only to equalize funding across Kentucky's highly diverse districts, but also to ensure that students have access to the full range of resources they need to succeed. The legislature viewed KERA, not just as an overhaul of the state's school funding formula, but also as a means to address educational outcomes. KERA offers additional state dollars based on student needs.⁸⁹ The law allows school districts to access other state monies to support Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, or FRYSCs.

The FRYSCs have been a key component of the new funding law's success. The state-funded Division of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers initiates contracts with school districts for FRYSC services and provides training and support for FRYSC coordinators and their staff. The initiative offers varied and unique programs to student and family populations based on local needs

With FRYSC funds local school districts now employ approximately 1,200 people in 98 percent of all eligible schools in Kentucky. There are more than 625,000 students enrolled in schools served by FRYSCs—roughly 93 percent of all public school students in the state. Once established, centers serve all students in the school and their families, regardless of their socio-economic status, through various school-wide services, group programs, and individual interventions.⁹⁰

Since KERA began, Kentucky has seen consistent increases in its education funding (local, state, and federal). According to the Bluegrass Institute, between the 1989–90 school year and 2012–13, education spending, in inflation-adjusted dollars, grew by 188 percent.⁹¹

Needs & Solutions

FRYSCs work to meet the needs of a state school-aged population in communities devastated by generational poverty.



Each FRYSC center, before receiving funding, is required to conduct a needs assessment and describe how they will meet the needs of their community within the following categories:

Family Resource Centers serve families of children under school age and in elementary school and coordinate:

- preschool child care;
- afterschool child day care;
- families in training;
- family literacy services; and
- health services and referrals.

Youth Services Centers serve students in middle and high school and coordinate:

- referrals to health and social services;
- career exploration and development;
- summer and part-time job development (high school only);
- substance-abuse education and counseling; and
- family crisis and mental health counseling.⁹²



Like in Multnomah County’s SUN Schools, FRYSCs use an interagency model of solving the problems of generational poverty. Schools are natural community hubs. Children come every day and parents of young children, more often than not, drop them off at school and/or pick them up. This makes schools ideal locations for interagency service provision. Conversely, services can bring families and communities into the school to create broad and deep support for the children’s education as well as other aspects of the school as a community. FRYSCs utilize these intersections for the benefit of the full community. FRYSCs have changed the way Kentucky does business—the assumption is that the schools will work with health, housing, transportation, employment agencies and vice versa.



Health care: Currently, full service health centers operate in almost every school in the state of Kentucky, providing immunizations, well-child checks, and many other day to day services. They also operate health fairs for almost every community that provide critical services which the mostly uninsured population cannot otherwise access. The fairs are not just one-offs. Providers collect baseline data and then check against that data at the end of the year in order to challenge themselves for the next year. All schools provide mental health services. At many schools in the state of Kentucky, dental vans provide screening, sealant, and other services. Doug Jones, regional FRYSC program manager, said that he was determined to provide dental care for students and families because he was “tired of having Jay Leno make fun of Kentuckians for having bad teeth.” Coordinators work through local charity groups such as the Lions Club to provide glasses for children who need them. A system of “tele-medicine” allows on-site providers to be connected electronically with health professionals in teaching hospitals to help with issues that can’t be adequately diagnosed or dealt with on-site, such as serious mental health issues or medication-related questions.



Substance abuse is a huge problem in Kentucky and is probably their greatest area of need. Heroin, methamphetamines, prescription drug use, and “designer” drug use are growing problems in the state. FRYSCs work hard on prevention and education. They utilize every tactic, from motivational speakers to guard dogs doing locker sweeps. On-site mental health providers provide needed drug addiction counseling and make referrals for drug treatment, whether hospitalization or rehab. Centers provide lock-in parties for graduation and proms to prevent these events becoming opportunities to abuse drugs and alcohol.



Often, coordinators find, grandparents or great grandparents are raising children because the parents are either incarcerated or have died from overdoses. In these cases FRYSCs merge their family crisis and mental health components with substance abuse treatment and prevention. Lines between components are fluid—the interagency model at work. While most services are determined based on the needs of each school site, some are organized statewide. For example, all schools do red ribbon week on substance abuse and prevention; all schools do blue ribbon week for child abuse. These “elevating” strategies result in lowering the stigma attached to these issues and allow for more reporting of individual cases.



Family engagement: Because family crisis and child abuse are common and illiteracy among adults is high, the FRYSCs make a point of engaging families early. Parent engagement drives the programming from the very beginning. Parents, teachers, students and in some instances, community, work together on the needs assessment that determines which programs will be brought into the school. Each year the results are evaluated and determinations made for the following year.



FRYSCs have changed the relationship of families to schools in the state. In the early years of the program, when coordinators would travel out into the community and introduce themselves, parents would say: “Wow, nobody’s ever been here from the schools before.” Now FRYSCs envelop families very early into their Born Learning program before their children enter school. Home visits and families-in-training programs around early childhood are key to developing students who are ready to learn. In Kentucky, principals used to think that coordinators would never be able to get parents to come to the school in the evenings. The FRYSCs used a research-based curriculum on homework help. Jones told us, “We wound up with standing room only crowds in these small rural towns. Of course, we fed them. Home visits are key. One parent wouldn’t come into the school because he had been a behavior problem with the same principal when he was a kid. Also he felt that he hadn’t done very well in life, had bad grammar, looked a little disheveled. But I did a home visit and he decided to come and he became good friends with a physician’s wife who baked him the first birthday cake he had ever had (in his life). After that we couldn’t keep him away. He came to everything.” Given high illiteracy levels, parents’ need for continuing education is high; FRYSCs provide adult education in GED, ELL, as well as job preparation and training across the state.



Restorative Justice: FRYSCs play a major role in creating positive school climate, through their training in PBIS and other restorative practices such as yoga or meditation. They also create opportunities to use innovative strategies like karate to help students modulate their anger while learning strong self-discipline at the same time.



COORDINATION: FRYSCs touch everything that happens in the school, so they have a part in the success of everything that happens in the schools, including academics. Coordinators sit on school leadership teams—for which professional development is provided statewide—to ensure alignment for provision of medical and social-emotional needs to academic needs.





Academic supports: After-school programs, such as ACT preparation and tutoring programs, align with academics to enhance student success with the regular school curriculum. These programs utilize AmeriCorps volunteers. The programs help the students as well as the young people in AmeriCorps, who are often former students from these same school systems. KY Senator Reggie Thomas says that the FRYSCs are responsible for turning around Bryan Station High School in Fayette County by doubling the number of home visits in the school community, doubling the amount of transportation provided for afterschool programs, and doubling contacts with FRYSC coordinators or partners before, during, and after school.



There have been enormous changes in Kentucky's national standing since 1990. *Education Week's* Quality Counts 2016 annual report ranked Kentucky's schools 27th on a range of key education indicators, up from 48th in 1990. Harvard ranks them the eighth most improved school system over two decades. Their high school graduation rate is 9th highest nationally and their drop-out rate is 13th lowest nationally. The 2015 "Building a Grad Nation" report called Kentucky "a beacon to all other states" for its ability to all but eliminate the opportunity gap between low income students and all other students to graduate on time. There is only a 1.4 percent difference—the lowest in the nation by far.⁹³

Kentucky is "a beacon to all other states" for its ability to all but eliminate the opportunity gap between low income students and all other students to graduate on time.



FRYSCs Into the Today: But poverty remains in Kentucky, and it is not a secret. Schools partner with cooperative extension and other community agencies to create "reality stores" where students are assigned an income and they have to shop at different "stores" to meet their daily need based on the income they have. Career exploration and job mentoring and training for both students and families are key components of all centers. But "community revitalization" at the state level is a heavy lift, and the sad irony is that students who are successful academically often leave the state because there are so few employment opportunities.



The Great Recession has forced the State to cut education funding by more than 11 percent. Poorer counties with a smaller tax base are disproportionately disadvantaged by the loss of state support. But in Kentucky, the legislature is working to rectify this shortfall. In 2014, the General Assembly increased the state's main school funding formula by \$189 million over the next two years. The money was allocated to support technology, textbooks, staff pay increases and teacher training. Even these increases won't bring Kentucky school funding back to pre-recession levels. But the state has shown commitment to the success of the FRYSCs,⁹⁴ and to continuing to work towards a statewide structure that advantages all students and schools. Kentucky is truly a beacon to the rest of the country in this statewide commitment to overcoming barriers constructed by poverty.



Funding sources

The FRYSC program is funded entirely through legislative appropriation from the Kentucky General Assembly. The funds go through the Department of Education to the Cabinet for Health and Family Services, where the Division of FRYSC resides. The Cabinet then contracts with local school districts to provide FRYSC services.

In a nutshell, view below Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Service Centers' transformational results after 25 years as a Community School system:⁹⁵

State of Kentucky—25 years of Family Resource and Youth Service Centers		
Transformations	Before	After
Education Week's annual Quality Counts report of key education indicators	1998: 48th	2016: 27th
Harvard student improvement data		8th over 2 decades
High school graduation		9th highest nationally
High school dropouts		13th lowest nationally
2015 "Building a Grad Nation" report		Called Kentucky "a beacon to all other states" for its ability to all but eliminate the opportunity gap between low-income students and all other students to graduate on time. There is only a 1.4 percent difference, the lowest in the nation by far
Freshmen who graduate		23rd highest nationally

Conclusion & Recommendations:

Community schools implement evidence-based strategy to bring together the resources of school, family, and community to make schools stronger and help young people thrive. When Community Schools are able to employ the multiple strategies outlined in this report, their results can be *sustainably transformational*: increasing school attendance, decreasing suspensions and expulsions, creating healthy and safe communities, and improving academic outcomes.

This report has outlined six essential strategies for Community Schools and the key mechanisms used to implement these strategies, and has also highlighted Community Schools across the country where these model strategies are being used to achieve transformational results. A close look at transformational Community Schools and districts shows that across racial, economic, and geographic diversities in this country, Community Schools work. As the new federal education legislation gives states greater power to implement Community Schools, policymakers and advocates should use the strategies and mechanisms we outlined in this report to achieve transformational Community Schools across the country.

(a) Educational strategy recommendations: The **model Community School strategies** outlined in this report can and should be used in every public school across the United States to achieve sustainable transformational results. Those strategies are:

1. **Curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging.** Schools offer a robust selection of classes and after-school programs in the arts, languages, and ethnic studies, as well as Advanced Placement (AP) and honors courses. Also offered are services for English Language Learner and special education populations, GED preparation programs, and job training. Pedagogy is student-centered.
2. **An emphasis on high-quality teaching, not on high-stakes testing.** Assessments are used to help teachers meet the needs of students. Educators have a real voice in professional development. Professional development is high quality and ongoing, and includes strengthening understanding of, and professional alignment with, the Transformational Community School strategy.
3. **Wrap-around supports and opportunities** such as health care, eye care, and social and emotional services that support academics. They are available before, during, and after school, and are provided year-round to the full community. Community partners are accountable and culturally competent. The supports are aligned to the classroom using thorough and continuous data collection, analysis, and reflection. Space is allocated within the building or within walking distance for services.
4. **Positive discipline practices, such as restorative justice** and social and emotional learning supports, are stressed so that students grow and contribute to the school community and beyond. School safety and positive school climate are achieved through these mechanisms. Suspensions and harsh punishments are eliminated or greatly reduced.
5. **Authentic parent and community engagement** is promoted so the full community actively participates in planning and decision-making. This process recognizes the link between the success of the school and the development of the community as a whole.
6. **Inclusive school leadership** who are committed to making the Transformational Community School strategy integral to the school's mandate and functioning. They ensure that the

Community School Coordinator is a part of the leadership team and that a Community School Committee (Committee)—which includes parents, community partners, school staff, youth, and other stakeholders that are representatives of the school’s various constituencies—has a voice in the planning and implementation of the strategy.

I. Implementation recommendations: Community schools achieve success by implementing the above strategies through the following mechanisms:

1. An asset and needs **assessment** of and by both school and community
2. A strategic **plan** that defines how educators and community partners will use all available assets to meet specific needs and get better results
3. The engagement of **partners** who bring assets and expertise to help implement the building blocks of Community School
4. A Community School Coordinator whose job is to facilitate the development and implementation of the strategic plan in collaboration with school and community members/partners, and ensure alignment of solutions to needs.

II. Policy recommendations: The new federal education legislation, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA), sends much of the decision-making power to create innovative models for student success to the states and districts. This report recommends that:

1. State and local policy makers, using the opportunity created by this new law and in collaboration with their education constituencies including parents, school staff, students and community members, tap the power of community to grow the number of effective Community Schools in every state and municipality in the country.
2. Community organizing and education advocacy groups, unions, and Community School practitioners join lawmakers to pass legislation that will enable a dramatic increase in the number of Community Schools.
3. The above parties use the information, data, and policy templates included in this report to help accomplish these goals.

This report provides the resources necessary for local and state policy makers, community, parent, teacher and youth organizations, and current practitioners to vastly expand and improve Community Schools in their city or state.

Below are descriptions of four Community School policy templates.

- State legislative template using a grants-based funding mechanism (summary)
- State legislative template using a funding formula-based funding (summary)
- Local Board of Education policy template (full template)
- Local City Council policy template (full template)

The full templates can be found in Appendices A, B, C and D respectively.

The Center for Popular Democracy, Coalition for Community Schools, and the Southern Education Foundation stand ready to connect you with other policy makers, practitioners, theoreticians, advocates, and organizers to help you along your way. The Coalition for Community Schools convenes a state network of local Community School initiative leaders across the country looking to work with policymakers like you to introduce supportive Community Schools legislation.

Contact Kyle Serrette at kserrette@populardemocracy.org for help with connecting to others in the field who are working to introduce and/or implement Community Schools policy.

Contact Mary Kingston Roche at rochem@iel.org to find out if there are any Community School leaders, practitioners or technical assistance providers in your state to help you.

Contact Katherine Dunn at kdunn@southerneducation.org for information about how this work is proceeding and resources specifically within Southern states.

Afterword

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL STRATEGY WORKS!

It is good for children, families and communities.

It improves education performance.

It is cost effective.

It is good politics.

It is the right thing to do.

We KNOW the Community Schools Strategy works in just about any community in which it is implemented with fidelity. This report offers strong examples of that. But we need more than local examples. We need state policy to reach many more children, and we need more school and community leaders to embrace the approach.

Individual schools from California south to Texas to Florida north to Minnesota and east to Maryland have embraced the Community School Strategy... and it works. Whole-school systems in Oakland and Cincinnati are committed to Community Schools as a principal strategy to overcome the debilitating impact of poverty. Multnomah County in Oregon has adopted a countywide approach with all six of its school systems joining in the battle against allowing poverty to continue its claim of children and families.

And then there is Kentucky... in a class by itself, but a class into which all 49 other states are invited. In one state, twenty-five years ago, elected officials, educators and the wider citizenry, prodded by the courts, made the decision to change everything. The Community School Strategy (Family Resource and Youth Service Centers) remains a centerpiece and bedrock feature of the Kentucky school system statewide.

The 1990 Kentucky Education Reform Act provided for every school with more than 20% of its students eligible for free and reduced priced meals (Kentucky's definition of concentrated poverty) to be a Community School. They've funded that commitment ever since. Today 93% of all the students in the state (98% of all the eligible schools) attend a school that embodies the Community School Strategy. And the RESULTS? Kentucky children moved from almost dead last in the nation (48th) to 27th. In only one generation. That's huge.

If Kentucky can do it, every state can do it. The Community School Strategy is not an experiment. Phasing them in statewide over five or six years makes sense providing the time to develop the human capital to staff them competently and the partnerships to nurture them and to build the resource base to sustain them. Piloting them, as if we don't know that they work, makes no sense.

The evidence is compelling to make the Community School Strategy the pivotal element of the next phase of an American democracy that is of the people, for the people and by the people. The Community School Strategy is a solution.

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Former Philadelphia Superintendent of Schools, 1994-2000

December 2015

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