

Community Schools: A Powerful, Yet Essential Equity Strategy

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Agenda

- Check-In
 - Name one thing you have done this summer (either professionally or personally) that has been restorative to you and/or your community.
- Overview of Community Schools
- Community Schools at PS15
- Q & A

A Brief History of Community Schools

The community school strategy has its roots in the late 1800s and the establishment of the first urban settlement houses, which offered critical learning and development opportunities as well as health and social services to newly arrived immigrants in urban neighborhoods. This movement was led by the pioneering efforts of Jane Addams, an outspoken advocate for the poor.

The **Children's Aide Society** opened its first community school in 1992 in Washington Heights. This northern Manhattan neighborhood houses a huge immigrant population that the agency had identified as critically lacking in social supports and quality public education. Over the next eighteen years, CAS added new schools in Washington Heights, East Harlem, the South Bronx and Staten Island- all under-served New York City Neighborhoods.

Brief History of Community Schools

Responding to widespread interest in schools, in 1994 CAS founded the Technical Assistance Center for Community Schools (now the National Center for Community Schools), to help others implement the strategy.

In 1997, CAS became one of the three founding partners of the Coalition for Community Schools, an alliance of national, state, and local organizations that helps build awareness and understanding of community schools, advocates for supportive public policies and helps promote research and disseminate knowledge among its members and other organizations. CAS remains an active partner and supporter of this coalition.

What are community schools?

- A strategy for organizing the resources of the community around student success.
- Through extended hours, services, and relationships, community schools reconceive education as a coordinated, child-centered effort in which schools, families, and communities work together to support student's educational successes, build stronger families and improve communities.
- A strong core instructional program designed to help all students meet high academic standards
- Expanded learning opportunities designed to enrich the learning environment for students and their families
- A full range of health, mental health and social services designed to promote children's well being and remove barriers to learning

Key Elements of a Community School

- **Focus on Education-** Students are freer to learn because the school's many services and supports work together to remove obstacles to their education; teachers can better focus on the curriculum because their students are healthier, have improved attendance and fewer social/emotional problems that interfere with the classroom's focus.
- **School, Family and Community Engagement-**Community school partners comprise of school staff and administration, agency staff, parents and members of the community. They are united in a common goal: to maximize student's learning while optimizing their health and well being, and strengthening their families and neighborhoods.

Elements of a Community School

- **Extended Hours and Expanded Learning Opportunities-** Before and after school, weekend, Summer, and holiday programming expand children's learning opportunities while coordinating with the student's school-day curricula to create a coherent educational experience.
- **Partnerships** – Community schools are planned, implemented and maintained by the members of the active, coordinated partnerships dedicated to improving student achievement, health and well-being.
- **Site Coordinator / Community School Coordinator** –Nearly all models of community schools employ a site coordinator, whose role involves joint planning with school staff and subsequent recruitment, management and coordination of partners.

Elements of a Community School

- **Continuous Support Along the Pathway to Productive Adulthood-** Community schools often include pre-k, Head Start, or other programs below kindergarten age. Young people need abundant opportunities to learn and access to “whole child” supports throughout their childhood and adolescence. The community school strategy is adaptable to all levels of education reform.
- **Wellness-** Community schools are designed to operate as networks that address the multiple emotional, social and health needs of children and their families along a wellness continuum. The emphasis on wellness promotes a healthier, more positive school climate as well as improved student health.
- **Sustainability-** Leaders of community schools need to consider how to sustain the work, even at the earliest stages. Sustainability means more than fund-raising- it means making permanent changes in daily practice and in institutional arrangements.

Key Elements of a Community School

- **Whole School Transformation-** Through their attention to school climate and to the school as a wellness environment, and through what one prominent researcher calls “new institutional arrangements,” community schools become more than the sum of their programmatic parts.

Research Supports the Community School Strategy

Strong research undergirds the community schools strategy for education reform. While improving the educational and developmental outcomes for children by creating new educational institutions that combine essential supports for learning makes intuitive sense, it is, in fact, anchored by a solid base of research and current knowledge about child development, school improvement, parent engagement and child health.

Defining Success

While the primary focus of community schools is promoting children's educational success, families, communities and schools all benefit from the strategy in tangible ways. Community schools take a comprehensive and integrated approach to improving services and to defining success:

- ✓ Children – Children are healthy and ready to learn. They have access to regular medical, dental, mental health and vision care, as well as immunization on schedule and assistance in managing chronic illnesses through a school-based or school-linked health center.
- ✓ Parents – Parents are engaged in their children's education, at home and school. They are welcomed into the schools; their self-efficacy is enhanced, they become better advocates for their children, participate and volunteer in school activities.

Defining Success 2

- ✓ Communities – Communities benefit from the improved school climate. There is less vandalism, less disruptive activity in neighborhoods because students have more opportunities for constructive activities. The school welcomes and engages community as active participants, all of which helps promote student achievement.
- ✓ Schools – Schools experience multiple positive changes. Teachers no longer need to spend class time on children's health or social needs. They are freer to teach and often improve their own attendance and productivity as a result of their heightened job satisfaction. The schools have a safer, more supportive and more positive climate, which also contributes to deeper student and family engagement. School-based or school-linked health centers reduce health-related absences and promote preventive care.
 - ✓ Healthy students are better learners.

Community Schools at PS15

- We have completed our 3rd year of community schools
- We are considered an emerging community school
- We have a menu of partners, an advisory board, a strong parent council
- We have developed programming that is tailor made to our school and that is developed in a process with multiple stakeholders
- Impacts have included increase in student attendance, increase in student PARCC scores, increased parent engagement and reduction in suspensions
 - Take a moment or two to examine our last Community School Newsletter, what stands out to you?

Components of a Community School



Imagine...

- Take a moment to imagine if you had no restrictions and all the help you needed to build programming in your school within these bubbles, what would you build with your community?
 - Turn and Talk
 - Share out

Community School Model Implementation

Community members must be involved at every step!

STEP 1. Asset and Needs Assessment: An inclusive process which includes families, students, community members, partners and school staff who define “what we have” and “what we need.” Asset assessment articulates the strengths and capabilities available within the school, the community and by potential partners. Needs assessment defines specific issues, concerns, and deficits to be addressed.

STEP 2. Strategic Plan: Describes the school’s vision, values and mission. The plan articulates how assets may be used to address needs with the goal of high academic, civic and personal outcomes for all students. The plan focuses on curriculum, high-quality teaching, wraparound services, positive behavioral practices, parent and community engagement and inclusive leadership.

STEP 3. Engagement of Partners: Organizations, businesses and community-based entities that historically have not engaged with the school are recognized as assets and their expertise is critical to implementing the community school pillars.

STEP 4. The Coordinator facilitates the development and implementation of the strategic plan in collaboration with school and community members/partners; oversees the alignment of assets with needs; and manages the integration of before and after school programs and wraparound services with the academic program and schedule. The Coordinator may also engage in fund raising activities.

You must evaluate and report!

Q&A

Tank you for being a great audience!

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