



STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS,  
STRENGTHENING COMMUNITIES:

# THE PROMISE OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

A POLICY FRAMEWORK  
DESIGNED BY  
**THE NEW YORK CITY  
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS COALITION**

**MAY 2013**



United Federation of Teachers  
*A Union of Professionals*



**PARTNERSHIP  
for New York City**



**The Children's Aid Society**

## PREAMBLE

Each and every child in New York City deserves a quality education and opportunities to succeed. The community schools movement is based on recognition of our collective responsibility as a society to support our city's children and improve their educational outcomes.

Children depend on their families, their communities, their schools and the city as a whole to gain the tools necessary for success. Because of this, we all need to work together on their behalf, particularly as families and communities are still struggling during these difficult economic times.

This important goal cannot be achieved through classroom and school experience alone, but requires the delivery of sustainable health and human services, particularly in economically distressed communities.

To that end, our diverse coalition of people and organizations advocates for a comprehensive approach to better support our children, their families and their neighborhoods through a system-wide adoption of the community schools strategy.

This strategy helps schools fulfill their mission and opens schools up to the communities around them. What's more, community schools redefine the relationships and the responsibilities between the school community and other service providers in an effort to have a greater impact on the lives of the city's public school students and their families.

### CONTEXT

For too many children, even a strong teacher is not enough to ensure excellent educational outcomes. A child cannot fully engage with school if he is regularly absent because of chronic asthma or can't see the blackboard because she doesn't have glasses. A child struggles that much more to focus on a lesson if she's hungry or her family is in unstable housing. A child can't give his all if he has a toothache or if he or another family member is facing mental health challenges. The statistics are staggering:

- ◆ More than 21,000 children will go to sleep tonight in a New York City homeless shelter. (SOURCE: *Coalition for the Homeless*)
- ◆ One out of five New York City children relies on emergency food. (SOURCE: *Food Bank for NY*).
- ◆ One out of five New York City children struggle with mental health issues such as depression, anxiety, ADHD or other behavioral disorders. (SOURCE: *City Department of Health & Mental Hygiene*)
- ◆ Forty-six percent of New Yorkers were considered either poor or near poverty in 2011, struggling to make ends meet and to provide their children with the most basic supports. (SOURCE: *NYC Center for Economic Opportunity*)
- ◆ Tens of thousands of New York City public school students have come from across the globe, some as refugees of wars and famines; most of these immigrant students face language and cultural barriers as they get acclimated to our country and our school system. (SOURCE: *Citizens' Committee for Children/U.S. Census Bureau*)
- ◆ More than 39,000 kids under the age of 15 went to emergency rooms for asthma in 2010. (SOURCE: *Citizens' Committee for Children*)
- ◆ Between 15 and 25 percent of students are bullied. (SOURCE: *U.S. Department of Health & Human Services*)
- ◆ 90,000 elementary school students in New York City miss a month or more of school every year. (SOURCE: *Center for New York City Affairs*)

Schools need strategies to help overcome the obstacles that can stand in the way of a child's ability to come to school, ready to learn — and schools can't do that important work alone. We must ensure that all stakeholders that have an impact on children's lives — families, schools, hospitals, medical clinics, businesses, social service providers, government agencies, places of worship and other institutions — are aligned to provide essential services, supports and possibilities for New York City kids. In short, we need to organize systems around children, and not the other way around.

### THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS STRATEGY

At its core, the community schools concept is a proven, research-based strategy that organizes school and community resources around student success. Community schools expand and enhance the resources available to children and their families by seamlessly integrating existing sustainable community programs and services into the school environment. Partnerships between schools, community organizations and businesses allow services to be inside or close to school buildings. In this way, students and community members have immediate access to the services they need, right where they are and live.

Community in this model is defined in the broadest sense possible, including not only non-profits, but also private-sector businesses, hospitals, universities and communities of faith. Based on a comprehensive needs and asset assessment, each school develops its own constellation of community partnerships according to the needs of that particular school and community.

These targeted services and programs can include enrichment and expanded-learning opportunities (tutoring and mentoring; after-school and summer programs; as well as the arts, music, dance and theater); college preparedness and access services; health, dental and vision clinics; mental health and other social services; job and housing assistance, translation services and food programs; and adult education and family engagement programs.

Ideally, these programs tap into existing funding streams or are built on sustainable business plans at little or no cost to the district, through public/private partnerships and public/public partnerships between different government agencies. Leveraging funding from a variety of public and private sources, along with securing self-sustaining programs and services, can leave schools less vulnerable to inevitable fluctuations in the economy.

This type of approach also achieves savings efficiencies by linking and consolidating neighborhood programs, allowing service providers to manage resources more effectively and eliminating waste. What's more, in an age of tight budgets, engaging community service providers and organizing resources at the neighborhood level can be a powerful and effective tool to leverage existing and new resources and to reach economies of scale. At the local community level, coordination among service providers — i.e., all after-school providers in a local community — ensures that vital resources are used most effectively and efficiently so that children get the resources they need. For example, not all schools need a school-based health center; however, schools clustered together can share a clinic located at one school.

With services seamlessly integrated into a school's daily operations through the work of a resource coordinator/director, the building becomes a vibrant community hub where children and their families can get the help and support they need. Community schools give teachers and administrators a robust toolbox of options to help their students overcome the challenges in their lives so that they can focus on succeeding in school.

### UNIQUE NEEDS, UNIQUE MODELS

There are nearly 1,800 schools in New York City, and each has its own approach to teaching and learning. Likewise, there are many different community schools models in New York City, and each has its own approach. And just as no two schools are alike, there is no "one-size-fits-all" community schools model. The promise of the community schools strategy includes the ability for a school to choose and customize a model of its choice to meet the needs of the students and local community. The most successful community schools fully engage parents and the broader community in figuring out which partnerships to pursue.

Cities with successful community schools invest in creating a collaborative model between government agencies, opening the door for cooperative planning, data sharing and problem-solving. These types of collective approaches not only allow government agencies to exchange information and best practices, but also provide services more quickly and efficiently to the communities they serve. That collaboration can, in turn, build trust and support from communities that see government's positive impact on their lives, and make it more likely that those community members themselves get involved.

Having these public and private resources on hand and accessible to families allows schools to remove barriers to learning and addresses the needs of children in a holistic way. Schools become the center of the community by being open to everyone — all day, every day.

We believe, based on research and evidence, that close collaboration among schools, neighbors and service organizations leads to increased student success and strengthens entire communities, making them more stable and desirable places to live.

### GUIDING PRINCIPLES

As a coalition, we are committed to working with schools and neighborhoods to ensure that each school building has the resources it needs to best support children.

New York City has been at the forefront of the community schools movement (see the appendix for more details), but has not yet developed a comprehensive strategy for supporting the development of community schools at scale. We have a unique opportunity to build that capacity now. Our efforts are based on the following principles:

- ◆ All children deserve the opportunity to succeed;
- ◆ “Cradle to career” support is essential for all children, but especially for those from lower-income households;
- ◆ The needs of children can and should be met holistically;
- ◆ Parent and community engagement strengthens schools;
- ◆ School buildings are essential community assets that can be better utilized to meet the needs of students, families and surrounding communities;
- ◆ Public/private and public/public partnerships can provide accessible and affordable programs and services to students, parents and their school communities;
- ◆ Barriers to learning can be removed by integrating and coordinating academic programs with social, emotional and health supports, as well as by providing expanded learning opportunities and services; and
- ◆ All stakeholders should join with communities to advocate for the resources needed to give residents of the city's most impoverished areas opportunities for upward mobility.

### **RECOMMENDATION #1** **CREATE A STATEWIDE POLICY FRAMEWORK**

Governor Cuomo used his 2013 State of the State speech to lay the groundwork for a strong statewide approach to community schools. As part of a larger vision to improve student outcomes, particularly those in distressed communities, the governor proposed creating a competitive grant that allows schools and neighborhoods to implement community schools models.

The proposal became a reality, thanks in large part to the work of the governor's New NY Education Reform Commission, which spent the better part of 2012 developing actionable ideas to move our education system forward. In its report, the commission recommends restructuring schools "by integrating social, health and other services through community schools to improve student performance" and suggests fusing together best practices to "support at-risk students and families through collective impact." The report further states that "by providing the comprehensive supports that students need within the school setting at every stage, we can ensure that our students are on track to be college and career ready."

The governor's \$15 million competitive grant initiative is a significant step in the right direction and opens the door to additional efforts that can be put in place at the state level to further support community schools.

A successful statewide effort to expand and enhance community schools should include a statewide community schools council that brings together key policymakers, state agencies and stakeholders. The council's focus would be to:

- ◆ Connect policymakers, state agencies, departments, organizations and other stakeholders to create a statewide vision for community schools and student outcomes;
- ◆ Create statewide policies that support and enhance that vision;
- ◆ Identify potential sustainable state, federal and private foundation funding streams;
- ◆ Collaborate on practical strategies and interagency mechanisms that increase schools' access to statewide resources and funding streams;
- ◆ Remove obstacles to delivering state resources efficiently and cost-effectively;
- ◆ Link state services to reduce fragmentation of programs and eliminate redundancies;
- ◆ Develop statewide public/private and public/public partnerships;
- ◆ Give voice to the community schools movement, promoting its ideals to school districts around the state;
- ◆ Provide local-level incentives and guidance for districts and partners interested in implementing a community schools model;
- ◆ Work with districts to match statewide resources to schools using community schools models; and
- ◆ Serve as a liaison with organizations involved in the community school movement.

Along with key policymakers, state agencies/divisions that might have representatives on this council include the State Education Department, the Office of Children and Family Services, the Department of Family Assistance, the Department of Health, the Office of Mental Health, the Office of Immigration Affairs and the Division of Homes and Community Renewal.

Other potential partners include statewide organizations such as CUNY, SUNY, the Arts Council and the New York State Foundation for Science, Technology and Innovation, as well as organizations and businesses that are currently involved in the community schools movement. Stakeholders involved in issues such as healthcare, community services, youth development and adult education should be considered.

In addition to this collaborative council, state lawmakers and the State Education Department should create guidelines and protocols for how schools should use data to demonstrate the effectiveness of the community schools models they implement.

### **RECOMMENDATION #2** **BUILD A STRONG CITYWIDE FOUNDATION**

In order to successfully move forward and expand the community schools strategy to more schools in New York City, support from the next mayor is critical. The community schools vision must be given a voice as new educational policies are developed.

Our diverse group of coalition partners, representing hundreds of thousands of New Yorkers on the front lines of education today, stands ready, willing and able to partner with the new administration as soon as the transition process begins. We are committed to providing solid and meaningful expertise, and giving a voice to those who have dedicated their lives to making a difference in children's lives every day.

### **RECOMMENDATION #3** **CITYWIDE PROBLEM-SOLVING**

New York's next mayor has a huge opportunity to make government work better for kids by creating a "Children's Commission," consisting of key stakeholders and city agencies, to better support school communities and community school models.

This group should outline a clear vision and framework for how city services and agencies (such as the Department of Education, the Administration for Children's Services, the Department of City Planning, the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene, the Department of Homeless Services, the New York City Housing Authority, the Mayor's Office of Immigrant Affairs, the Department of Parks & Recreation) can coordinate to align policy and funding, as well as match city-based resources to schools. Examples of successful cross-agency collaboration, such as the Interagency Taskforce on Chronic Absenteeism, should be studied and replicated.

### **RECOMMENDATION #4** **IMPROVE SCHOOL ACCESS & SUPPORT**

The new administration can take additional steps to support community schools and improve access to these programs. Specifically, the next mayor should:

- ◆ Encourage school communities to design and implement a community schools model that helps them provide access to services that meet local needs. This would include providing schools with the flexibility and resources necessary to support their efforts;
- ◆ Modify existing permit requirements to allow schools additional opportunities to keep their doors open longer each day;

- ◆ Identify and correct laws and regulations at the city, state and federal levels that serve as barriers to the community schools concept (e.g., policies that limit the use of school-based health clinic services by neighboring schools and community members);
- ◆ Create policy supports to help facilitate the placement of community school resource coordinators/directors in every school; and
- ◆ Modify DOE data systems to allow data-sharing between schools, agencies and service providers, and institute methods to track and evaluate the services and supports that students receive.

### **RECOMMENDATION #5** **LEVERAGE EXISTING EFFORTS**

The next mayor should leverage existing successful community school models and neighborhood-based efforts to coordinate services. That includes programmatic components such as the hundreds of school and community-based after-school and summer programs, early childhood and adult education programs, school-based health clinics, and tutoring, mentoring and academic intervention programs. All of these are critical building blocks of community schools.

These programs and the groups that offer them, many of which are publicly funded, should be carefully evaluated to determine those that should be maintained and replicated across the system. (See Appendix for more details.)

### **RECOMMENDATION #6** **IDENTIFY & SECURE NEW PARTNERS**

The next administration should take steps to not only leverage those successful programs and resources, but also identify new partners that can help scale up community schools programs. Potential partners include hospitals and community organizations that can provide services to entire neighborhoods.

The next mayor should foster the growth of sustainable public/private & public/public partnerships. Ideally, these programs tap into existing funding streams or are built on sustainable business plans at little or no cost to the district.

### **RECOMMENDATION #7** **CREATE SUSTAINABLE FINANCING POLICIES**

Leveraging funding from a variety of public and private sources, along with securing self-sustaining programs and services, can leave schools less vulnerable to inevitable fluctuations in the economy. The next mayor should:

- ◆ Review the school budgetary processes and all related monetary policies with an eye to creating a financial structure that better aligns resources to schools embracing a community schools model, particularly schools with the greatest need;
- ◆ Create a financing strategy to seek funds and take full advantage of state and federal funds; and
- ◆ Promote financing strategies with the goal of sustainable funding for coordination and programmatic components, the two areas where community schools initially incur the most costs.

### **RECOMMENDATION #8** **BUILD A SOLID & INCLUSIVE STRUCTURE**

To be successful, schools and local communities that embrace a community schools model engage parents and their neighborhoods to determine what services best fit the needs of their students and families, and then identify, assess and seek to introduce programs and services that meet those needs.

To do this important work, it is critical that leadership structures exist at the school, local community and citywide levels. These various levels of leadership would work together, and each would provide schools with technical assistance and capacity-building.

Given that community schools are an efficient and effective service-delivery model that avoids redundancy and waste and best leverages existing funding, it is important that state and city agencies responsible for allocating funding coordinate their programs and grant-making through the community schools model (i.e., a school or partner is more likely to get funding if they are a community school).

#### **SCHOOL LEVEL**

At the school, a site-based leadership team (or committee), including the principal, a resource coordinator/director, teachers, parents and community partners, would:

- ◆ Conduct a comprehensive needs assessment of its student population and engage with parents and community about their vision for the school;
- ◆ Conduct a comprehensive assessment of existing school resources, assets and partnerships;
- ◆ Where necessary, identify new potential partners and service providers based on assessed need;
- ◆ Set specific and measurable outcomes, tied to identified citywide outcomes, to maximize the impact of programs and services on student success;
- ◆ Identify at-risk students and develop a plan to match individual students to the programs they need;
- ◆ Monitor student-specific data (such as attendance, tardiness, suspensions, school safety, graduation rates, college enrollment data, district data, health data and test scores) and make strategic decisions based on aggregate and student-level data;
- ◆ Measure and evaluate the immediate and long-term impact of programs, services and partnerships; and
- ◆ Meet regularly to share ideas, strategies and best practices in and out of the classroom.

#### **LOCAL COMMUNITY LEVEL**

Local community-level work provides an opportunity to coordinate and align institutions in a particular neighborhood to support children and families. By working together, these institutions facilitate resource-sharing, collaboration and referrals and have the opportunity to reach economies of scale.

At the neighborhood level, critical partners across the neighborhood (such as schools, health providers, after-school programs, early childhood programs and community leaders) agree on neighborhood-level outcomes, based on the identified citywide outcomes, and agree to be mutually accountable for success.

While the neighborhood-level team does not prescribe a specific model, it does look at neighborhood-level outcomes and helps to organize community partners in service of better coordination for children and families.

A Neighborhood Leadership Team, made up of schools, CBO lead(s), service providers, community leaders, will:

- ◆ Adapt citywide outcomes to the neighborhood context;
- ◆ Organize schools, partners and providers horizontally (across service provision – i.e., all after-school providers, all school-based health providers) and vertically (along the pathway from early education through high school graduation);
- ◆ Meet regularly to review neighborhood-level data in order to make smart decisions regarding partnerships and resources across the neighborhood — all informed by regular tracking, in aggregate, of needs and programmatic outcomes. This body will also make recommendations on, for example, when to leverage a systemic partner to work in multiple schools or when to advocate for a policy shift to address an issue that affects multiple schools.

### CITY LEVEL

At the citywide level, a city leadership team – the “Children’s Commission” – made up of the mayor, the Department of Education, city agency commissioners, as well as key stakeholders, community-based organizations, funders and business partners should:

- ◆ Develop a shared vision and overarching policies for community schools;
- ◆ Determine desired citywide outcomes for students;
- ◆ Evaluate various community schools models;
- ◆ Ensure policy alignment at the city level and advocate for policy alignment at the state and federal levels;
- ◆ Create standard processes of data usage, quality control and sharing protocols;
- ◆ Identify potential high-leverage citywide partners including health, mental health and social-service providers, human-service organizations, youth-development organizations, businesses, higher-education institutions, and cultural and arts institutions; and
- ◆ Provide models of proper supports, professional development, technical assistance and best practices (e.g., proven methods of financing school-based health clinics, comprehensive mental health programs and optometry reimbursements).

### COALITION COMMITMENT

This broad coalition of people and organizations comes from different sectors and different walks of life, but we all share the commitment to strengthen our schools and communities. Based on research and evidence, we firmly believe that students who benefit from access to additional programs and services under a community schools model will see more academic growth and better educational outcomes. What's more, we know that community schools can serve as a catalyst for a neighborhood's revitalization. The community schools approach takes a great deal of time and effort, but we stand ready to work with schools — and the new administration — to expand and enhance this important initiative. The children of New York City deserve nothing less.

### COALITION PARTNERS:

United Federation of Teachers

Partnership for New York City

Trinity Wall Street

Children's Aid Society

## APPENDIX I

### Community School Models in NYC

The below examples of community school models in New York City represent a solid base on which to build a citywide system of community schools. One size does not fit all — especially in a city like New York. Each school community must determine which model is best for its students. However, what these models have in common is a commitment to explicit and long-term relationships between the school and at least one community partner; joint planning between the school and its community partner(s) on the needs and assets of students and on strategies to remove barriers to learning; and shared accountability for student learning and healthy development.

#### Beacon Schools

The Beacon Community Centers (which now number 80) were first developed in New York City in the early 1990s to serve as community resources in high-need neighborhoods. The Beacons, which are operated by community-based organizations, are located in select public schools and serve youth and adults in the evenings, on weekends, over holidays and during the summer.

#### Children’s Aid Society Community Schools

The Children’s Aid Society partners with the city Department of Education in 16 community schools in Washington Heights, Harlem, the South Bronx and Staten Island. These community schools are based on a “developmental triangle,” which calls for a strong instructional program, expanded learning opportunities and services designed to remove barriers to learning and healthy development so that students can thrive. They offer an integrated approach to education that extends the hours and services of traditional public schools to address the comprehensive needs of students and families.

#### Community Learning Schools

Each Community Learning School (which now number six and will soon expand two-fold) becomes a community “hub” for programs and services, built around the unique needs of its students and community. A School Advisory Board — composed of parents, school staff, community members, local businesses and services organizations — helps secure partnerships as well as establish and prioritize the scope of services. A school-based Resource Coordinator manages the ongoing development and coordination of services, and serves as the primary liaison between students, school staff, parents, community members and service partners.

#### Harlem Children’s Zone Schools

The Harlem Children’s Zone network includes in-school, after-school, social-service, health and community-building programs. Components of the HCZ programs include: the Baby College®; all-day pre-kindergarten; extended-day and extended-year charter schools; health clinics and community centers for children and adults during after-school, weekend and summer hours; youth violence prevention efforts; social services; and college-admission and retention support.

#### Transfer Schools

Transfer schools are small, academically rigorous high schools designed to re-engage students who have dropped out or who have fallen behind in credits. Operated in collaboration with the city Department of Education, transfer schools offer a full-day, year-round academic program. Transfer

schools, such as those run in partnership with Good Shepherd Services, offer young people the best in youth development practices within a rigorous, standards-based instructional setting.

### **Additional Models**

In addition to the above models of community schools, there are some free-standing community schools, such as the Manhattan Comprehensive Night and Day High School and Sunset Park High School.

### **Neighborhood-based Initiatives**

Given New York City's size, much of the coordination of existing and new resources in and around schools can best be realized at the neighborhood level. Neighborhood-level coordination provides an opportunity to reach economies of scale and facilitates resource sharing, collaboration and referrals. Based on the belief that one school or one community-based organization cannot do it alone, more and more community-based organizations are partnering with each other and with schools in order to best serve children within a geographic area. This work is relatively new in New York City, but some examples of existing initiatives that can help strengthen and expand community schools in the city are:

#### ***Federal Promise Neighborhood Grantees in New York City (2010-2012):***

- ◆ Zone 126
- ◆ Flatbush Promise Neighborhood Initiative (CAMBA)
- ◆ Cypress Hills Promise Neighborhood
- ◆ Abyssinian Development Corporation
- ◆ Lutheran Family Health Centers
- ◆ Collective Impact
- ◆ The Children's Aid Society and Phipps Community Development Corporation
- ◆ United Way of New York City

### **Existing Programmatic Components of Community Schools**

Community schools leverage existing and new resources through partnerships with community resources. Examples of existing New York City programs that make up key programmatic components of community schools are:

- ◆ 525 school-based and school-linked Out-of-School Time (OST) Programs funded by the city
- ◆ 128 school-based health centers
- ◆ Adult education programs
- ◆ Early childhood programs
- ◆ School-based tutoring, mentoring and academic intervention programs

## APPENDIX II

### Community Schools Research

Individual community schools and community schools initiatives large and small across the country have evaluated their impact on children, families and communities. In addition to evaluations that show the benefit to children of the coordination of essential services in schools, the community schools strategy weaves together diverse strands from a multi-disciplinary knowledge base about what it takes to help all young people achieve school success and reach productive adulthood. Below are examples of research from around the country on the effectiveness of community school initiatives, as well as research on some of the key programmatic components of community schools.

### Community Learning Centers – CLC (Cincinnati Public Schools)

The Community Learning Centers are a district-wide initiative designed to provide academic reinforcements for students and develop community-centered hubs of services and resources. The 2010-2011 annual performance report evaluates the outcomes of individualized student services related to tutoring, mentoring, after-school programs and college access at the Cincinnati Public Schools CLCs. Data for 2010-2011 show that academic achievement has improved in CLC schools since the onset of Resource Coordination. Students receiving student support services, including tutoring, mentoring, college access and after-school programs, all showed positive academic trends from 2009-2010 to 2010-2011.

### Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative

The Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative (TACSI) evaluation studied 18 TACSI schools and 18 non-TACSI schools with comparable demographics. The report suggests that bringing the community school model to scale in TACSI schools enhances student achievement and narrows the achievement gap. When controlling for the poverty effect, results indicate that students in TACSI schools significantly outperformed their counterparts in comparison schools on state math and reading tests.

### Hartford Community Schools

A 2011 report presents findings on systems-level community school implementation, school-level implementation and progress toward outcomes at Hartford Community Schools. At the school level, outcomes included more robust community school programs; increased capacity of lead agency staff; demonstrated value to school leadership; and increased data quality. Systems-level outcomes included increased clarity about the importance of a systems-level focus; district-wide emphasis on school-community partnerships; and expansion of funding and school partners in Hartford Community Schools. Most school, student, family and community outcomes were positive and met their indicators of success.

### SUN Community Schools (Multnomah County, Oregon)

SUN Community Schools (CS) provide school-based educational support, recreation, social and health services, and parent engagement to students and their families. In 2010-2011, there were 60 SUN CS sites. Over 75 percent of SUN CS students showed improvement in state math and reading scores. Additionally, nearly 75 percent of SUN CS students were meeting their reading benchmarks or on track to reach their benchmarks in three years. Seventeen percent of SUN CS students were classified as chronically absent compared to the district's average of 32 percent. Seventy-nine percent of 12th grade SUN CS students graduated.

### **Children’s Aid Society Community Schools (New York City)**

The following is a synopsis of third-party evaluation results of Children’s Aid Society (CAS) community schools over a 19-year period. Children at CAS community schools have “far higher” attendance than peer schools. Students at CAS community schools have shown higher achievement than peer schools and students in CAS middle school after-school programs experienced greater academic gains than their non-participating peers. Teachers in CAS community schools reported being able to spend more time on instruction than their counterparts in comparison schools. Studies of health services in CAS community schools found dramatic increases in children’s access to quality health care; better student and family management of chronic illnesses, particularly asthma; and improvements in students’ vision. The CAS community schools also saw an increase in parent engagement.

### **Communities in Schools (national)**

A 2010 report measures national outcomes in Communities in Schools (CIS) over a five-year period. The national, state, and local affiliates of CIS serve students in 3,400 schools. “High implementer” CIS schools had considerably greater effects on reducing dropout rates and increasing on-time graduation than their non-CIS comparisons and other CIS schools (i.e., “partial implementers”). Results indicate that CIS students experienced consistent improvements in attendance and state-mandated test scores.

### **Consortium on Chicago School Research**

New research from Chicago identified five essential supports for student success – all critical components of community schools: strong parent-community ties; enhanced professional capacity; a student-centered learning climate; a coherent instructional program; and strong principal leadership that drives change and enlists teachers, parents and community members to help expand the reach of the work and share overall responsibility for improvement.

### **City Connects – CCNX (Boston)**

According to a 2012 progress report, students who attended City Connects elementary schools are significantly less likely to be chronically absent (defined as being absent for 10 percent or more of the days within the school year) than students who never attended CCNX schools. Students enrolled in CCNX in elementary schools achieved significantly higher GPAs overall and in mathematics in grades 6, 7 and 8. Similarly, students enrolled in CCNX in elementary schools achieved significantly higher GPAs in English Language Arts in grades 6 and 7.

### **Coalition for Community Schools**

The best single summary of this extensive body of evaluative research was produced in 2009 (and is now being updated) by the Coalition for Community Schools. Looking across all existing evaluations of community schools at that time, the coalition concluded: A growing body of research suggested that fidelity to the community school strategy yields compounding benefits for students, families and community. Community school students show significant gains in academic achievement and in essential areas of nonacademic development. Families of community school students show increased family stability, communication with teachers, school involvement and a greater sense of responsibility for their children’s learning. Community schools enjoy stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment and greater community support. The community school model promotes more efficient use of school buildings and, as a result, neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride and better rapport among students and residents.

### **Health**

Another recent study traced the causal pathways between student health and educational achievement, urging schools to address seven “educationally relevant health disparities”: poor vision; asthma; teen pregnancy; aggression and violence; (lack of) physical activity; (lack of) breakfast; and (untreated) inattention and hyperactivity. This research strongly supports the community schools’ inclusion of health care as a critical component of student success.

### **Parent Engagement**

Research conducted over the past two decades confirms that family engagement improves students’ educational outcomes. Studies conducted by Joyce Epstein, Anne Henderson and other leaders indicate that children do better in school when their parents regularly support, monitor and advocate for their education. The Harvard Family Research Project views family engagement as a key reform strategy when it moves “beyond random acts” into work that is systemic, integrated and sustained — the very approach promoted in community schools.

### **After-School and Expanded Learning Opportunities**

More than 25 years of research, conducted by such educational leaders as Reginald Clark, Milbrey McLaughlin and Deborah Vandell, has documented the important role played by out-of-school-time experiences in promoting school success. For example, Clark found that young people who spend between 20 and 35 hours per week engaged in “high-yield” learning activities during their non-school hours do better in school than their less-active peers. McLaughlin and Vandell documented a wide array of positive results (academic, social and emotional) from young people’s participation in high-quality after-school and youth development programs.

## NOTES

- An Urban Studies Council robust, annotated summary of the cited community schools research can be found at: [http://www.urbanstrategies.org/documents/fscs/FSCS%20Funding\\_Oct%202012.pdf](http://www.urbanstrategies.org/documents/fscs/FSCS%20Funding_Oct%202012.pdf).
- <http://news.cincinnati.com/assets/AB1820921121.PDF>.
- <http://www.csctulsa.org/files/file/Achievement%20Evidence%20from%20an%20Evaluation%20of%20TACSI.pdf>
- [http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/HCS%20Final%20Report%20\(2-6-12\).pdf](http://www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/HCS%20Final%20Report%20(2-6-12).pdf)
- [http://web.multco.us/sites/default/files/sun/documents/suncsannual\\_outcomes1011.pdf](http://web.multco.us/sites/default/files/sun/documents/suncsannual_outcomes1011.pdf).
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