



Financing Community Schools

LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community schools are one of the most efficient and effective strategies to improve outcomes for students as well as families and communities. Community schools leverage public and private investments by generating additional financial resources from partners and other sources.

This report looks at how community schools finance their work. It describes the resources, partnerships, and activities community schools generate with the dollars they have; where monies come from; and the mechanisms community schools use to leverage additional funding and build their capacity to achieve agreed upon results. The report draws on survey results and case studies from a purposeful sample of experienced community schools—both individual sites as well as district-sponsored initiatives.

Community schools are built on the simple logic that schools and communities are mutually dependent and that strong and purposeful partnerships between them are essential to students' academic success. Whether in small towns, urban areas, or big cities, non-academic factors—hunger, safety, health, and other issues—spill into the classroom, affect learning, and create challenges well beyond what schools should be expected to handle alone. Community schools are one of the only school-reform strategies specifically designed to address both academic and non-academic issues by integrating and leveraging funds, working across silos, and partnering with local organizations to maximize resources. Inside community schools, we see an intentional leveraging of federal, state, and local funding streams—public and private—to provide supports and opportunities that students need to thrive both academically and beyond.

In this period of stripped down budgets, educators, community leaders and policymakers are more aware than ever of the need to use scarce resources to maximize results. Most schools, health and social service providers, youth development organizations, higher education institutions, public and private agencies and government officials work in isolated “silos,” concentrating on single issues. Experience teaches that these single issues overlap and that diverse stakeholders are all, in effect, responsible for the same children, the same families and the same communities. But bureaucratic organization and fragmented funding streams make it hard for their respective sectors to work together to better meet community and family needs.

The financial advantage of community schools is clear: community schools connect these multiple sectors and build the capacity to make a comprehensive approach efficient, effective and sustainable. For nearly two decades, educators, community leaders and policymakers have used the community school strategy to organize and leverage resources to achieve shared goals. Through partnerships, community schools align and integrate strategies to support students, strengthen schools, engage families, and help build entire communities where learning happens.

Coalition for Community Schools

Because Every Child Deserves Every Chance



RECOMMENDATIONS

A community school is an investment in the community itself. With the coming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, federal, state, and local agencies should take legislative and practical steps to mirror the culture of alignment, leverage, and coordination demonstrated by the community schools featured in this report.

The Coalition for Community Schools, representing over 160 organizations interested in the well-being and academic success of students, calls on policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to recognize—and promote—community schools as a seasoned and powerful strategy for school reform and community revitalization. In order to support the sustainability and expansion of community schools, the Coalition recommends that policy makers:

- ▶ **Define and support a community school strategy through laws, regulations and guidelines.** The community school strategy should be defined in district, local government, state and national policy. It should be supported by legislation, regulations and guidelines for all programs providing funding that touches the lives of children, youth, and their families, in the journey from early childhood to college.
 - The community schools strategy should be included as an allowable use of funds under Title I.
 - The Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) program should be authorized and funded at a substantial level as a vehicle to help provide a continuing impetus for the development of community schools and serve as a learning laboratory for effective practices.
 - Funding for technical assistance and capacity building should be available to speed the learning of FSCS grantees and other developing community schools and to support learning among policymakers at all levels.
- ▶ **Provide incentives in ESEA and other legislation that move schools and community partners toward results-driven public/private partnerships.** Policymakers should incentivize partnerships by awarding additional points in grant competitions, rewarding greater flexibility in

funding, and setting aside bonus funding for those who meet the following priorities:

- Priority for using a comprehensive results framework.
 - Priority for those who demonstrate alignment and coordination of funding streams.
 - Priority for partnerships and consortia, over single entities.
- ▶ **Fund site coordination and site coordinators in support of community schools.** Our findings suggest that coordinators are the fulcrum of a community school. They leverage and integrate resources and have proven their value to principals, allowing school administrators to focus on instructional improvement. In order to support these necessary coordination functions, we recommend that:
- The Full Service Community Schools Act (H.R. 3545 and S. 1655) should be authorized by Congress as part of ESEA.
 - The reauthorized ESEA should provide an option to include the funding of a community school coordinator for all Title I schools.
 - Other federal and state agencies that finance opportunities and services for children, youth or families at schools or linked to schools should specify in grant guidelines that a portion of funding may be used to pay for the salary of a community school coordinator or for site coordination.

“For every dollar spent [on community schools], we were getting back five, six, seven dollars from the business community, from non-profits, from the social service agencies, from the state [and] the federal government.”

—Arne Duncan, Secretary,
U.S. Department of Education