



UNLOCKING OPPORTUNITIES: SERVICES THAT HELP POOR CHILDREN SUCCEED IN THE CLASSROOM

Part 7: Schools As Community Hubs for Students and Families

By Soumya Bhat and Jenny Reed

Elementary and secondary schools can serve not only as a source of academic instruction, but also as community hubs that connect children and their families to other services that ultimately enhance academic goals. In many communities, schools and community-based organizations partner to deliver services identified as community priorities – physical and mental health care, afterschool programs, adult education, or early childhood supports. These “integrated student supports” in turn can lead to engaged families, stronger communities, and better academic outcomes.

The District currently is investing resources into six grantees (11 schools) to broaden their role in their communities, but it could be doing more to expand these promising practices to all high-poverty schools.

- **Create clear, stable funding for the Community Schools model to expand in the District.** Community Schools need to be prioritized and funded as part of strategies to close the student achievement gap in DC.
- **Explore the role of an intermediary organization.** Either a government or non-government agency should take on the role of coordinating a city-wide expansion of Community Schools, including consistent data tracking and making professional development and technical assistance available for grantees.

Key Features of Community Schools

- Community engagement and buy-in from school leadership
 - Initial assets and needs assessment to identify gaps
 - Partnerships between school and community-based organizations
 - Integration of comprehensive, non-instructional services with school academic goals
- **Prioritize data collection and evaluation of key indicators.** The District should continue to collect information on school readiness, student attendance, adult education, and other indicators to assess the short- and long-term impacts of Community Schools.

Research on Community Schools. Community Schools use public schools as central hubs for students and the larger community to access integrated services, supports and opportunities. They do this by developing partnerships between the school and community-based resources.

There is evidence that school-based student and family supports can lead to reductions in grade retention and dropout rates, improved attendance and gains in math, reading, and

overall grade point average.¹ These efforts take a “whole child” perspective and recognize that a child’s development and academic success is hinged on several domains and need to include the school, family, and larger community.² Interventions that address a range of academic and non-academic needs have been shown to result in better outcomes than those focused only on one of these domains.

Using schools as a community hub also pays off in the long-term. Studies show that every dollar invested in a Community Schools model saves \$4 to \$15 from improved educational, environmental, and health outcomes for children and families, and costs that would be avoided – such as reductions in ER visits or repeating a grade.³

There are over 4,000 community schools operating in the U.S. Community Schools focus on issues such as chronic absenteeism, parental involvement, early childhood services, or youth development. The partners often connect students and their families with outside supports, including medical, dental and mental health services. They also connect students with extended learning opportunities before and after school and during the summer, and connect families with classes like financial literacy, GED prep, and computer classes.

DC’s Community Schools Initiative. There are 11 DC public and public charter schools operating Community School (CS) partnerships in the District (see **Appendix**.) All grantees were required to establish an advisory board comprised of community members and to conduct a needs

assessment to learn what programs the school already offered and to identify gaps.

Each site has a full-time coordinator who works to build partnerships between the school, community-based organizations, and families in the community. The coordinator works with the school principal and faculty to align partnerships with the school’s academic plans and to best match the services to identified needs of students and families. The coordinator also works to inform parents and the broader community of services available to families at or near the school site.

In 2012, the District’s CS grantees were identified by an advisory committee and allocated a combined total of \$1 million in local funds through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education (OSSE). A typical CS grantee budget is just enough to cover the cost of a few staff positions, such as the full-time coordinator, attendance specialist, or mental health coordinator, as well as seed funding for key partnerships, such as for after-school providers or health services.

A few more examples of the CS model in action are listed below:

- **Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative Community Consortium at Jefferson Academy and Amidon-Bowen Elementary School:** The Dreamworks program, which offers art-based leadership development for youth, started in April 2014 at Jefferson Middle School. A six-week fatherhood education empowerment

¹ Kristen Anderson Moore and Carol Emig. Integrated Student Supports: A summary of the Evidence Base for Policymakers. Child Trends, 2014.

² Kristen Anderson Moore and Carol Emig. Integrated Student Supports: A summary of the Evidence Base for Policymakers. Child Trends, 2014.

³ Ibid and Children’s Aid Society, “Measuring Social Return on Investment for Community Schools.” 2013. <http://www.childrengainsociety.org/files/CASE%20STUDY%20final.pdf>.

DC's Promise Neighborhood Initiative

DC and a number of communities across the nation have launched "Promise Neighborhoods," built on the model of the Harlem Children's Zone. These initiatives bring community partners together to address education, health, and social services supports in targeted low-income communities. DC's Promise Neighborhood Initiative (DCPNI)—in the Kenilworth-Parkside community of Ward 7—has received substantial federal and private funding, launched a number of activities, and recently hired a new leader. It also has faced some challenges, such as the closing of a public school within its boundaries.

DCPNI is working to tackle poverty with over 40 partners that offer services for children and their parents, from early learning programs for young children to workforce development and technical training courses for parents. Two partner organizations, the Educare DC Early Learning Center and Unity Health Care, opened new facilities there in 2012. DCPNI also helped launch summer and out-of-school-time services that year, including its Digital Media Academy, the Tiger Woods Learning Center, the Boys and Girls Club, and Save the Children.

The DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative received a planning grant from the U.S. Department of Education in 2010, and it landed a \$20 million, five-year federal implementation grant in 2012. It has received substantial additional support from private foundations. It does not receive funding from the DC government.

DCPNI also has faced challenges. The DC Housing Authority's application for a \$30 million federal Choice Neighborhoods grant to overhaul the Kenilworth Courts housing project was turned down. The recent closing of Kenilworth Elementary School, one of three schools in the Promise Neighborhood, was another setback. The school boundary changes recently adopted by Mayor Gray include a recommendation to reopen Kenilworth.

In the coming months, DCPNI's Parent Advocates program will begin assigning case workers to children in the community and launch a program focused on parents, which will include everything from accessing GED and job training to financial management and involvement in their children's education. Moving forward, DCPNI aims to become a leading employer of Kenilworth-Parkside residents and expanding the programs that are most successful in lifting residents out of poverty.

For more information on the DC Promise Neighborhood Initiative, see <http://dcpni.org/>.

program, Quenching Father's Thirst, is held at a community center. Mental health services are provided to families through a partnership with Family Preservation Services, a behavioral health care service provider, and mobile dental van offers oral health services on-site to students. Another partnership with Martha's Table offers nutritious groceries once a month to families of 30 Jefferson students and 75 Amidon-Bowen students.

- **Latin American Youth Center Community Consortium:** The coordinator spent time building relationships with service providers, including Mary's Center. A dental bus visits the site every six months, offering students a diagnosis on the first visit and treatment on the follow-up visit. The coordinator sets up monthly meetings with parents and the school principal and has a regular presence in the school cafeteria during lunchtime to get to know students. This also makes it easier

when the time comes to refer a child for needed services.

- **Mt. Pleasant Community School Consortium:** Partners include Cardozo clinic, Mt. Pleasant Library, and a credit union that offers financial literacy and budget management workshops. The coordinator helps students and families navigate the system, with an emphasis on working with English Language Learner students. Some of the major needs the coordinator identified are employment, housing, nutrition, legal services, and social services. She developed a presentation on summer options for adult students and families which compiled all the information into one place.

As the CS program is sustained with funding in year two (fiscal year 2015), grantees plan to continue to refine their goals while working to expand participation and improve their existing partnerships. For example, Amidon-Bowen wants to procure a washer-dryer for the school because there are no laundromats in the neighborhood or in the neighborhood's public housing. Jefferson Academy hopes to reinvigorate their parent resource center. The LAYC consortium wants to offer more peer learning between staff, and organize resource fairs focused on mental health and social services. The Mt. Pleasant Consortium will focus on improving school attendance and recruiting partners for before- and after-school activities, including exploring ways for high schools students to take part in community service. All grantees will work to track and evaluate their work through common measures of success that are consistent with academic goals set by DCPS and public charter school leaders, including improved outcomes for student attendance, school climate, and reading proficiency.

Recommendations for DC Scale-Up of Community Schools. The long-term success of Community Schools for D.C. depends on a number of factors, including stable leadership, strong district support, solid relationships with community partners, and a sustained financial investment. DCFPI recommends that the CS model be expanded in the District to become a larger community-based strategy to improve outcomes for low-income students and their families.

In order to accomplish this objective, the following steps should be considered:

- **Create clear, stable funding for the Community Schools model to expand in the District.** Community Schools need to be prioritized as part of a larger strategy to close the student achievement gap in DC. The CS pilot is currently funded at \$1 million per year, will need additional funding if it is to expand to more high-poverty schools. Sites can be funded with a blend of public and private resources, but private funders will want to see the District is committed to scaling up this pilot phase before committing their support for future years.
- **Explore the role of an intermediary organization.** The Baltimore CS Initiative uses an intermediary organization to coordinate the city-wide effort, including consistent data tracking, and making professional development and technical assistance available for grantees. This type of infrastructure will be needed as the CS model expands to more sites, and DC should determine what the right entity - OSSE or a non-government agency - is able to take on this role.
- **Prioritize data collection and evaluation of key indicators.** The District should continue to collect information on school readiness,

student attendance, adult education, and other indicators to assess the short-term impacts of Community Schools. This will be particularly important to attract additional

funding from non-public sources, but also to show District leaders the impacts on student learning, health, family engagement, and other outcomes over time.

The District Can Look To Baltimore as a Model For Enhancing Community Schools

The Baltimore City Community Schools Initiative, operating since 2006, is a partnership of Baltimore City, City Schools, and the Family League of Baltimore, a non-profit grantmaking organization. In 2013, through efforts made by the Family League, the model was redesigned to align CS with the city's out-of-school time strategies. Integrating the model meant advocates were no longer fighting over the same funding streams, and that community partners and funders were able to come together to support one comprehensive strategy focusing on supports for students from breakfast to supper.

In spring of 2013, Maryland passed legislation for a \$1.2 billion bond for renovation funds for Baltimore City Schools, with specific language about schools serving as community hubs. The Family League is partnering with the Mayor's office and the school district to plan facility renovations with an emphasis on the needs of a CS partnership model.

Strong aspects of the Baltimore model include:

- **Citywide steering committee with shared vision.** Formed by the Family League, the 37-member committee includes funders, policymakers, principals, lead agencies, and coordinators.
- **Intermediary role.** The Family League serves to align the city's strategies to strengthen before- and after-school programs as the main focus of their model. The Family League is both the Local Management Board for Baltimore as well as a 501c3 able to leverage and blend multiple funding streams.
- **Data and evaluation.** Each school coordinator is able to share metrics across the CS initiative, through a data sharing agreement with the school district. For example, they track school climate, attendance, suspension data, and academic performance indicators for their students. Family League partners with the Baltimore Education Research Consortium to perform external research and evaluation of the programs. Data collected is used to drive school level strategy and system level resources.
- **Strong district-level support.** The city's Office of Family Engagement was highly supportive of the CS model and its new alignment strategy. There is a pending district-wide policy development team focused on Community Schools through this office.
- **Diverse funding streams.** The funding for the Baltimore CS Initiative comes from a range of public and private sources, including the Mayor's office, the Governor's Office for Children, the Open Society Institute, the Wallace Foundation, and the Collaborative for Building After-School Systems. While the majority of funds currently are from the city, the Initiative aims to match each dollar with private funds in the future.

For more information, see <http://www.familyleague.org/>.

Appendix


**DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA 2013 COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
INCENTIVE INITIATIVE GRANTEEES**

Name of Consortium	Consortium Partners	Ward(s) Represented	Services Provided	Contact Information
Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Community Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Next Step PCS Youth Build PCS LAYC Career Academy PCS Mary's Center 	Ward 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health Care Dental Care Absenteeism Reduction Health and Fitness 	Lori Kaplan President/CEO Latin American Youth Center 1419 Columbia Road, NW Washington DC 20009 (202) 319-8842 lori@layc-dc.org
Partnership Achieve	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> E.L. Haynes MS E.L. Haynes HS Mary's Center 	Ward 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Medical and Dental Care Mental Health Prevention and Treatment Services Truancy Intervention Youth Development 	Joan Yengo Vice President, Programs Mary's Center for Maternal & Child Care Inc. 2333 Ontario Road, NW Washington, DC 20009 (202) 420-7007 jyengo@maryscenter.org
Roosevelt Community School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roosevelt HS (Lead) Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative <p>CBOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Concerned Parents of Petworth Senior High Alliance of Parents, Principals and Educators (SHAPPE) Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) New Heights Teen Parenting Program District of Columbia College Access Program (DC CAP) BUILD Mary's Center 	Ward 4	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Medical Care Mental Health Care Tutoring and SAT Preparation Mental Health First Aid Training Teen Suicide Prevention Care Coordination and Diversion Program Truancy Prevention 	Karen Feinstein Executive Director Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative 4420 Georgia Avenue, NW Washington, DC 20011 (202) 722-1815 ext. 289 kfeinstein@gafsc-dc.org
DC Scholars at Stanton Elementary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DC Scholars Stanton ES (Lead) <p>CBOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> City Year People Animals Love Flamboyan Foundation 	Ward 8	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health Prevention and Treatment, Academic-enrichment Services Absenteeism Prevention Youth Development Programs Parental Involvement Initiatives School-age Child-care Services 	Jon Rybka Managing Director/External Relations DC Scholars at Stanton Elementary, 2701 Naylor Road, SE Washington DC 20020 (202) 480-8108 jrybka@scholaracademies.org
Mount Pleasant Community School Consortium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Briya PCS (Lead) Bancroft Elementary School Mary's Center for Maternal and Child Care <p>CBOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Flamboyan Foundation DC Scores Soccer Sitar Arts Center Horizons Greater Washington 	Ward 1	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Primary Medical and Dental Care Mental Health Treatment and Prevention Services Early Childhood Education Parental Involvement & Leadership Programming Adult Education Programs Financial Literacy Courses Youth Development Programs 	Christie McKay Briya Public Charter School 2333 Ontario Road, NW Washington, DC 20003 (202)797-7337 cmckay@briya.org
Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative Community School Consortium at Jefferson Academy and Amidon-Bowen Elementary School	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative (Lead) <p>Partners/CBOs:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> DC Children's Trust Fund Family Preservation Services DreamsWork, Inc. 	Wards 5 & 6	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mental Health Prevention and Treatment Services Youth Development Programs Academic Enrichment Activities Parent Involvement Activities Youth and Adult Job-Readiness and Career Counseling Services 	Sharon Crytzer Deputy Director Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative 801 7th Street, SW, Washington DC 20024 (202) 832-9400 scrytzer@ebfsc.org