

Wraparound Services

“Teachers and support professionals know that students need to come to school ready and able to learn. Students who have good nutrition, dental and medical services, and counseling programs where necessary are simply going to do better in school.”

— NEA President Dennis Van Roekel

Student Success Requires Attention to the Needs of the Whole Child

NEA members and affiliates are acutely aware of the interconnected nature of the academic, physical, mental, social, and emotional development of students, their families, and communities. Students with untreated medical concerns, or whose parents or caregivers are fearful or unable to communicate with school staff, are less likely to benefit from the learning and enrichment opportunities available to them in school.

Full-service community schools seek to remove barriers to student success by locating, partnering, coordinating, and helping students access comprehensive “wraparound” services from local service providers that complement and are aligned with effective instruction and other work done by the school. These services—sometimes at or near the physical school site—can include:

- primary health, mental health, and dental care
- family engagement, including adult education
- preschool learning

- academic enrichment
- expanded after school learning time or summer programming
- mentoring
- postsecondary education and career options awareness

Extent of Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools is an alliance of about 170 national, state, and local K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health, and other organizations, including NEA. The Coalition estimates that there are over 4,000 community schools, mostly traditional neighborhood schools—but including some charter schools as well—operating in 49 states and the District of Columbia.

Funding Sources

Community schools develop in response to a local community initiative. Funding sources are diverse and include community partners and supporters, philanthropies, and the federal government.

Recipients of federal Full-Service Community Schools grants, which currently average \$400,000–\$500,000, must have a full-time program coordinator who works to align the various services provided with the school’s objectives. The program coordinator also schedules and coordinates the expanded use of the school facility by working with the principal and other stakeholders.

The Promise Neighborhoods initiative is less school-centered in its approach, but otherwise similar in concept to Full-Service Community Schools in expanding student access to wraparound services. Both federal initiatives are currently funded at about \$10 million for 20 grantees.

The 21st Century Community Learning Centers program and the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA) Title I School Improvement Grants (SIG) provide other sources of federal funding support for building wraparound service initiatives.

The Early Childhood Sector

The early childhood sector has a long history of providing comprehensive services to children and families, beginning with the Head Start program. First launched in 1965, Head Start was designed to be a comprehensive school-readiness program created to address the emotional, social, health, nutritional, and educational needs of low-income preschoolers. Since its inception, Head Start has provided comprehensive health and developmental screenings, health care referrals, and follow-up; special services for children with disabilities; nutritious meals; vision and hearing tests; immunizations; onsite family caseworkers; and home visits to all enrolled children.

Despite research that supports providing health, parent involvement, nutrition, and social support services as necessary to ensure school readiness for children

in low-income communities, too few children receive them. Head Start currently services only six in ten eligible children.

A change to the Head Start program in 2007 required all states to develop Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCS). These state- or local-level collaborations aim to coordinate multiple early childhood services and ensure that children are healthy and ready to learn at school entry by reducing disparities in access and quality of early care and improving services for those at highest risk.

These collaborations are reflected in partnerships involving a range of public and private early childhood agencies, parents, and communities focused on the effective provision of services in the areas of:

- child health
- early care and education
- mental health and social-emotional development
- family support
- parent education

Children’s Cabinets

Although several states have formed “Children’s Cabinets”—representatives of various state agencies that serve children and their families and aimed at streamlining the administration of services they provide for shared clients—states so far have not been a major source of funding support for comprehensive wrap-around service initiatives. Illinois passed legislation in 2009, House Bill 684, which made it the first state to codify community schools into its state school code and established community schools as a legitimate innovation strategy for Illinois schools to implement and seek funds. The legislation provided a structure

for community school oversight and expansion, better enabling it to take advantage of federal funding. California, Kentucky, Oregon, and Washington have legislation, some longstanding, supporting community schools. The Forum for Youth Investment has been promoting a federal “Children’s Cabinet” aimed at streamlining the administration of federal programs benefiting children.

Results

Reports of highly positive results tout the benefit of community schools. These claims include better student achievement in reading and math in community than in noncommunity schools in Chicago, New York City, and San Mateo County, California, higher graduation and attendance rates, reduced disciplinary actions, higher parental participation, stronger student relationships with adults and peers, and benefits to communities such as expanded services for adults.

To date, these evaluations have not been subjected to rigorous, independent scrutiny evaluating their quality and the validity of their claims. Expert scholar and practitioner Jane Quinn notes, however, that several well-developed strands of research suggest a strong theoretical case for the promise of a community schools strategy:

- Children do better in school if they have broader access at early ages to health and mental health services and family supports, as well as other school readiness interventions.
- Everyone benefits when parents can be involved in their children’s school experience with the help of supportive services.
- A strong and growing body of research suggests that good after-school programs prevent children from getting into trouble and promote a wide range of positive student outcomes.
- Community schools, often located in disadvantaged neighborhoods, build the capacity of communities to solve problems encountered by students and their families.

Association Role

More unions participate in community school initiatives as part of their planning, oversight, and implementation teams. Some play leadership roles in promoting new community school initiatives, for example, by arranging tours of community schools for local stakeholders.

Community schools in Portland, Oregon, Lincoln, Nebraska, and Evansville, Indiana are among those included in the NEA Priority Schools Campaign’s recently released Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0 report.

The Evansville Teachers Association (ETA) serves both as a member of the community school steering committee and a larger community stakeholder group. ETA President Keith Gambill describes part of his role as “to get information from teachers on what students need and get the community partners wrapped around those needs.”

State associations can highlight successful or promising local affiliate-supported community schools initiatives in their publications and meeting or conference sessions as one option for local affiliates to consider as a way to provide value to members by improving their sense of efficacy on the job.

Recommendations

For local-level actors

Scan your community. Are there wraparound services or full-service community schools in place? Are there existing partnerships between schools and community partners? If yes, consider how you might work with others to

support, build upon and perhaps enhance the work that is being done. If there are no such initiatives currently in place, and particularly if you are not an experienced advocate, talk with someone—perhaps a technical assistance provider or advocacy group identified in the Resources section of this document—about how you might proceed. Consider visiting a school district with wraparound or community schools strategies in place.

For state-level actors

Consider establishing full-service community schools as constituting, in part or in full, a school innovation or school improvement model, with applicants proposing such models eligible for state innovation or school improvement funding opportunities.

If your state has a Children’s Cabinet, learn about its plans, and make sure they include linking other state agencies to schools as part of their agenda. Share information with them about wraparound services and full community schools.

If there is no Cabinet, consider establishing, through the actions of the governor, the legislature, or both, a “Children’s Cabinet” comprised of representatives from the various state agencies whose programs serve K-12 or K-16 students. Cabinets can streamline the administration of state programs to avoid overlapping requirements, such as multiple service providers reporting on the same client outcomes. Given the importance of success in school to the state economy, Children’s Cabinets may focus on how other state agencies support education, as well. In addition, Cabinets can review existing data on outcomes for children in the state, consider collecting or advocating the collection of additional data, and make any policy or program operation recommendations they believe can improve these outcomes.

Coordinate the work of the state-level mandatory early childhood program coordinating bodies—the Early Childhood Comprehensive Systems (ECCSs)—with state-level Children’s Cabinets that focus on K-12 or K-16,

but not early childhood. Each body should have at least one representative who serves as a member on another body to facilitate information sharing, opportunities for collaboration, and conversations that generate ideas for improving the effectiveness of policy and programs in promoting positive student outcomes.

For federal-level actors

Consider whether, and if so, how, school turnaround, school improvement, and innovation grant programs might provide an additional federal funding option for proposals which feature wraparound services or community school approaches.

Continue funding both the Full Service Community Schools and Promise Neighborhood initiatives. Conduct independent evaluations of each initiative.

Continue funding other federal programs that create key building blocks for community-level wraparound initiatives, such as the 21st Century Community Learning Centers.

Incorporate wraparound services and full-service community schools as allowable uses under Title I.

Include in professional development grant guidelines language requiring that principals and teachers be prepared to work more effectively with families and communities to offer wraparound services and organize full-service community schools.

Consider forming, through White House or Congressional action, a federal-level “Children’s Cabinet” with functions parallel to state-level counterparts (see above section for state-level actors).

REFERENCES AND RESOURCES

- Blank, Martin L., Jacobson, Reuben, and Melaville, Atelia. Achieving Results Through Community Partnerships: How District and Community Leaders are Building Effective, Sustainable Relationships. Center for American Progress. January 2012.
- Chang, Theodora. Maximizing the Promise of Community Schools. Center for American Progress. April 2011.
- Chang, Theodora, with Lawyer, Calyssa. Lightening the Load: A Look at Four Ways that Community Schools Can Support Effective Teaching. Center for American Progress. January 2012.
- Community Schools Research Brief 09, accessed at Results section, Coalition for Community Schools Web site. www.communityschools.org/assets/1/AssetManager/CCS%20Research%20Report2009.pdf
- "The Crucial Role of Teachers and Teacher Unions," Coalition for Community Schools Newsletter. January 19, 2012. www.communityschools.org//the_crucial_role_of_teachers_and_teacher_unions/
- Henderson, Anne T. et al. "Family-School-Community Partnerships 2.0: Collaborative Strategies to Advance Student Learning," NEA Priority Schools Campaign, 2011. www.neaprioritieschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2011/11/Entire_PSC_Profiles_Interactive.pdf
- Quinn, Jane. "Community Schools: A Strategy, Not a Program," NEA Visiting Scholars Research Brief, spring 2009, volume 2. www.nea.org/assets/docs/HE/communityschoolspaper.pdf
- "Resources" section of the Coalition for Community Schools Web site features Toolkits for the Field, Capacity Building guides on scaling up local partnerships and financing community schools, information on technical assistance providers, webinars and other Coalition resources. www.communityschools.org
- Web site for Communities in Schools, a 30 year-old network of about 5,000 professionals in 25 states and D.C. serving nearly 1.3 million young people in more than 3,400 schools through promoting and implementing its model of dropout prevention. www.communitiesinschools.org
- Web site for the Forum for Youth Investment, currently promoting a federal "Children's Cabinet" concept. www.forumfyi.org