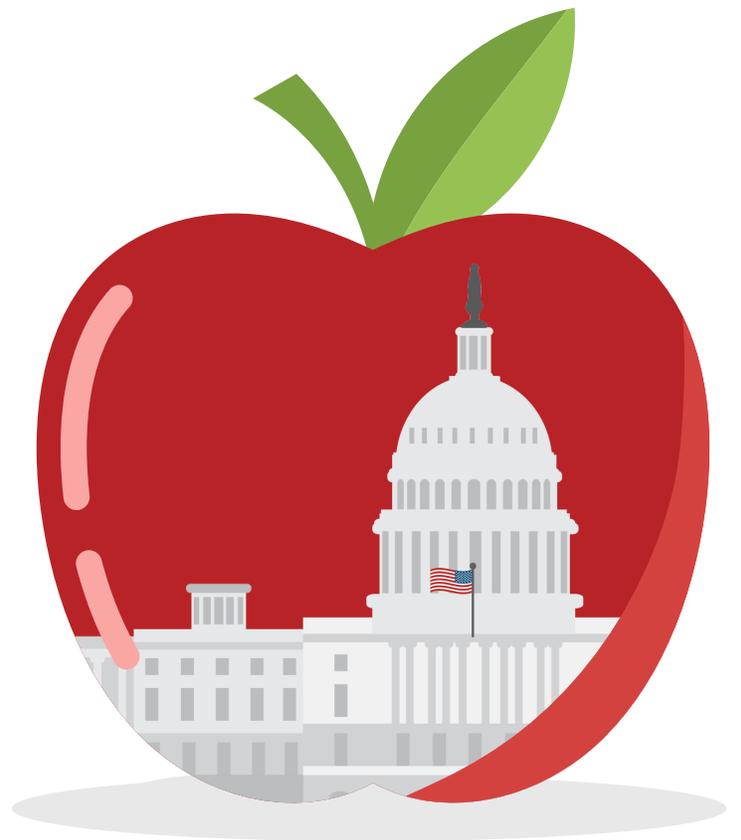




Educational Success Policy Brief

Vol. 1—Community Partnership Schools™





Vol. 1—Community Partnership Schools™

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We envision a world where **all students** have their needs met and the support they deserve to be able to attend school each day ready to learn, and where **all schools** are able to provide the learning environment that ensures equitable opportunity and success for all students.





Introduction

The Alliance for Strong Families and Communities is a national strategic action network of social sector leaders and community-based human services organizations. We are united by our shared vision of a healthy and equitable society, and the members of our network work toward this vision by supporting their communities via the provision of a wide array of human services, their work with and in community, their leadership, partnerships, and paramount responsibility to advocacy. An increasing segment of community-based organizations (CBOs) in the Alliance network are deeply engaged in ensuring all children and youth succeed in education. For example, many CBOs are providing behavioral health services, consulting with schools on school or district-wide efforts to improve culture and climate, implement differentiated learning curricula, and train educators. Others are operating innovative schools to serve diverse learners or are partnering with school districts to co-operate community schools.

What these organizations have in common is that they are all propelling cross-system impact. Through the lens of seeing the whole child within the context of their family, community, and the multiple systems that interface in their lives, these organizations understand what needs to happen at a practice, systems, and policy level to enable all young people to succeed in education. The Alliance believes we have a responsibility to harness the collective expertise and power of our network to contribute our voices and innovations to the national conversation on education reform at the local, state, and national levels.

As a network of leaders in the human service sector, we are positioned to contribute our unique perspectives and solutions to help make education reform efforts work for all children and youth. We know that systems change requires innovative efforts at both the practice and the policy level, and it is our mission to advance equitable transformation in education by pulling on these levers in the following ways:

- elevate the voices of community-based organizations and the people they serve;
- highlight innovations and case studies from our sector;
- foster cross-system collaboration;
- facilitate applied research;
- provide recommendations to policymakers;
- and align efforts with coalitions and other stakeholders who share our values.



Values

To realize our vision for educational success, we believe the following intersectional principles must be prioritized to achieve educational equity in our country so that all students can succeed.

This list represents the value – and the values – that CBOs bring to education reform efforts, and serve as the north stars to guide the Alliance’s efforts to support systems change in education.



Advance Justice & Equity

Our public education system and all related stakeholders prioritize educational justice. Schools are funded adequately and equitably, institutional and systemic racism is acknowledged and addressed as a root cause of educational inequities, and historically marginalized students, families, and communities are equitably supported.



Address the Hierarchy of Needs

All families and students have their basic needs met (e.g., safety, clean water, nutrition, clothing, utilities, health and wellbeing, childcare). Schools are able to support families in meeting all community-identified needs through integrated supports on-site or via collaborative resource and referral networks.



Acknowledge the Social Determinants of Health

All education stakeholders understand the impact the social determinants of health play in child well-being and school readiness. They recognize that investing in asset-based community development strategies can mitigate impacts of poverty and promote positive development.



Ensure Kindergarten Readiness

All families have access to – and utilize – high-quality early care and education supports from prenatal to pre-K (e.g., health and wellness resources, early intervention, parenting support, childcare, preschool, etc.) so that all children enter school ready to learn.



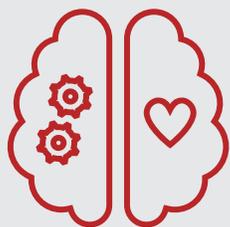
Center Parent & Family Voice

Parent and family engagement is prioritized in all schools. Families have the access, resources, and power that is needed to meaningfully engage in their children's education and to promote their healthy development in partnership with schools.



Transform Culture & Climate

Schools create and maintain a safe, nurturing, culturally relevant, and appropriately challenging environment for all students as evidenced by prioritizing relationships; building authentic community; embracing anti-racist and justice-oriented values; being trauma-informed while maintaining high expectations; and valuing diversity, equity, and inclusion.



Support the *Whole Student & All Students*

Schools support the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic development of all students by implementing schoolwide data-informed tiered systems of supports that emphasize promotion/prevention strategies and are informed by brain science. Students in need of the most supports are served equitably, with adequate resources devoted to differentiated learning, coordination of services teams, and inclusive interventions.



Leverage Cross-System Collaboration

All child-serving public systems (e.g., general/special education, child welfare, healthcare, housing, mental health, juvenile justice, etc.) effectively collaborate, leverage the expertise of multiple partners, and braid/blend funding to deliver integrated and highly coordinated services that reflect a two-generation approach.



Measure What Matters

Educational success is defined, operationalized, and measured in ways that prioritize: (1) whole-child development; (2) whole-school development; (3) family and community experience; and (4) post-secondary opportunity.



Invest in Workforce Development

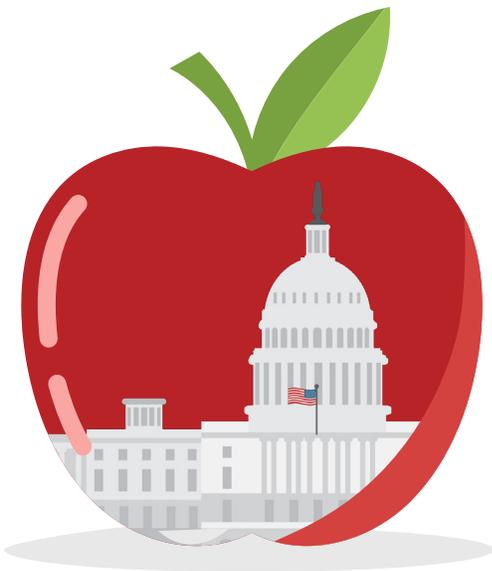
Effective, diverse, and committed professionals want to work in public education. Education professionals are acknowledged as a critical job in our society, as evidenced by investments in the training, professional development, compensation, and ongoing support necessary to recruit, develop, and retain effective educators.

In alignment with our mission, the goal of the Alliance’s education policy briefs is to lift up the values-based innovations and thought leadership from our sector, and to identify the policy recommendations that can help to spread and scale these solutions in communities across our country.

Through policy and practice, we want to build the capacities of community-based organizations to continue to be a catalyst for education reform and to achieve meaningful impact for young people, especially those facing the greatest barriers to educational success.

In this issue, we focus on community schools. The following pages will cover:

- History and context of community schools
- Overview of the Community Partnership Schools™ model, an innovative approach to community schools
- Recommendations for policy stakeholders to support the spread and scale of this work



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We thank our partners at the Children’s Home Society of Florida, the University of Central Florida, and the Children’s Institute for their contributions to this policy brief.



Background

History

Community schools have deep roots in the American education system. They are grounded in two principles: (1) the purpose of schooling is to prepare young people for democratic citizenship, and (2) schools and communities are inextricably intertwined and interdependent. During our nation's earliest years, education was mostly informal – children and adults attended school in community settings where they were taught life skills, moral lessons, and literacy skills. At the turn of the 20th century, public schooling became more formalized in response to industrialization, immigration, and urbanization. Social inequities expanded, and under-resourced neighborhoods began using school buildings as community centers. After the Great Depression and during segregation, community schools became more popular, particularly in African American communities, where schools increasingly became community centers operated by and for Black neighborhoods. School buildings were places for academic enrichment for students during the day, and offered services for students, families, and community members in the evening.

Contemporary community schools have continued to predominantly serve communities experiencing oppression, poverty, and inequitable education opportunities caused by systemic and institutional racism. In the late 20th century and into our modern era, new operating models for community schools have evolved that include more formalized partnerships with community-based organizations, higher education institutions, healthcare providers, faith-based organizations, local employers, and others. Through collaborative leadership, schools, and community stakeholders, we are able to provide integrated student supports, expanded learning opportunities, and family and community engagement.

In 2015, the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) was enacted into law. This legislation was an important landmark in supporting the scale and spread of community school models. Under ESSA, states were able to set new goals for how to best support the highest-need schools, enabling an increased emphasis on integrated student supports, expanded learning opportunities, and family and community engagement. ESSA requires that school districts and other Local Education Agencies (LEAs) involve the community, young people, and parents to guide and design the implementation process of community schools. For many community schools stakeholders, the passing of ESSA was seen as a victory, and advocates have since shifted to focus on implications at the state level. In 2015, state legislators passed more community school bills than any other year.

According to the National Center for Community Schools, over 5,000 community schools now exist across the country. As this educational approach has taken off in the 21st century, we are seeing a culture shift reflected in the increased emphasis on rigorous research and evaluation, coalition building, and policy change related to community schools. This movement is gaining momentum because community schools work – they improve academic outcomes and overall student health.

Additionally, community schools boast a high return on investment – for every \$1 spent on community schools, \$12-\$15 can be delivered in social value. By addressing the full spectrum of needs of children, families, and communities, community schools can provide all students with the supports they deserve to be able to attend school each day ready to learn and can create the learning environment that provides equitable opportunity for success in education and in life.

Pillars, Models, and Challenges of Community Schools

According to the [Partnership for the Future of Learning](#), there are four pillars of community schools:

1. collaborative leadership,
2. integrated student supports,
3. expanded learning opportunities,
4. and family and community engagement.

No two community schools look alike, but all community schools should have these four tenets at the core of their operations.

The Coalition for Community Schools, as well as the National Center for Community Schools, identify several national models for community schools: Beacon Schools, Children’s Aid Society Community Schools, Communities in Schools, Schools of the 21st Century, United Way Bridges to Success, and University-Assisted Community Schools. (See this [report](#) and [webpage](#) to learn more.)

Under ESSA, each state was given the ability to create community schools under their own guidelines. The beauty of community schools is that they are unique for each community they serve, but this also presents a challenge in that it can be difficult to ensure these schools are being implemented with fidelity to achieve the best possible outcomes. This also makes it hard to evaluate impact and to research the efficacy of community schools with rigor and at scale. As one example of implementation concerns, a recent study suggests that there should be a full-time coordinator who can ensure the schools adhere to community school standards, yet many states and districts are lacking this position ([Jacobson, 2019](#)).

Additionally, a major limitation of community schools is sustainability. While return on investment may be high, community schools often have operating costs that are higher than typical schools. Funding for community schools can be very piecemeal, with funds blended and braided from multiple sources and funding streams. Funding may also be short term, depending on where it comes from.

Another limitation is the potential of duplicating resources. Between community schools, human service providers, health care providers, and other community-based organizations, there can be overlap in bringing similar resources to one community. While this may be unintentional, it can create a disjointed and confusing experience for students and families, can cause tension between community partners, and can be an inefficient use of resources. Many policies are grant-based programs, meaning they are subject to funding elimination year to year. This dynamic can conflict with the fact that community schools are a long-term strategy for supporting community development, and thus requires long-term investment in integrated supports.



Innovation

The Community Partnership Schools™ Model

In 2008, the University of Central Florida (UCF) and Children’s Home Society (CHS) of Florida, a community-based human service provider, agreed to work together to improve the outcomes of children and families. By the next year they were committed to a community school model to Orlando, in partnership with Orange County Public Schools and Orange Blossom Family Health. Their new model drew from the New York Children’s Aid Society, a leader in transforming neighborhoods and communities through community schools. Evans Community School was the first community school opened through the partnership between the university, community-based organization, school district, and healthcare provider.



Their innovative model, Community Partnership Schools™, is now one of the fastest-growing approaches in the field of community schools. The Florida legislature recently passed [Senate Bill 7070](#), signed into law by the Governor on May 9, 2019, to [fund the planning and development](#) of more of these schools across the state. This was an effort that received large support across both sides of the aisle. The state budget for Fiscal Year 2019-20 includes \$7.1 million in grants to support the existing 15 Community Partnership Schools™ and to establish up to 12 new schools across the state. ([See bill analyses and fiscal impact statements](#))

[All the schools](#) currently implementing (or planning to implement) this approach share a similar model, yet are able to uniquely address their own community needs. Students receive supports that enable them to better focus on their education, as well as expanded learning opportunities. Schools offer parent resource centers, counseling, on-site food pantries, on-site access to health and wellness, and many other resources to support the whole family.

Key to its success, The Community Partnership School™ model involves forming a long-term partnership among the four core partners – a school district, a university or college, a community-based organization, and a health care provider. Sometimes there are more community partners involved, depending on what the school community needs. Each school ideally has four core staff members: a director, an expanded learning coordinator, a wellness coordinator, and a family coordinator. The staff work together to identify partners and providers that offer various services.

This unique model can transform the educational experience of students that attend Community Partnership Schools™ (CPS) and can also transform the larger community as well when partners are committed to long-term investment. The Community Partnership Schools™ model is unique and impactful because of its 25-year partnership agreements. This type of long-term partnership is the kind of investment that can have a lasting, multi-generational impact. Communities that have experienced generations of racism, oppression, poverty, violence, underinvestment, and other forms of trauma deserve long-term investments to advance health, well-being, and social and economic mobility for all residents.

Each essential element of the **four-core partnerships** has a specific role that aids the success of this model.

- **The school district.** The school district contributes a portion of the funding to implement the CPS model, which is [typically 25%](#) but can vary school to school. They also provide the structure for the students' academic environment and provide the human capital and curriculum needed to ensure academic improvement.
- **The community-based nonprofit.** The nonprofit element also provides a level of human capital as well. In this case of the CPS model, the initial partner is Children's Home Society of Florida (CHS). CHS provides the school with a few individuals that will help run the essential elements of the CPS school outside of direct academics. CHS will provide positions such as a director of community schools, a parent and family engagement coordinator, and an expanding learning coordinator and wellness coordinator, just to name a few. These roles are funded through a combination of state appropriations legislation (75%) and local match (25%) – the dollars are distributed to CHS which then hires staff for these positions.
- **The health care provider.** The health care provider provides consistent access to quality health care services primarily to students and may also provide services to the community at large. For example, if a student is not feeling well, they can see a healthcare professional at the school, and if it turns out to be minor, they can continue going on with their regular school day. Parents would not need to figure out additional transportation to get their child to a doctor. The provider accepts insurance, Medicaid, or a sliding scale to ensure financial barriers do not prevent students or families from accessing health care.
- **The university or college.** The university partner helps to evaluate, plan, provide technical assistance, and implement supports that are needed to best serve the community (ccie.ucf.edu, 2020). For example, UCF supports the [application and planning process](#) for new community school sites in development across the state. The University is also able to leverage its social capital to connect resources and partners to the school and community as needed.

Certification

The UCF Center for Community Schools ensures the model is implemented with fidelity across the state. The Center has developed a certification process that requires schools/communities to submit their plan at least a year in advance to get certified. This certification process requires the school and community to lay out a comprehensive plan that details the 12 specific aspects that ensure the success of the Community Partnership Schools™ model. The school district and community must provide a plan of action and details on who will meet the needs of the school and the community it intends to serve (ccie.ucf.edu, 2020).

Standards

- | | |
|--|------------------------------------|
| 1. Partnership | 7. Comprehensive Wellness Supports |
| 2. Collaborative Leadership, Governance, and Structure | 8. Family and Community Engagement |
| 3. Foundation Principles | 9. Volunteering |
| 4. Staffing | 10. University/College |
| 5. Integrated Community Partnership School Framework | 11. Evaluation |
| 6. Expanded Learning Opportunities | 12. Sustainability |

The Community Partnership Schools™ Model – A Snapshot of Outcomes

In the 2018-2019 school year, the impact of Community Partnership Schools™ can be demonstrated via the following data points:

Expanded Learning Opportunities

- 6,801 students received tutoring and academic support, receiving a total of 96,964 hours of support
- 7,205 students participated in enrichment activities, for a total of 125,354 hours

Wellness Supports

- 1,280 students received primary healthcare
- 2,193 students received dental care
- 3,015 students received behavioral healthcare
- 2,260 students received vision care

Family & Community Engagement

- 164,529 hours of volunteerism
- 9,227 hours of mentoring

Additionally, leaders from CPS schools report an overall more positive school culture and climate, leading to positive outcomes for students, staff, and the community. For example, CPS schools are seeing [impacts](#) such as an increase in graduation rates (e.g., from 64% to 88% from 2011 to 2018 at Evans High School), increases in teacher retention (e.g., 80% to 96% from 2016 to 2017 at C.A. Weis Elementary), decreases in out-of-school suspensions (e.g., a drop from 425 to 113 between 2016 and 2018 at C.A. Weis Elementary), increases on points earned in the Florida Standards Assessment (e.g., from 254 to 324 from 2018 to 2019 at Endeavor Elementary) and a reduction in the number of law enforcement calls to the community surrounding the school.

Advantages of the Community Partnership Schools™ Model

The Community Partnership Schools™ (CPS) model is able to overcome some of the key limitations of community schools. The CPS model provides fidelity via the 12 standards, monitored by UCF. They ensure that the model is replicated in a way that is specific to the needs of the individual school and community it serves, yet still holds true to the CPS model itself. Leaders in the Community Partnership Schools™ ensure there is not a duplication of services by conducting a thorough evaluation of the needs of the communities they serve. Additionally, the fact that academics, enrichment activities, social services, community connections, and health/wellness services all take place via one hub – the school – it ensures that families have a one-stop-shop for any supports they may be seeking and that services are not duplicated across disparate providers across the community.

The CPS model also provides a solution to another one of the key challenges of community schools – sustainability. To successfully sustain this model, several things must occur. First, and most importantly, is the establishment of strong ties and relationships on multiple levels. It is vital that there are connections that reach beyond just the classroom. These connections can be seen at the district and school level and then among the non-teaching staff and community school staff ([expandinglearning.org, 2020](https://expandinglearning.org)). This is where the importance of the partnership truly shines. The relationship built not only between the school and the community partners, but all the relationships will help sustain this model. Once relationships are established and everyone involved believes in the success of the model, and the good they are contributing to for the students and community alike, it then becomes self-sustaining.

After the relationships are established, the model is built to sustain itself. This formation of relationships and self-sustaining capability is one of the major components of the Community Partnership Schools™ model. This unique model calls for a long-term commitment of not just the school district and the community, but of the university and nonprofit organization to continue with the mission and vision of the community school. It is understood that systemic change needed to impact an entire community will not happen overnight. That success entails the support from multiple stakeholders. It would not be advantageous for partnerships to be developed and then suddenly removed from the community. The community would not only suffer from the loss, it would also make it harder for other community partners to come in afterward and make connections. Additionally, the 12th standard specifically addresses the issue of sustainability, stating that the CPS cabinet maintains a minimum of a one-year-in-advance funding plan to ensure consistent programs throughout the school year ([ccie.ucf.edu, 2020](https://ccie.ucf.edu)).

The four partners commit to their long-term agreement via a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). These MOUs outline the specific commitment each partner is adhering to during the time of the partnership. These allow each partner to understand and agree to the service or resource and length of time they are committing to. ([See an example of the MOU used at one of the Community Partnership Schools™](#))



Recommendations

To encourage the growth of community schools, and in particular, the Community Partnership Schools™ model, we propose the following recommendations.

Federal Policy Stakeholders

Incentivize indicators of school and student success in state accountability plans that prioritize whole-child, whole-family, and whole-school development.

To comply with ESSA, states submit school accountability plans to the federal government. Four required indicators of student success are academic achievement, academic progress, English language proficiency, and high school graduation rates. The fifth indicator is up to the state and must be a measure of school quality or student success. These can be strategies such as kindergarten readiness, college readiness, and availability of advanced coursework. The Community Partnership Schools™ model in Florida includes reports on chronic absenteeism as their fifth indicator. This encourages school stakeholders to prioritize supporting the overall health and well-being of students and families in order to remove barriers to attending school (e.g., housing and safety needs, transportation issues, physical health concerns, mental and emotional health needs, etc.). Other indicators that help community schools prioritize how they can best serve their students include school climate data, student health and wellness indicators, and family and community feedback.

Sustain and increase regulations that prioritize family voice in school improvement plans.

Part of ESSA also includes ensuring that parents are involved in the plans for improving schools ([Every Student Succeeds Act, Title I, Part A, Sec.1005](#)). As the law states, once a school is labeled as a “struggling school,” the state and district must draft and implement plans to ensure that the school gets back on track. Parents are allowed and encouraged to be involved in these plans and in the progress of those plans. According to ESSA, “plans must use evidence-based teaching and approaches” ([Lee, 2020](#)). If a school notices that a specific subgroup of students is struggling, it must notify parents. Under ESSA, parents have a lot of power and responsibility. This is especially true of community schools. Community schools develop plans to serve schools based on the specific needs of their students and surrounding communities. All of the models discussed in this brief have included a strong parent voice. Specifically, Community Partnership Schools™ in Florida builds each school model around the needs identified by students, parents, and teachers. Parents sit on the leadership and governance board to represent the student and parent voice in the decision-making process.

Additionally, parents are involved in surveys and are invited to volunteer at schools throughout the year. The community school models highlighted in our case study place people, resources, and services in each building to help students and their families overcome the specific challenges that were previously identified. By uplifting and encouraging parent involvement, the collaborative leaders of Community Partnership Schools™ have been able to successfully meet the needs of their students. ESSA has already begun to ensure that parents are involved in planning and crafting improvement plans for their children’s schools.

We recommend taking one step further to ensure that parent voices continue to be upheld and valued under ESSA by incentivizing parent participation on all governing school boards, so that the federal government continues to give parents the right to be involved in their child's education. Parent involvement is vital to student success, and it's essential to each community schools model.

Sustain, expand, and develop federal funding streams that support the work of community schools.

The following programs in ESSA provide funding for community schools and related programs. Among those programs are the Promise Neighborhoods Program, Full-Service Community Schools, and the Investing in Innovation Fund:

- Found under [Title IV, Section 4624](#), the Promise Neighborhoods and Full-Service Community Schools Programs are aimed at increasing educational and developmental outcomes of students in disadvantaged communities by supporting organizations and infrastructure in the community ([U.S. Department of Education, 2017](#)). Both are designed to deliver a continuum of supports to students.
- Found under [Title IV, Part F](#), the Investing in Innovation Fund provides support to agencies and organizations that partner with schools to create innovative educational programs and practices ([U.S. Department of Education, 2018](#)).

We recommend that these programs are protected with [continued increases in appropriations](#) so that more community schools have access to such funds. The programs allow for schools to be flexible in how they support and serve students academically. ESSA encourages personalized learning and innovative ways to teach, which is exactly what community schools aim to do. Expanding and further funding those programs would make them more accessible for community schools to continue their very important and effective work.

Through the Education Stabilization Fund, the CARES Act has allowed for K-12 schools to obtain federal relief funds to address basic student needs ([CARES Act Summary, 2020](#)). Most of the funds can be used to purchase technology to support remote learning, support mental health, after-school and summer programs, and to assist students in making up lost learning time due to COVID-19. There are also flexible funds available for governors to use as they see fit. The support provided through the CARES Act can directly benefit community schools and the work that they are doing on the ground to support students during this time. Because community schools provide a variety of services by securing partnerships with a range of organizations and departments, students would directly benefit from extra funds available to child nutrition programs, telemedicine programs, emergency food assistance programs, certified community behavioral health clinics, child care and development block grants, child welfare services, and others. Community schools that already have these partnerships in place would directly impact students through a variety of channels as they target each barrier that their families are facing during this crisis.

Just as the federal government has passed the CARES Act to benefit students and communities in need, we recommend that legislation be passed so that struggling schools in the future have access to increased federal funding to assist with school improvement plans.

State Policy Stakeholders

Establish legislation specifically devoted to establishing community schools.

In 2019, the Florida Senate passed Senate Bill 7070, which established the Community School Grant Program. The program “funds and supports the planning and implementation of community school programs” ([The Florida Senate, 2019](#)). The bill highlights and lifts up the community schools model that was developed by the Center for Community Schools at the University of Central Florida, one of the founding partners of the Community Partnership Schools™ model. State legislators can also look to [legislative case studies](#) from other states such as New Mexico, New York, Maryland, and Minnesota that are leading the way in advancing the community school movement.

Increase funding for community schools, prioritizing local decision-making and flexibility of funds.

We recommend that states allow schools to have flexibility and control over how they use funds based on the needs of their communities. Community Partnership Schools™ in Florida serve as examples of how to differentiate and personalize services to best meet the needs of the communities in which they serve. As no two communities are the same, no two community school models are the same. Funding flexibility will allow schools to evaluate the needs of their community and bring in services that directly meet those needs. This funding flexibility will allow for schools to bring programs that are specific to student well-being, which will increase student health and academic performance, better preparing them for life after school.

Shift funds from Justice Departments to Departments of Education.

We recommend that the states increase their overall education budget and include community schools directly into their school budgets. Other states can serve as a model for prioritizing education to directly impact community schools. For example, in 2014, California’s Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act (Proposition 47) reduced penalties for some felonies, which resulted in a decrease in the state’s prison population. They redirected 25% of the savings to the CA Dept. of Education to reduce truancy and support students at risk of dropping out of school or who are victims of crime. These funds have been used to support the Learning Communities for School Success Program, which provided grant funding for several strategies to advance these goals, including community schools. We recommend other states pass similar legislation as a strategy both for reducing the school-to-prison pipeline and for increasing support for effective community schools. Reducing penalties for juvenile and adult offenders is not only a moral imperative but would also allow funds to be reallocated to prioritize more cost-effective preventative services over punitive services.

Pass legislation to establish statewide technical assistance networks.

As this movement continues to gain momentum and new community schools are established, it will be crucial to support the network of community school stakeholders in each state. Establishing statewide technical assistance support systems will create a network of stakeholders to learn from one another, improve their schools, and increase their impact. For example, in 2018 the New York State Education Department passed legislation to fund [three regional technical assistance centers](#) across the state. The goal of these centers is to build upon the existing strengths of schools, remove barriers to learning, and support whole-child development. This is accomplished through technical assistance, professional development, and via communities of practice that advance the community schools strategy. We recommend that community-based organizations are key partners in this work, given their relationships working to support the whole child, whole family, and whole community.

Local Policy Stakeholders

Include community schools in strategic planning.

Each school district is responsible for coming up with strategic plans to meet the needs of their students. We recommend that school districts include community schools in their strategic plans. For example, in 2017, Los Angeles Unified School District passed a resolution that embraced community schools by issuing a definition of community schools and elaborating on the pillars necessary for them to be successful ([Community Schools Playbook](#)). The Los Angeles Unified School District created a design process that included assessing local community needs, engaging with community partners, developing strategic plans, and establishing a point person to oversee the community schools process ([Community Schools Playbook](#)). As local school districts are already doing work to meet the needs of their students, each school district should be including community school strategies into their strategic plans and establishing an implementation team to work with individual schools. This team can assess community needs, create strategies for how to best implement all four pillars, and identify partnerships to prioritize and pursue.

Build and strengthen relationships across the education ecosystem.

We recommend that community school stakeholders, such as school districts, community-based organizations, higher education institutions, health care providers, juvenile justice departments, child welfare stakeholders, and others, establish and deepen partnerships by:

1. creating opportunities for networking and relationship-building;
2. sharing data;
3. and communicating frequently and transparently about how to most effectively support young people and the larger community.

An authentic ecosystem of support, built-in partnership with students and families, is what allows for the collective impact that is possible through community schools. Local legislators can enable these relationships by financially supporting and/or incentivizing partnerships between county departments and private sector stakeholders.

Create opportunities for local legislators to visit community schools.

Finally, we recommend that state elected officials visit community schools at least once per year. It is important for local representatives to visit the schools in which they are passing legislation to support. Visiting schools will give representatives the opportunity to speak with and hear directly from students, teachers, and organizations that are involved in each community school. Engaging in these conversations and visiting community schools will allow for representatives to recognize the importance of the legislation they pass and reinforce the urgency and need for support. These visits will also serve as an opportunity for community schools to demonstrate the effectiveness of the work that they are doing in each community, so that legislation can be protected, reformed, and expanded.

Funding for Community Schools: A Resource

Financing community schools can be complex. We recommend community school stakeholders consult [this brief](#), entitled *Financing Community Schools: A Framework for Growth and Sustainability*. This thorough report, developed by the Partnership for the Future of Learning, covers seven key guidelines and considerations for funding community schools. The recommendations are organized by the three possible stages of development for community schools in your region: exploring; emerging; or excelling.

