

## Community Schools Fact Sheet

### ***How is a community school different?***

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A community school is open to students, families and community members before, during and after school, all year-round. It has high standards and expectations for students, qualified teachers and challenging curriculum. Unlike a traditional public school, a community school focuses on the needs of the whole child – physical, emotional, social and academic – to create the conditions necessary for all children to learn. Community schools also strengthen families and communities so they are better able to support student success.

A community school coordinator, employed by a lead community-based organization or the school, ensures that partnerships are intentional, not ad hoc, and integrated into the life of the school. With support from the community school coordinator, families, students, principals, teachers, community residents and partner organizations decide together how to foster student learning. School and community act in concert to help young people succeed; schools do not work alone.

### ***In an ideal community school:***

- Before- and after-school programs build on classroom experiences and help students expand their horizons, contribute to their communities and have fun.
- Family support centers strengthen parent involvement, parent education and leadership development, and provide crisis assistance, child care and housing assistance;
- Medical, dental and mental health services are readily available
- Parents and community residents participate in adult education and job training programs.
- The school sees community as a resource for its curriculum, engages students in active learning and service, and helps them become problem solvers in their communities.
- The community uses the schools as a center for community problem solving.
- Volunteers support young people's academic, interpersonal and career success.

### ***What difference does a community school make?***

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These are highlights from different evaluation reports referenced in *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*.

### ***Improved academic achievement***

- The **California Healthy Start** model reported reading test scores went up 25 percent and math scores increased by 50 percent for students in the lowest quartile in participating schools.
- Reading test scores improved at rates exceeding the **Chicago** citywide average at all three **Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative (FSSI)** schools. One of the schools also reversed a stubborn decline in math scores.

- In 1999 and 2000, **Texas Alliance** school students improved their scores on the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills at more than double the state rate for math, reading, and writing.

### ***Improved attendance***

- Seventy-eight percent of students in schools supported by Communities In Schools in **32 states, including North Carolina, Texas and Pennsylvania**, improved attendance rates.
- In **Ohio**, the Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project (SACC) improved attendance rates by more than 50 percent.

### ***Improved commitment to learning***

- Teachers in the **Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program** reported that students improved in completing classwork and homework, following directions and obeying school rules.

### ***Increased family involvement***

- Children's Aid Society (CAS) of **New York** reports a 78 percent increase in family involvement at their elementary school and a 147 percent increase at their middle school.
- According to a **New York City Beacons** parents survey, more than 50 percent of responding parents reported attending meeting and activities in their children's schools.
- School principals credit the **Boston Excels** programming for dramatically improving home-school engagement.
- **California Healthy Start** found that parents volunteered for 4,143 hours, a 35 percent increase.

"Students with more highly involved parents were more likely to gain in both reading and math than children with less involved parents. This finding held across all income and education levels."  
 -Ann Shaver and Richard Walls (1998), *A New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of Schools Family, and Community Connections to Achievement*, Anne Henderson and Karen Mapp, Southwest Educational Development Laboratory Annual Synthesis 2002.

### ***Improved behavior and increased safety***

- Students participating in the preventative health, mental health, and recreation services offered through the **New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program (NJ SBYSP)** reported a decrease in destructive behaviors compared to their peers outside the program. Students also reported improved educational aspirations and credit accumulation.
- The **Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program** found that students who received mental health and related services showed an 85.3 percent decline in school discipline referrals.

- In the **New York City Beacons**, 80 percent of youth interviewed found that the Beacons centers helped avoid drug use; 74 percent avoided fighting; 75 percent did better in school; and, 72 percent became better leaders.
- Eighty-five percent of youth reported feeling safe at the **New York City Beacons** centers.

### ***Increased Community Engagement***

- Community residents surrounding the **New York City Beacons** centers were more likely to agree that people looked out for each other's children and did not isolate themselves in their communities.

### ***More stable families and communities***

- According to the Polk Bros. Full Service Schools Initiative (FSSI) in **Chicago**, mobility was lower in FSSI schools than comparison schools, eventually dropping below the region and school district rates.
- **California Healthy Start** reported families considered "in crisis" or "at risk" because of unmet basic needs, such as housing, clothing, food, transportation and employment, were cut in half.

"When children move a lot for various reasons, they can fall behind by as much as two-thirds of a grade by the time they are 12 years-old, and even the kids who stick it out in highly transient schools suffer, falling behind similar kids by as much as half a grade," said David Kerbow of the University of Chicago's Center for School Improvement.

### ***More parents employed and independent***

- **Boston Excels** found their parents have completed English for Speakers of Other Languages classes, obtained jobs or found better jobs, applied for and received U.S. citizenship, and become paid parent organizers or trainers.
- Parents, involved with schools using the School of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century community model found in **20 states, including Arkansas, Colorado and Missouri**, indicated that the availability of child care services enabled them to miss significantly less work.
- **Ohio** School Age Child Care Project respondents reported that adults were able to work additional hours or move from part-time to full-time employment because of available and affordable child care.