

## Community School

### What is a Community School?

A community school is a place and a set of partnerships between the school and community resources. The community school strategy integrates academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and civic engagement to improve student learning and to develop stronger families and healthier communities.<sup>1</sup>

Community schools contain a host of opportunities and supports built-in the school, which give students and parents all the tools they need to learn and grow. There are four program areas covered by the community school concept: family engagement extended learning opportunities, early childhood programs, and health services.

We believe that schools, together with their communities, must work to fulfill five conditions for learning that the Coalition has identified as necessary for every child to succeed, based on an analysis of recent research.<sup>2</sup>

These conditions are:

- *Condition #1:* The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.
- *Condition #2:* Students are motivated and engaged in learning -- both in school and in community settings, during and after school.
- *Condition #3:* The basic physical, mental, and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.
- *Condition #4:* There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff.
- *Condition #5:* Community engagement, together with school efforts, promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and connects students to a broader learning community.

### Community School Research

Research tells us that Community Schools through partnerships work to achieve these results:

- Children are ready to learn when they enter school and every day thereafter. All students learn and achieve to high standards.
- Young people are well prepared for adult roles in the workplace, as parents and as citizens.
- Families and neighborhoods are safe, supportive, and engaged.
- Parents and community members are involved with the school and their own life-long learning.

Unlike traditional public schools, community schools link school and community resources as an integral part of their design and operation. Consequently, community schools have three major advantages that schools acting alone do not.<sup>2</sup>

- Gather additional resources to reduce the demand on school staff for addressing all the challenges that students bring to school.
- Provide learning opportunities that develop academic and non-academic competencies.
- Build social capital -- the networks and relationships that support learning and create opportunities for young people while strengthening their communities.

### References

<sup>1</sup>[www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org)

<sup>2</sup> Blank, M. J., Melaville, A., & Shah, B. P. (2003). Making the difference: Research and practice in community schools.

Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools.

[http://www.communityschools.org/mtdhomepage\\_new.html#download](http://www.communityschools.org/mtdhomepage_new.html#download)