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AMERICAN Educator

A QUARTERLY JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH AND IDEAS



Surrounded by Support

**PARTNERSHIPS BETWEEN COMMUNITIES AND SCHOOLS
CONNECT STUDENTS WITH THE SERVICES THEY NEED**

16

**Freeing Teachers to Teach and
Enabling Students to Learn**

22

**Community Schools'
Enduring Appeal**

30

**Coordinating Academic,
Health, and Social Services**



This special issue brings together researchers, historians, educators, and service providers to describe the need for, and effective development of, school-community partnerships. One key to success? Having a community partner responsible for all the nonacademic services; well-developed partnerships wrap services around the school, so teachers are free to teach and students are ready to learn.

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Where Art and History Meet

WHETHER ART IMITATES LIFE or life imitates art, as the saying goes, what better way to teach students history, culture, and current events, than by having them study photographs, sculptures, and paintings—without leaving the classroom? In a few keyboard clicks, teachers can access an easy-to-navigate Web site that includes works of art in the J. Paul Getty Museum's collection. The Los Angeles-based institution has paired these objects with free lesson plans designed for elementary, middle, and high school students. There are more than 150 lesson plans grouped into 27 topics, including "Who's Afraid of Contemporary Art?"; "Gods, Heroes and Monsters: Mythology in European Art"; "Artful Women"; "Neoclassicism and the Enlightenment"; and "Looking at Illuminated Manuscripts." Students are asked to complete a variety of tasks, such as conducting research, writing papers, and making art of their own.

For example, the newest set of lesson plans, titled "Historical Witness, Social Messaging," addresses a wide range of important historical ideas and events while also emphasizing how works of art—through symbolism, color, satire, etc.—both record and influence history. Each lesson provides the relevant historical

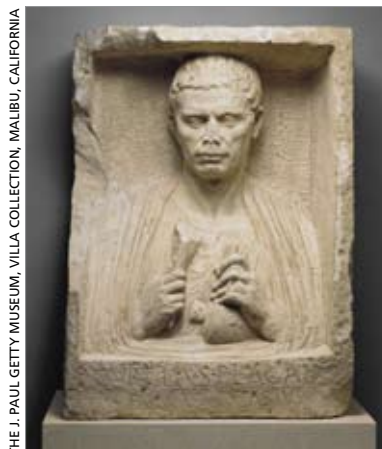


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ETIENNE BRÉTON, THE J. PAUL GETTY MUSEUM, LOS ANGELES

context, with background information on each piece of art. For example, a lesson that can be adapted for kindergarten through fifth grade introduces students to the great disparities between working-class and wealthy women of the 19th century by comparing *The Milliners* by Edgar Germain



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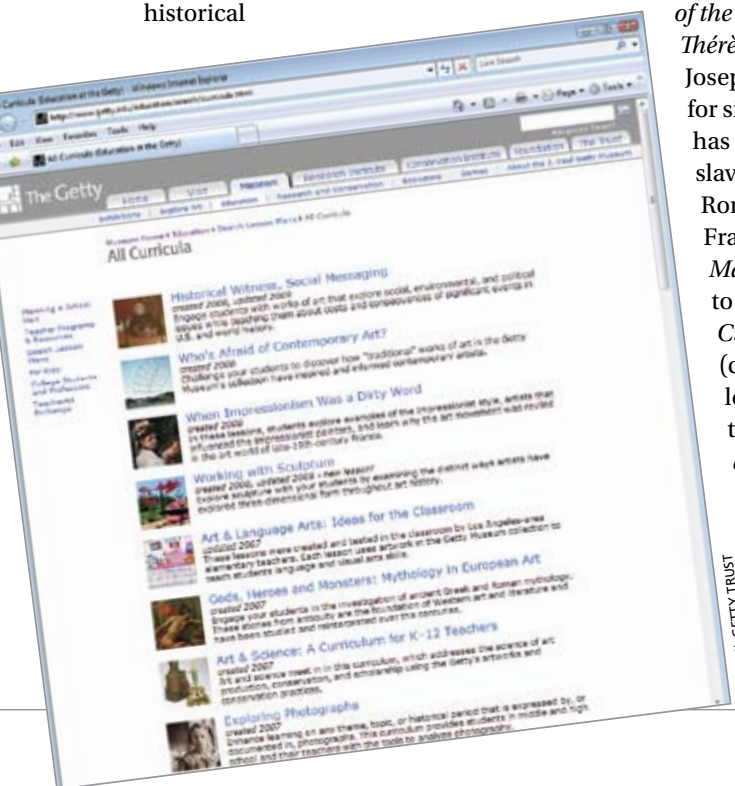
Hilaire Degas (top left) to *Portrait of the Marquise de Miramon, née Thérèse Feuillant* by Jacques Joseph Tissot (top right). A lesson for sixth through eighth grades has students write a paper on slavery in America and the Roman Empire, and compare Francis Harwood's *Bust of a Man* (center right), from 1758, to *Grave Relief of Publius Curtilius Agatus, Silversmith* (center left), from AD 1–25. A lesson for ninth through twelfth grades uses *Man with a Hoe* (right) by Jean-François Millet and *Farm Workers, South of Tracy, California* (bottom right) by Dorothea Lange to introduce students to the history of labor unions.



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Supporting Teaching and Learning



At the heart of any great school is, of course, great teaching. But great teaching doesn't simply spring forth—it isn't just a matter of getting the right person into the right classroom.

Great teaching is cultivated by carefully coordinated education systems that include supportive administrators, knowledgeable and accessible peers, relevant and ongoing professional development, a rigorous curriculum, coherent and focused textbooks, aligned assessments, and so forth. *American Educator* addresses these core educational issues regularly. They are critical for school improvement, but they are not always sufficient for increasing student learning.

Some students come to school hungry or with a toothache or worried about where they will sleep that night. Solving such problems may not be the school's responsibility, but such problems hinder learning all the same.

So while great schools tend to all the educational issues just mentioned, they also ask important questions: What else do our children need? And who can meet those needs?

In this special issue of *American Educator*, researchers, historians, educators, and service providers explore ways to address the nonschool factors that prevent students from achieving their potential. The school plays a key role, but school staff members neither run nor deliver nonacademic services. The school provides community-based partners access to both students and facilities. These partners, whether they are colleges or food banks, health clinics or rec centers, share in the goal of having all students enter class ready to learn. While some services are available during the school day (especially in an emergency), most are provided before and after school, on weekends, and

over the summer, so that students are rarely, if ever, pulled out of class.

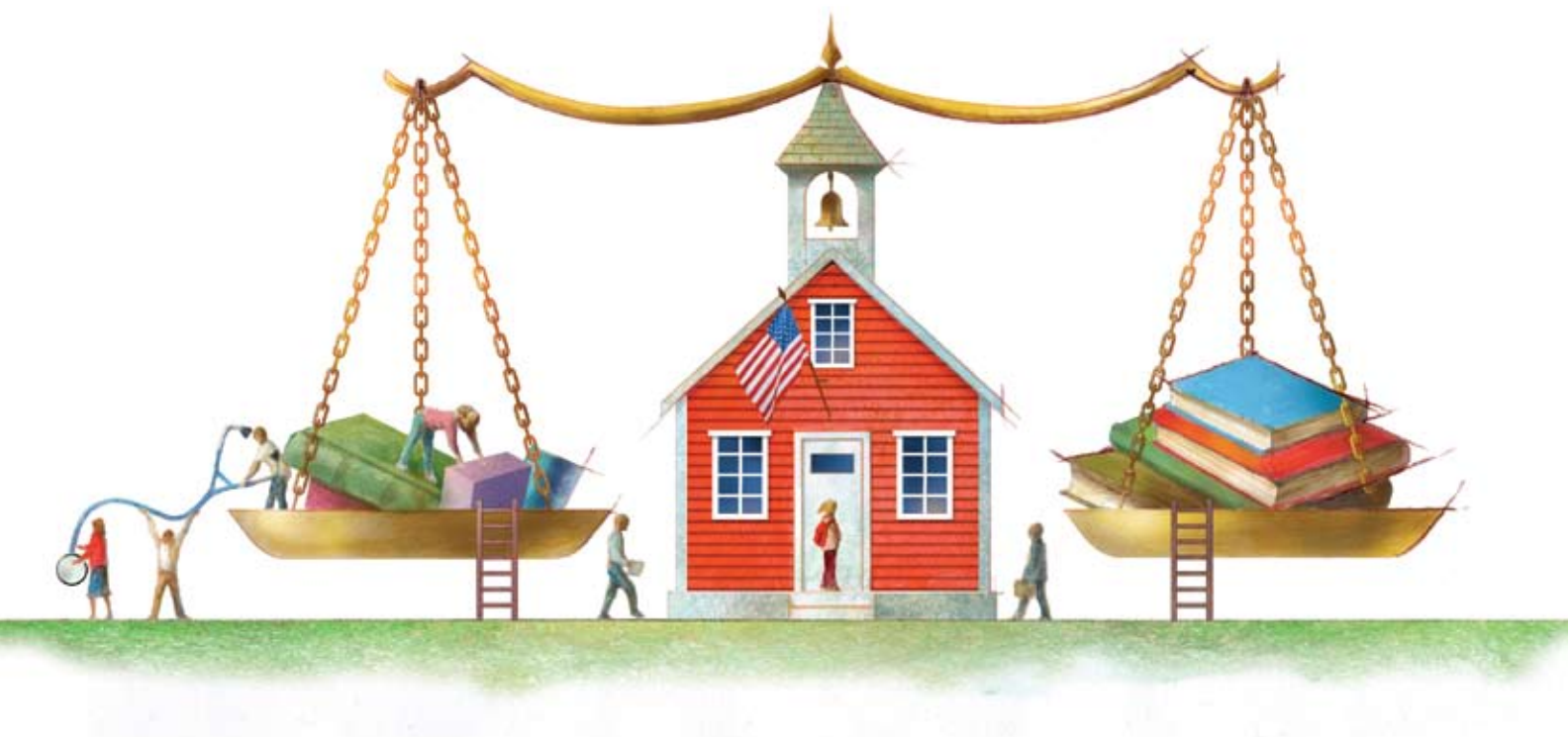
This issue of *American Educator* begins with research showing the dramatic differences in home life and health

between our poor and middle-class children. But we don't dwell on these discrepancies for long; they are well known. The rest of our summer issue is devoted to providing examples of successful school-community partnerships and to highlighting lessons learned. In particular, experience and research have shown that it's important for an external organization to take the lead in assessing needs, securing funding, and developing partnerships. Having a point person who coordinates the services and knows the students' schedules is also crucial. As one social worker told us, "You don't want a partner to arrive when the students are on a field trip."

Finding the funds for this work may seem daunting, so it's important to note that much of what is described here does not consist of new services. A great deal can be accomplished just by coming up with new ways of delivering existing services. Many communities already have health clinics, counseling services, food banks, shelters, adult literacy classes, GED programs, etc. But all too often, these services are not centrally located, so low-income families have to spend the whole day on buses crisscrossing the city just to meet a few of their needs. Clearly, bringing these services to the school makes more sense. The children are there, the family is nearby, and the facility is available once school lets out. By wrapping services around the school, school-community partnerships make better use of the school buildings, make community services more accessible, and make students more likely to reach their potential. —EDITORS

Equalizing Opportunity

Dramatic Differences in Children's Home Life and Health Mean That Schools Can't Do It Alone



BY RICHARD ROTHSTEIN

Public discourse about education pays great attention to the stubborn persistence of an achievement gap between poor and minority students and their wealthier white peers—and public schools come under great criticism for their apparent inability to close that gap. Some of this criticism may be justified. But there is more to the story than school reform. No society can realistically expect schools alone to abolish inequality. If students come to school in unequal circumstances, they will largely, though not entirely, leave

school with unequal skills and abilities, in both cognitive and noncognitive domains. This is not a reason for educators to throw up their hands. Rather, in addition to efforts to improve school practices, educators, along with community partners, should exercise their own rights and responsibilities as citizens to participate in redressing the inequalities with which children come to school.

Income is more unequal and lower-class* families have less access to medical care in the United States than in any other industrial nation. The gap in average achievement probably can-

Richard Rothstein is a research associate at the Economic Policy Institute, former national education columnist with the New York Times, and author of several books, most recently Grading Education: Getting Accountability Right, which he coauthored with Rebecca Jacobsen and Tamara Wilder. This article is adapted with permission from Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap, published in 2004 by the Economic Policy Institute and Teachers College Press.

*Throughout this article, the term “lower class” is used to describe the families of children whose achievement will, on average, be predictably lower than the achievement of middle-class children. American sociologists once were comfortable with this term, but it has fallen out of fashion. Instead, we tend to use euphemisms like “disadvantaged” students, “at-risk” students, “inner-city” students, or students of “low socioeconomic status.” None of these terms, however, captures the central characteristic of lower-class families: a collection of occupational, psychological, personality, health, and economic traits that interact, predicting performance (not only in schools but in other institutions) that, on average, differs from the performance of families from higher social classes.

not be narrowed substantially as long as the U.S. maintains such vast differences in socioeconomic conditions. Although some lower-class children can overcome these handicaps, and although more effective schools can help narrow the gap a little, it is fanciful to think that, on average, children from such different social classes can emerge at age 18 with comparable academic abilities.

Nonetheless, many of the curricular and school organizational reforms being pursued today have merit and should be intensified. Repairing and upgrading the scandalously decrepit school facilities that serve some lower-class children, raising salaries to permit the recruitment of more qualified teachers for lower-class children, reducing class sizes for lower-class children (particularly in the early grades), insisting on higher academic standards, holding schools accountable for fairly measured performance, creating a well-focused and disciplined school cli-

the time children are 3 years old. This difference is exacerbated during the years that children spend in school, but the growth in the gap occurs mostly in the afterschool hours and during the summertime, when children are not in classrooms.¹ So children's out-of-school time offers an enormous—but needlessly neglected—opportunity to narrow the gap.

To better understand just how great the challenge is, this article reviews some of the key differences between lower- and middle-class families in childrearing and children's health. For a more detailed look at these issues, see *Class and Schools: Using Social, Economic, and Educational Reform to Close the Black-White Achievement Gap*, the book from which most of this article is drawn. Schools will not be able to address all of these differences on their own. But we, as a nation, can—and if we are serious about giving all children equal opportunities to succeed, we must.

Most of the social class difference in average academic potential exists by the time children are 3 years old.



mate, doing more to encourage lower-class children to intensify their own ambitions—all of these policies, and others, can play a role in narrowing the achievement gap.

Such reforms are extensively covered in public discussions of education, so it is not necessary for me to review them here. My focus is the great importance of reforming social and economic institutions if we truly want children to emerge from school with equal potential.

Readers should not misinterpret this emphasis as implying that better schools are not important, or that school improvement will not contribute to narrowing the achievement gap. School reform, however, is not enough. The social and economic conditions that lower-class children face must also be addressed. For example, the growing unaffordability of adequate housing for low-income families has a demonstrable effect on average achievement. Children whose families have difficulty finding stable housing are more likely to be mobile, and student mobility is an important cause of low student achievement. It is hard to imagine how teachers, no matter how well trained, could be as effective with children who move in and out of their classrooms as they are with children whose attendance is regular. In schools with high mobility, the nonmobile students are affected too, as classroom dynamics are disrupted and teachers must review material.

And yet, evidence indicates that schools, on average, are doing a great deal to combat the achievement gap. Most of the social class difference in average academic potential exists by

Since the publication of *Class and Schools*, a growing number of national leaders, from across the political spectrum and with varied expertise, have advocated for combining school improvement with improvements in the social and economic conditions that prepare children to succeed in school. These leaders have sponsored a platform, “A Broader, Bolder Approach to Education,” to which all Americans are invited to add their names at www.bolderapproach.org. Yet despite this growing chorus proclaiming that schools alone cannot be expected to significantly narrow the achievement gap, opposition to the “Broader, Bolder Approach” persists. Therefore, it is necessary to reiterate the research establishing the importance of narrowing the gap in readiness to learn, if we are to succeed in narrowing the gap in learning.

Social Class Differences in Childrearing

To take full advantage of school, children should arrive every day ready to learn. But children differ in how ready they are, and these differences are strongly influenced by their social class backgrounds. Parents of different social classes, on average, tend to raise children somewhat differently. For example, more educated parents read to their young children more consistently and encourage their children to read more to themselves when they are older.²

How parents read to children is as important as whether they do; more educated parents read aloud differently. When low-income parents read aloud, they are more likely to tell children

to pay attention without interruptions or to sound out words or name letters. When they ask children about a story, questions are more likely to be factual, asking for names of objects or memories of events.³ Parents who are more literate are more likely to ask questions that are creative, interpretive, or connective. They ask questions like, “What do you think will happen next?” and “Why do you think this happened?” and “Does that remind you of what we did yesterday?”⁴ Middle-class parents are more likely to read aloud to have fun, to start conversations, and to provide an entrée to the world outside. Their children learn that reading is enjoyable and are more motivated to read in school.⁵

Stark social class differences arise not only in how parents

are more likely to engage in conversation with each other as if their infants, and even their older children, were not present. These parents make less of a deliberate effort to name objects and develop children’s vocabularies.

Twenty years ago, two researchers from the University of Kansas visited the homes of families from different social classes to monitor conversations between parents and toddlers. The researchers found that, on average, professional parents spoke over 2,000 words per hour to their children, working-class parents spoke about 1,300, and parents on welfare spoke about 600. So by age 3, children of professionals had vocabularies that were nearly 50 percent greater than those of working-class children and twice as large as those of welfare children. Indeed, by 3 years

Middle-class parents are more likely to read aloud to have fun, to start conversations, and to provide an entrée to the world outside.

read but in how they converse. Explaining events in the broader world to children in dinner talk, for example, may have as much of an influence on test scores as early reading itself.⁶ Through such conversations, children develop broader vocabularies and become familiar with contexts for reading in school.⁷ Educated parents are more likely to engage in such talk and to begin it with infants and toddlers, conducting pretend conversations long before infants can understand the language. Typically, middle-class parents “ask” infants about their needs, then provide answers for the children (“Are you ready for a nap, now? Yes, you are, aren’t you?”). Instructions are more likely to be given indirectly, such as, “You don’t want to make so much noise, do you?”⁸ This kind of instruction is really more an invitation for a child to work through the reasoning behind a command and to internalize it. Soon after middle-class children become verbal, parents typically draw them into adult conversations so children can practice expressing their own opinions.

Working-class parents typically maintain firmer boundaries between the adult and child worlds, and are less likely to conduct conversations with preverbal children. Except when it is necessary to give a warning or issue other instructions, these parents less often address language directly to infants or toddlers. Unlike middle-class parents, working-class parents are less likely to simplify their language (using “baby talk”) to show preverbal children how to converse before the children are naturally ready to do so. If children need instruction, the orders are more likely to be direct, undisguised in question form.⁹ Working-class adults

old, the children of professionals had larger vocabularies than the vocabularies used by adults from welfare families in speaking to their children. Cumulatively, the Kansas researchers estimated that by the time children were 4 years old, ready to enter preschool, a typical child in a professional family would have accumulated experience with 45 million words, compared with only 13 million for a typical child in a welfare family.¹⁰

Deficits like these cannot be made up by schools alone, no matter how high the teachers’ expectations. For all children to achieve the same goals, those from the lower class would have to enter school with verbal fluency similar to that of middle-class children.

Social Class Differences in Children’s Health

Childrearing practices play a role in school performance, but vast differences in children’s health, and health care, are also important. Overall, lower-income children are in poorer health, suffering from undiagnosed vision problems, lack of dental care, poor nutrition, and more.

Vision

Lower-class children’s higher incidence of vision problems has the most obvious impact on their relative lack of school success. Children with vision problems have difficulty reading and seeing what teachers write on the board. Trying to read, their eyes may wander or have difficulty tracking print or focusing. Tests of vision show that these problems are inversely proportional to family income; in the United States, poor children have severe



vision impairment at twice the normal rate.¹¹ Juvenile delinquents especially have extraordinarily high rates of such problems; difficulties in seeing and focusing may contribute to their lack of mainstream success.¹² Foster children, who experience even more stress than most disadvantaged children, also have unusually high vision failure rates.¹³

Fifty percent or more of minority and low-income children have vision problems that interfere with their academic work.¹⁴ A few require glasses, but more need eye-exercise therapy to correct focusing, converging, and tracking problems. In one experiment where therapy or lenses were provided to randomly selected fourth-graders from low-income families, children who received optometric services gained in reading achievement

Low-income children with asthma are about 80 percent more likely than middle-class children with asthma to miss more than seven days of school a year from the disease.

beyond the normal growth for their age, while children in the control group, who did not get these services, fell further behind.¹⁵

Children who are believed to have learning disabilities are also more likely to have vision impairment. Disproportionate assignment of low-income black children to special education may reflect, in part, a failure to correct their vision. Often, when children seem to have puzzling difficulties learning to read, the explanation is no more complex than that they cannot see. (Sometimes, vision difficulties remain undiagnosed in middle-class children as well, but more often, the failure to diagnose is a problem of the poor.)

Lower-class children are more likely to suffer from vision problems because of their less adequate prenatal development; typically, middle-class pregnant mothers have better medical care and nutrition.¹⁶ Visual deficits also arise because poor children are more likely to watch too much television, an activity that does not train the eye to develop hand-eye coordination and depth perception.¹⁷ Middle-class children are also more likely to have manipulative toys that develop visual skills.¹⁸

Hearing

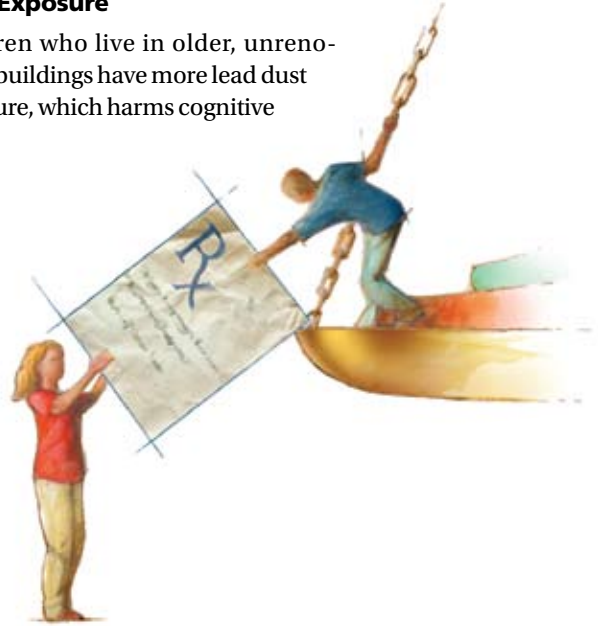
Lower-class children also have more hearing problems.¹⁹ These may result from more ear infections that occur in children whose overall health is less robust. If poor children simply had as much medical treatment for ear infections as middle-class children, they could pay better attention and the achievement gap would narrow a bit.²⁰

Oral Health

Children without dental care are more likely to have toothaches; untreated cavities are nearly three times as prevalent among poor children as among middle-class children.²¹ Although not every dental cavity leads to a toothache, some do. Children with toothaches, even minor ones, pay less attention in class and are more distracted during tests, on average, than children with healthy teeth.

Lead Exposure

Children who live in older, unrenovated buildings have more lead dust exposure, which harms cognitive



functioning and behavior.²² High lead levels also contribute to hearing loss.²³ Low-income children have dangerously high blood lead levels at five times the rate of middle-class children.²⁴ Although lead-based paint was banned from residential construction in 1978, low-income children more likely live in buildings constructed prior to that date and in buildings that are not repainted often enough to prevent old layers from peeling off. Urban children are also more likely to attend older schools, built when water pipes contained lead.²⁵

Asthma

Lower-class children, particularly those who live in densely populated city neighborhoods, are also more likely to develop asthma.²⁶ A survey in New York City found that one of every four children in Harlem suffers from asthma, a rate six times as great as that for all children.²⁷ A Chicago survey found a nearly identical rate for black children and a rate of one in three for Puerto Ricans.²⁸ The disease is provoked in part from breathing fumes from low-grade home heating oil and from diesel trucks and buses (school buses that idle in front of schools are a particularly serious problem), as well as from excessive dust and allergic reactions to mold, cockroaches, and secondhand smoke.²⁹

Asthma keeps children up at night; if they do make it to school the next day, they are likely to be drowsy and less attentive. Middle-class children typically get treatment for asthma symptoms, while low-income children get it less often. Asthma has become the biggest cause of chronic school absence.³⁰ Low-

(Continued on page 45)

These Kids Are Alright



BY JENNIFER DUBIN

Robert Villarreal, 12, lives in Corpus Christi, Texas. His favorite subject is science and he loves PlayStation 2. When he grows up he wants to be a policeman, be a scientist, or work with computers. As with many kids, the dream changes depending on his mood. Pamela Perez, 13, lives in the Washington Heights neighborhood of New York City. She likes to read vampire novels and is already thinking about college and a career in forensic pathology.

Though they've never met, Robert and Pamela share a common bond. They both attend community schools—and that means they have supports that students in typical schools don't have. If they can't see the blackboard, they receive eye exams and glasses. If their families can't afford food for the week, they receive nonperishable goods to see them through.

In fact, both these students, and their classmates, have a skilled coordinator who makes sure they get what they need to focus on succeeding in school. In Robert's case, that coordinator is Brenda Salinas. When he struggles with homework, she tutors him. Afterward, she gives him a ride home from school. In Pamela's case, that coordinator is Marinieves Alba. She runs the after-school activities that Pamela enjoys: flag football, soccer, and Youth Council. The strength of community schools lies in the work that these women do.

Jennifer Dubin is the assistant editor of American Educator. Previously, she was a journalist with the Chronicle of Higher Education.

A Case Manager in Corpus Christi

For seven years, Brenda Salinas has worked at, but not for, George Evans Elementary School in Corpus Christi. She works for Communities In Schools. A national nonprofit, Communities In Schools tries to eliminate the myriad barriers that contribute to students dropping out of school. To that end, it coordinates health and social services as well as academic supports for more than 3,200 schools in 27 states and Washington, D.C. The group works with schools at the request of a school's principal. In Corpus Christi, Communities In Schools partners with 16 schools.

The majority of students who attend these partner schools are from low-income families. This includes Evans Elementary, where Robert Villarreal goes to school. Within a mile of his fifth-grade classroom are the mix of public housing units, five homeless shelters, and rundown one- and two-bedroom houses that Robert and his peers call home. The neighborhood is in the neglected north side of town. Businesses that once thrived here have moved to the more affluent south side, leaving abandoned buildings and vacant lots in their wake. On the north side, many residents are unemployed or earn the minimum wage. In 2008, 97 percent of the 347 students at Evans were classified as "economically disadvantaged."

When Robert's mother, San Juana Villarreal, enrolled him in



Left, Robert Villarreal in Corpus Christi and Pamela Perez in New York City both benefit from attending community schools. Above, Brenda Salinas, case manager at Evans Elementary, pulls a pair of shoes from the shelves of “goodies” she has crammed in her office. Right, Salinas tutors Robert in mathematics.



prekindergarten eight years ago, she learned that Evans had a case manager, Brenda Salinas from Communities In Schools. Inside her windowless office, Salinas has crammed an enormous, yet never sufficient, amount of what she calls “goodies”: not just papers, pens, and pencils, but also book bags, toothpaste, pretzels, T-shirts, sweatshirts, socks, and underwear. Students who need school supplies or a change of clothes know to come to her.

Like the teachers and administrators, Salinas works at Evans full time. As the case manager, she solicits the donations that fill her office, and she coordinates medical and social services—counseling, dental appointments, and eyeglass fittings—that students may not have access to outside of school. In most cases, she refers them to the free clinic down the street. Sometimes she brings in a speaker to discuss a specific health issue. This spring, she invited a dental hygienist to talk to students about the importance of brushing their teeth. At the end of the visit, students received toothbrushes, toothpaste, and tongue cleaners. A few years ago, Robert benefited from the vision referral. Salinas gave him a voucher for a free eye exam and a pair of glasses when his parents couldn’t afford them. They have since paid for his most recent pair on their own.

If students need more than eyeglasses or a one-time donation of food or clothes, parents can sign a consent form that allows the case manager to coordinate services for them. Robert’s mother signed this form after her son’s first-grade teacher recommended that he work with Salinas. Robert recently had been diagnosed with attention deficit disorder (ADD); he had to repeat first grade. His teacher could see that Robert would need extra support.

Once Salinas had the referral, she created a file containing Robert’s report cards, checklists detailing specific goals, and information about progress he has made. The file also includes information on his parents’ financial situation, so she can help determine what government services they should receive. Each year, she works with roughly 60 kids, meeting with them at least three times a month. For some students like Robert, she also tutors them three times a week.

Salinas coordinates with the parent liaison—a paraprofessional employed by the school—to schedule workshops for parents. Some of the topics have included juvenile diabetes, the importance of reading to your child, and how to enroll in health insurance programs like Medicaid. When parents express interest in getting their GED, Salinas offers to tutor them.

Brenda Salinas walks through the neighborhood surrounding Evans on the way to a home visit. Brenda is often in the community, checking with and offering support to parents whose children have been absent, securing parental consent for health matters like immunizations, and trying to build relationships.



At least once a day, Salinas gets behind the wheel of her silver Pontiac Vibe to make home visits. If a student has been absent for several days and the parents have not called the school, Salinas goes directly to the home to find out why. She also makes home visits if a student's immunization shots are not up to date and the school has been unable to get parental consent for a new set. One other person, whether it's the principal or school nurse, always accompanies her. For safety reasons, she never goes alone.

Salinas regularly drives to the local Communities In Schools office less than three miles from Evans, where staff members and volunteers manage a food pantry, write grants, plan summer camp, and keep track of outcomes, such as the number of students who have stayed in school. Veronica Trevino, the executive director of Communities In Schools in Corpus Christi, says the philosophy behind this support system is simple: "If students are hungry, they're not going to learn."

A Community School Director in New York City

For nearly two years, Marinieves Alba has worked at, but not for, the Mirabal Sisters Campus, which houses three public middle

schools in New York City's Washington Heights neighborhood. She works for the Children's Aid Society. A nonprofit that has long served New York City's low-income children, Children's Aid has partnered with 21 schools in Manhattan, the Bronx, and Staten Island to form community schools. The organization also works with schools nationally and internationally to help them adopt the community school model. In New York, the schools all share a similar setup. A team of Children's Aid employees works in an office in the school building to provide afterschool programs for students and evening classes for parents. Children's Aid also employs a dentist, a nurse practitioner, and social workers who work in the school full or part time. Although the programs at each school vary, depending on the students' needs, one position remains the same: a full-time community school director.

At the Mirabal Sisters Campus, the community school director is Alba. She works with all three schools, including the Maria Teresa Mirabal School (M.S. 319), where Pamela Perez is a student. Each morning, Pamela walks a few blocks from her family's two-bedroom apartment to this school. Nearby storefronts reflect the largely Dominican community that has settled here: Ernesto's Hardware Store, Tu Sabor Latino Restaurant, Liberato Food Market, to name a few.

Many parents speak Spanish at home. Many work as taxi drivers, home health aids, hairdressers, and small-business owners. One parent runs a hot dog stand up the block that students flock to after school. Often, parents work more than one shift. Some hold more than one job. The numbers of English language learners and students enrolled in the school's free or reduced-price lunch program reveal the community's linguistic and economic





Above, Marinieves Alba, the community school director at the Mirabal Sisters Campus, is constantly in motion as she coordinates the work of roughly 30 full- and part-time employees of the Children's Aid Society. Right, Pamela Perez attends a meeting of the Youth Council, which she is president of this year.

challenges. The most recent data are from 2007–08: of the 472 students enrolled at the school that year, 29 percent were English language learners and 98 percent received free or reduced-price meals.

Children's Aid seeks to alleviate the socioeconomic problems facing families by providing comprehensive services in the school. Alba and her staff of roughly 30 full- and part-time employees run the afterschool program, summer camp, parent involvement program, adult learning institute, school-based health and mental health services center, teen pregnancy prevention program, and performing arts program. They also oversee an emergency grant program for needy families. If parents can't pay for the school's \$90 uniforms, Children's Aid will pay for them with funds raised by the *New York Times*. If a family can't afford food, Children's Aid will provide vouchers to a local grocery store. In extreme cases, Children's Aid will help with housing costs, if families have been evicted from their homes.

At the beginning of each school year, Alba and her staff meet with M.S. 319's administrators and teachers to make them aware of the services. They also provide them with applications for the afterschool program and medical consent forms to give to students. Pamela has received an application each school year. In the fall, when she began eighth grade, she signed up for Youth Council—a student advocacy group—and soccer, two of 30 activities that Children's Aid coordinates as part of its afterschool program.

For some of these programs, Children's Aid has partnered with other nonprofits that send representatives into the school. For instance, staff members from Recycle-A-Bicycle teach students bike repair skills. Professionals from the Alvin Ailey American Dance Theater teach students dance. During the week, afterschool programs run from 3 p.m. to 6 p.m. On Saturdays at the school, some of these programs run from 8 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Children's Aid holds classes for parents, too. In the evenings,

the school is open until 10 p.m. so parents can attend GED and English classes, as well as classes in culinary arts, cake decoration, or curtain design. Anywhere from 15 to 30 parents enroll in the classes. They must pay a \$50 registration fee for a 12-week course. Some parents use the skills they learn to start home businesses. One parent who took the cake baking and decorating class several years ago has opened a bakery four blocks from the school.

Alba and her staff coordinate services in an office down the hall from the school's entrance. A reception desk and small couch greet visitors. Pamphlets with titles like "How to Enroll in Medicaid" and "How to Apply for a Green Card" are stacked on a shelf just past the door.

Around the corner is the school-based health center where Pamela, if she doesn't feel well, can visit the nurse practitioner. A health educator also works here two or three days a week to answer students' questions about sexual health. If students want to share other problems, they can see one of four social workers in the mental health office a few feet away from the health center.

The services don't end there. Across the street at P.S. 8, another community school that partners with Children's Aid, a full-time dentist and hygienist staff a dental clinic. The Children's Aid office schedules students' appointments, and on the day of their appointment, an escort walks them to and from the dental clinic. This way, parents don't have to miss work and students spend less time out of class.

While students and parents appreciate these services, teachers do, too. "Just having those things here makes a difference in their lives, and it makes a difference for us in the classroom," says Tiffany Braby, an English as a second language and social studies teacher. "It makes a difference in attendance because the kids are here, in school."

"Robert Has Come a Long Way"

In Corpus Christi, Robert Villarreal likes that he lives across the street from his school. "You can wake up at 7:45 a.m. and not be late," he says with a smile. A skinny boy with thick, black hair and the beginnings of a faint mustache, Robert is soft-spoken and

Right, Brenda Salinas walks with her arm around Robert Villarreal, a fifth-grader she has worked with since he had to repeat first grade. Below, Salinas meets with Robert's mother, San Juana Villarreal, to discuss her son's progress.



shy. His teachers describe him as sweet. Three days a week Salinas tutors Robert and his friend, Eric, another fifth-grader, from 3 p.m. to 4 p.m.

One afternoon in March, Salinas helps them with word problems for math class. For one problem, Robert forgets to write down the steps he takes as he tries to calculate the answer. "You can do it in your head, which is awesome," Salinas tells him, as they sit at a small table in her office. "Ms. Guizar, she wants you to show your work." A few minutes later, Salinas reminds them not to rush through the problems. "Remember guys, you've got to read that question not once, not twice, but three times."

Robert needs such reminders. With his ADD, he loses focus easily and is sometimes rambunctious in class. At the beginning of this school year, he got in trouble for silly stuff. "He would go into the bathroom and throw toilet paper wads at the ceiling," says Anna Guizar, Robert's math teacher. But after she talked to Robert's mother, the bathroom antics stopped.

The academic struggles continue, especially since Robert also has dyslexia. His report cards this year show mostly 70s, and a few 60s and 80s. Lately, he's been forgetting to turn in his homework, which has led to some lower grades. Still, Salinas is undeterred. She has redoubled her efforts to make sure Robert hands in homework. Salinas now escorts him to his teacher's box after school so she can see that he does turn it in. "Robert has come a long way," she says. With her help, he has not had to repeat another grade. However, state standardized tests remain challenging. In third and fifth grades, passing is crucial for moving on to the next grade. Robert has passed these tests, but it has not been easy. This spring, he had to retake one of the state tests.

Just as important as the academic improvement is the bond that Salinas and Robert share. He, like many of his peers, visits her throughout the day. An hour before his tutoring session, one afternoon in March, he comes to her office. He's about to take a test, and Salinas tells him to read each question carefully.



"When you finish, I need you to go back to number one and just read it again," she says. To Robert, it must sound like the hundredth reminder. From the way he smiles and puts his arm around her, it's clear he doesn't mind.

Salinas relates well to her students and their parents. She herself grew up poor. Her grandmother raised her in Kingsville, Texas, after her mother died when Salinas was 8 years old. She worked her way through college and was a special education teacher before taking this job. She's also a single mom.

Over the years, she's gotten to know many families—the Villarreals especially, because they are engaged in Robert's and his younger brother's education. Their father, also named Robert, attended the school's "Donuts with Dads" breakfast held one morning in March. Their mother, San Juana, volunteers at the school.

The parents work hard to make ends meet. Robert Villarreal is a chrome plater for crank shafts. San Juana is a cashier at Burger King. Both attended Evans Elementary as children. While her husband graduated from high school, San Juana dropped out senior year. At the time, she took a job at Long John Silver's to help support her family. She regrets her decision and wants her children to graduate from high school. She also wants them to go to college, something that she and her husband never did. "We want them to have a better life than what we have now," she says.

While her own parents were not involved in her education, San Juana has made it a point to engage in her sons'. As soon as they walk in the front door, "they know homework is the first thing they have to do," she says. So Robert can focus on his schoolwork, she limits his time on PlayStation 2 to weekends.

She is thankful for Salinas not just for helping with Robert's academics, but for helping with her personal life. Salinas has encouraged San Juana to get her driver's license—she recently started learning how to drive—and to get her GED, which she plans to do. When Robert's grandfather died after a lengthy illness, Salinas suggested his parents tell Robert over the weekend



Left, Brenda Salinas meets with school nurse Linda Narvaez and principal Arnoldo Barrera Jr. to discuss students on her caseload. Below, Narvaez takes a student's temperature. Bottom, Veronica Trevino, the executive director of Communities In Schools in Corpus Christi, keeps an office food pantry so case managers like Salinas can ensure that students do not go hungry over the weekend.



instead of during the week, when he had to take a test for school. Salinas thought the news would upset him and prevent him from focusing, and that the weekend would give them more time to explain the loss. The Villarreals followed her advice.

Not all parents do. One morning in March, Salinas and the school nurse make a home visit to a mother who for three weeks had refused to send her child to school. Salinas parks her car in front of the family's dilapidated apartment building. Cigarette butts litter the lawn and the window frames hold no glass. Salinas knocks on the front door, on which someone has scrawled "#2." The boy's mother opens the door and steps outside. She doesn't seem surprised to see the two women, just indifferent. "Where's Armando?" Salinas asks. "He's in bed," his mother says. "He's running a fever."

Salinas and the nurse remind her to send doctor's notes to the school to explain his absences. Otherwise, if he misses too many days, he may not be promoted to first grade. The mother shrugs and says she'll send them in soon. "OK," Salinas says good-naturedly. "Let us know what we can do to help out." The two women walk back to Salinas's car. Although they clearly are frustrated, they made an obvious effort to be nice. "We try to be as friendly as possible," Salinas explains, "because we are not the enemy." If Armando continues to miss school, Salinas and the nurse will visit again soon. They also will stay in touch with Child Protective Services, which the women have already notified about parental problems in the family.

Pamela Thrives in the Afterschool Program

One afternoon in April, Pamela Perez, wearing a blue polo shirt and her hair in a ponytail, sits with her friends in the cafeteria,



waiting for the afterschool program to begin. It's a Monday, so in a few minutes Pamela will meet with the Youth Council. She's the president of the student group, which works on advocacy issues in the school. Recently, the students met with school lunch officials to suggest ways to improve the "school supper," the meal that students in

the afterschool program are served. Such issues are important to students and also prepare them for more serious work.

This spring, the Youth Council tackled a statewide issue. Members of the group traveled to Albany to persuade state senators not to cut funding for afterschool programs. The students even wrote letters to Senator Bill Perkins to show their support. "Afterschool is an escape from the bad influences of this world," Pamela wrote. "To achieve unbelievable things, we need to be safe, and we need to be here, in afterschool."

Pamela has clearly benefited from the program. Mondays and Wednesdays she meets with the Youth Council. Tuesdays and Thursdays she plays soccer. Friday is a free-choice day; usually she picks flag football. Children's Aid coordinates the activities, so students have a place to go if their parents are not yet home.

When the school day ends, Pamela's parents are still working.



Above, a nurse practitioner takes a student's blood pressure inside the school-based health clinic at the Mirabal Sisters Campus. Above right, students participate in a dance class, one of 30 afterschool activities. Right, parents in the cake decorating class watch as their instructor ices a cake.



Her mother packages perfumes in a factory and her father drives a taxi. Because she participates in the afterschool program, she says her parents don't worry about her—and she doesn't worry about herself. "I thank the afterschool program for supporting me," she says. "It's really easy to get addicted to things, get in trouble, and go to jail."

Ysidro Abreu, the principal of M.S. 319, echoes that sentiment. Some parents in the community, he says, begin to disengage from their children's education in middle school. Parents may feel that at this age children are old enough to start taking care of themselves. Abreu tries to convince them otherwise. "As a Latino, I can say that the streets could end up taking your child." By "the streets," he means drug pushers and gangs.

Pamela's parents participate in her education as much as possible. But both are immigrants from the Dominican Republic, and their English is limited. Pamela says her mother understands English but doesn't speak it, while her father knows some words. Pamela says that her older sister, who attends City College, helps her more than her parents do. "Because she knows English, she can communicate more with me." Pamela's sister attends her parent-teacher meetings and encourages her to keep up her grades. Pamela usually earns 80s, but says she aspires to earn 90s. Noting the school's rigorous curriculum, Abreu says, "To get a 90 average is hard."

There's more to Pamela's education than just report cards, though. And that's where Children's Aid comes in. Although Pamela does not need all the services that the organization provides, the afterschool program has enriched her life. She has participated in sports and taken on leadership roles in student groups—activities that middle-class children take for granted. "Where we've worked with Pamela is in helping her to get out of

her shell," says Marinieves Alba, the community school director. "She's very articulate, very bright. But as with a lot of children that age, she's still growing into herself. And so, through a lot of the afterschool activities, we've actually been able to stimulate her growth further and really encourage her development as a young leader."

Helping low-income students become well-rounded individuals is what attracted Alba to the position of community school director. She says that working for Children's Aid is her way of giving back. The job requires her to build relationships with just about everyone she meets. Most days she interacts with students in the afterschool program, meets with the principals of all three Mirabal Campus schools, exchanges ideas with members of her staff, and of course, helps families in need of services. Hers is no mere desk job. Alba walks through the building regularly, so people are familiar with her face and feel her presence in the school.

Alba and her colleagues spend most of their time talking about individual students and looking at all the factors that may prevent them from succeeding in school. The answer is never just "they need to study more," Alba says. Of course, academic support is important, and Children's Aid can provide that. But other challenges often contribute to a student's poor perfor-



Above, parents attend an evening GED class at the Mirabal Sisters Campus. Above right, social worker Michelle Kohut high-fives a student in her office. A Children's Aid employee, Kohut supervises three social workers at the Mirabal Sisters Campus. Right, Pamela plays soccer in the afterschool program.



mance: a lack of food at home or a loss in the family.

If teachers suspect students are struggling with such problems, they can refer them to Michelle Kohut, who works in the mental health office. A Children's Aid employee, Kohut supervises three social workers who each meet with 25 students every week. Kohut, a social worker herself, also meets with students. Working in the school building enables social workers to do a better job helping students, she says. "We can talk directly to their teachers—with permission, of course." Following privacy laws, Kohut and her staff must keep information confidential. But they can ask students if it's OK for them to talk to their teachers. The kids, she says, always say yes. "Kids want us to talk to their teachers because they need help talking to their teachers." But if "we were at a community clinic, we would never be talking to their teachers." It's more difficult for social workers to cultivate relationships with teachers if they don't work in the same building, she says.

For instance, Kohut works closely with Nick Tillman, who teaches seventh grade. When one of his students was struggling academically, both Kohut and Tillman met with the boy's mother to devise a plan. They decided to use basketball to motivate the student to do better in school. Tillman suggested the mother supervise her son doing his homework, which he had not been turning in. If he did his homework for two consecutive weeks, he could participate in basketball after school. His problems, however, are more complicated than homework. His parents recently

separated, and he misses his dad. And he's been identified as needing special education services. As a first step, basketball seems to help. "All I really did was facilitate" the communication between a parent and a teacher, Kohut says. Although she downplays her role, facilitating is crucial in a community school.

What Lies Ahead

Pamela graduates from M.S. 319 in June. Ysidro Abreu, Pamela's principal, and Marinieves Alba, her community school director, believe that her transition to high school will be smooth. Her experiences both in class and in the afterschool program have laid the foundation for what should be a successful high school career.

Robert's last day at Evans Elementary is also in June. In the fall he'll attend a middle school that does not partner with Communities In Schools, which means that someone like Brenda Salinas won't be there to support him. Robert won't have another case manager until he attends his neighborhood high school, a Communities In Schools partner. In the meantime, Salinas has promised to tell the guidance counselor at Robert's middle school to look out for him.

Robert doesn't explicitly say that he will miss Salinas. Boys rarely say such things. But it's evident that he will miss her when he and his friend Eric, whom Salinas also tutors, start to talk about their schedules next year. While elementary school starts at 8 a.m., middle school doesn't begin until 9 a.m. Robert looks at Eric and does the math in his head. "We have an hour to come and visit," he says to his friend. □



Freeing Teachers to Teach

Students in Full-Service Community Schools Are Ready to Learn

BY JANE QUINN AND JOY DRYFOOS

Imagine you are a third-grade teacher in a low-income school, and at the beginning of the year, you are invited to review your class list with a community resource coordinator, a school social worker, and a mental health worker (who was assigned to the school by a local agency). Imagine working with that group to identify all of your students' circumstances that might warrant special attention—for example, a father not being in the home, poor housing conditions, bad attendance records, and the like—and then each team member taking on a specific follow-up assignment, such as visiting homes, enrolling students in an afterschool program, or providing parents with employment assistance. Imagine repeating this process every three months, so that everyone on the team is well aware of his or her responsibilities regarding each child and each family. For a third-grade teacher at the Gardner Pilot Academy in Boston, none of this is imagined—it's reality. As she says, "It is such a relief to have other people with whom I can share the ups and downs of my students' lives. A few of them need so much attention. If I spend the time with them, I let the rest of the class down. Under this arrangement, everyone gets what he or she needs."¹

* * *

School systems throughout the country are experiencing dramatic challenges. The achievement gap stubbornly persists, the true dropout rates are shocking, and the behavior challenges of many children are enough to drive any teacher out of the classroom. The basic premise underlying community schools is that schools, by themselves, cannot address all the needs of today's students. Partners are required to help provide the services, opportunities, and supports needed by students and their families.

Full-service community schools are public schools that:

- are open most of the time (before and after school, evenings, vacations, and summers);
- operate jointly through a partnership between the school

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and one or more community agencies that take the lead in finding and coordinating resources;

- provide access to health, dental, and mental health services;
- provide a family resource center and opportunities for parents to be involved in the school;
- ensure that afterschool and summer enrichment programs reinforce and extend the school curriculum;
- offer social and educational services for families and community members; and
- strengthen the neighborhood's ability to address its problems.

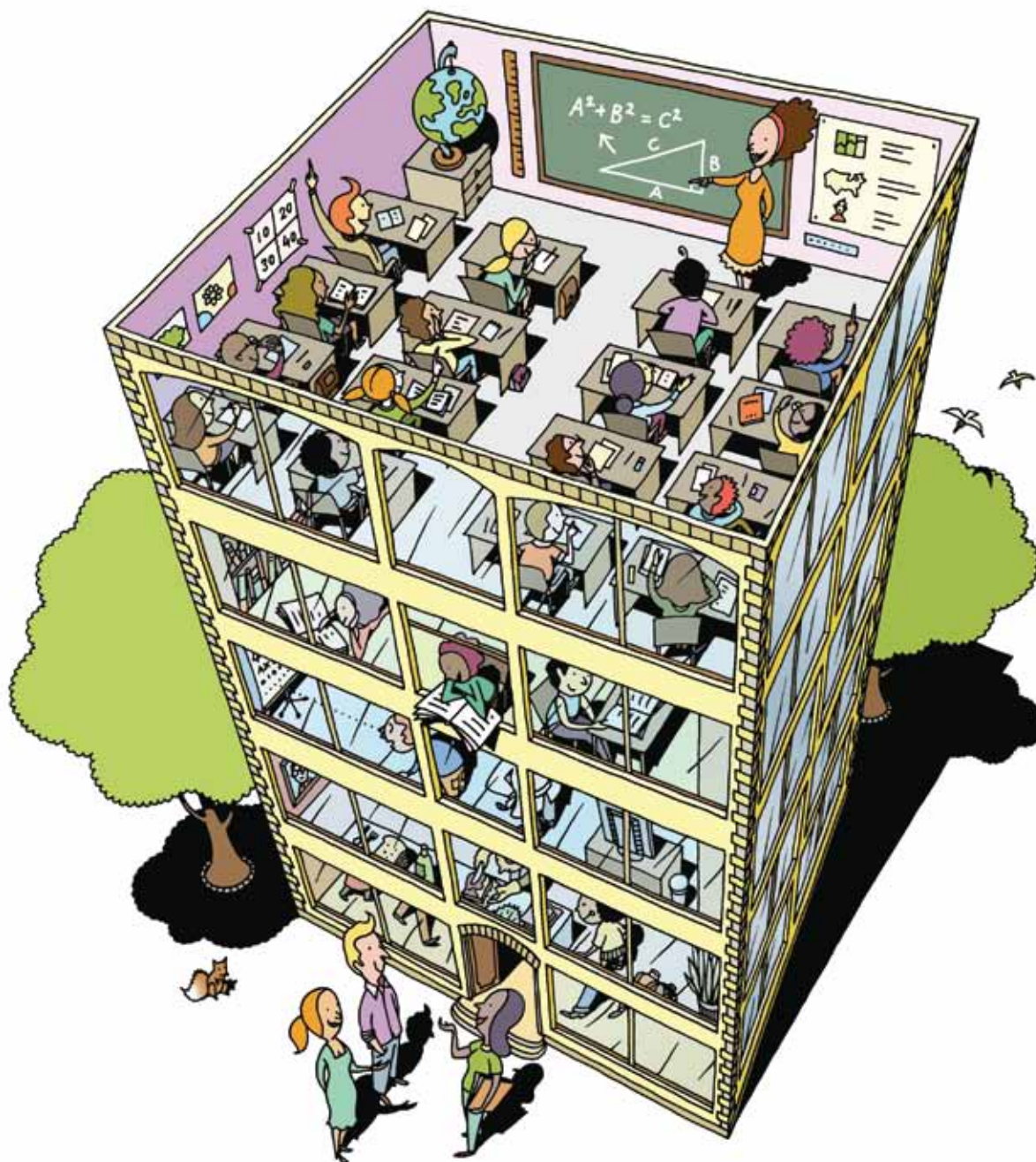
If these ideas and services are implemented effectively, community schools also offer academic benefits because teachers are able to concentrate on what they know best: intellectually stimulating children who are ready to learn. Drawing on the relevant research, our own nearly two decades of on-the-ground experience, and several interviews we recently conducted with teachers in full-service community schools, this article explores how the community school strategy for meeting students' needs enhances teachers' practice.

Listening to Teachers' Voices

Teachers' voices figured prominently in one of the earliest longitudinal studies of community schools. Conducted between 1993 and 1999, the study* was commissioned by the Children's Aid Society (CAS), a nonprofit organization that began partnering with New York City's public schools in 1989 to address the extraordinary social, health, and economic needs of students in some of the city's poorest neighborhoods. One of the key findings of the study was generated during interviews and focus groups with teachers: they consistently reported that the presence of other caring, competent professionals in their buildings enabled them to teach. Discussing the results at P.S. 5, an elementary school that CAS began working with in 1993, the evaluation team wrote:

Perhaps the most consistent comment from respondents was that the wealth of services and programs provided by CAS freed teachers up to do what they were hired to do—teach the children. Several people commented that teachers in most schools—and particularly in schools serving

*Results included improved academic achievement, improved student and teacher attendance, better student-teacher relationships, improved school climate, and dramatic increases in parent involvement. To learn more, see www.childrensaid.org/files/Complete_Manual.pdf.



poor, minority communities—spend much of their time dealing with children’s non-academic problems, and playing nurse, social worker and recreation counselor. Because children’s needs in these areas are being met through the services provided at P.S. 5, and because teachers have the luxury of giving many students more individualized attention during the after-school program, they can focus exclusively on teaching during their classroom time. It is clear that teachers’ experience of being in the classroom is quite different at P.S. 5 than at other schools.²

Just what is the experience of teachers who work in community schools? And how is that experience different from teachers’ work in more traditional schools? Teachers in well-developed community schools typically report the following six benefits, each of which we elaborate on below: (1) more children enter school ready to learn; (2) students attend school more regularly

and move less often; (3) parents are more involved in their children’s education—at home and in school; (4) students have greater access to health care, including medical, dental, and mental health services; (5) students have greater access to extended learning opportunities, including afterschool and summer enrichment programs; and (6) community support for public schools is enhanced through active community involvement.

Benefit #1: Improved School Readiness

Many community schools make explicit links to early childhood education programs in their areas, and some elementary-level community schools incorporate early care and education programs in their buildings, providing a continuum of services from prekindergarten (or even birth) through fifth or sixth grade. For example, CAS works in partnership with the New York City Department of Education to sponsor two community schools in

the Washington Heights neighborhood—P.S. 5 (referenced above) and P.S. 8—that integrate Early Head Start and Head Start programs into their pre-K through fifth grade elementary programs. Both schools serve low-income, predominantly immigrant populations. Families can enroll in the Early Head Start program during pregnancy, knowing they are expected to make a five-year commitment to participate in comprehensive educational, health, and social services, after which their children transition into public school classes within the same building.

Multiple evaluations have shown that students in this program are well prepared for kindergarten, that their parents maintain high levels of involvement in their children's education through elementary school, that mothers in the Early Head Start program show decreases in depression and stress over the course of participation in the program, and that parents report increases in the quality and size of their social support networks.³

The Kendall-Whittier Elementary School in Tulsa, Oklahoma, is another community school that takes an intentional approach to linking early childhood and elementary education, resulting in multiple benefits for students, families, and teachers. Janet McKenzie, a veteran kindergarten teacher at Kendall-Whittier, explains that her school came into being through a restructuring process that occurred in 1991. "Teachers who applied to work in this school were taking on a big challenge. We were going to what most people considered the worst building and the most challenging neighborhood.... Everyone told us not to go. But the bottom line is that a large group of teachers left their comfortable positions by choice for a school year of uncertainty, enormous challenges, difficult physical conditions, long hours, and a neighborhood unsettled by change. But in exchange, we got to envision and plan a new school that we believed could literally change lives."

The resulting school integrates early childhood into the elementary grades. According to McKenzie, "We have had a focus on early childhood from the beginning, understanding the benefits and the ramifications. Eventually, we had an Even Start program for children from birth to age 4 whose parents were enrolled in our half-day GED program. Then we also began our own full-day, 4-year-old classes. Our teachers are very involved with the students and their families. We regularly make home visits, and our teachers are visible and extremely involved in the community outside the school."

The linkage between early childhood and elementary education, coupled with the extensive involvement of teachers in the community, has led to several notable results. According to

McKenzie, "In the past, we struggled to get anyone to enroll early for kindergarten or pre-K, but now parents almost have to set up tents the night before to get a place in line! Our pre-K program is filled long before noon on enrollment day. Our community 'gets' that pre-K is vital to school success, and they want to make sure their children are able to participate."⁴

Benefit #2: Increased Student Attendance and Reduced Student Mobility

Several evaluations of community schools have documented increased student attendance and reduced student mobility. For example, the Children's Aid Society's longitudinal study mentioned above showed that student and teacher attendance was better at CAS's community schools than at regular schools with similar demographics.⁵ Studies of the national Communities In Schools program, the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods initiative in Multnomah County, Oregon, and the Chicago Community Schools Initiative also have demonstrated positive results in attendance and mobility.⁶ Several features of community schools contribute to these positive benefits, including the presence of on-site or school-linked health services, the ready availability of social services to address family problems, and the opportunity to attend engaging afterschool programs.

The implications of improved student attendance and reduced student mobility are enormous for teachers. Most importantly, teachers lose less instructional

time to catching up students who have been absent and to integrating new students into their classrooms midyear.

Chronic early absenteeism—when students in the early elementary grades miss a month or more of school each year—is a subset of attendance issues that is generating national research attention. For example, a recent report by the Center for New York City Affairs indicated that more than 90,000 kindergarten through fifth-grade students in New York City's public schools missed a month or more of school during the last academic year.⁷ Teachers know all too well the price they and their students pay for this problem. The report called for widespread implementation of the community school strategy, based on a very clear understanding that chronic early absenteeism is highly correlated with health and family problems—two issues that the community school strategy is designed to address.

Benefit #3: Increased Parental Involvement

Evaluations consistently document higher levels of parent and family engagement in community schools than in traditional

More than 90,000 kindergarten through fifth-grade students in New York City's public schools missed a month or more of school during the last academic year.



public schools, for many reasons. Teachers at these schools report that they are more likely to reach out to families by, for example, making home visits and regular phone calls. Also, many community schools consistently partner with community agencies that have deep knowledge of, and good relationships with, families, such as family service agencies and YMCAs. Many community schools offer a wide range of opportunities for families to engage in the life of the school and in their children's education. Researcher Joyce Epstein of Johns Hopkins University has outlined six types of parent involvement—parenting, communicating, volunteering, learning at home, decision making, and collaborating with the community⁸—all of which are found in well-developed community schools.

Heather Vaughn, an experienced teacher who currently works for the Albuquerque Public Schools' Office of Professional Development, offers training and support to early childhood teachers, grades pre-K through 2. As a result of the district's community schools initiative, she has observed many positive changes in family engagement and parent-teacher relationships: "I'm definitely seeing a shift. Now the teachers don't have to carry the whole weight of everything that happens at the school. Parents have become key players and are 'at the table' as partners. In my experience, many schools give lip service to the notion that parents are partners in their children's education, but the community school strategy puts that theory into practice. We now actively ask parents, 'How are you sharing with the school what you know about your child?' I see more reciprocity between schools and parents—it's now much more of a two-way street."

Vaughn has observed that as parents become involved in multiple aspects of the Albuquerque Public Schools, as they move "beyond homework" into roles as decision makers, volunteers, and workshop participants, teachers recognize and support them as part of "the broader community of learners." Reflecting on the multiple benefits she has witnessed firsthand, Vaughn muses, "Why aren't all of our schools community schools?"⁹

Her colleague Dolores Griego, a school board member in Albuquerque, notes that "family liaisons have generated parent involvement beyond our expectations." These key staff members are hired from the local community and trained by the district's Community Schools Department. Because of their deep community roots, the family liaisons are able to conduct outreach to parents and quickly earn their trust. Griego observes that one role of the family liaisons is to build community leadership and

cites, as a recent example, that 40 parents went to the state legislature to advocate for a school-based health center at their local school (Pajarito Elementary). "The parents see the bigger picture, beyond what is currently offered at their kids' school. They know that kids miss a lot of school because of immunizations and illness. They see a vacant lot next to the school and wonder, 'Why can't we build a clinic on that land?' Their role has been extended from 'parent of this child' to 'parent of this community.'"¹⁰

Benefit #4: Greater Access to Health Care

It is axiomatic that health is inextricably linked to students' school success. We often hear that children who can't see the

blackboard will have a tough time learning, and a strong body of research undergirds this commonsense argument.¹¹ There is growing support for finding new ways to link health care to education, particularly through partnerships with community resources. For example, U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan observed that when he was superintendent of schools in Chicago, "we attached health care clinics to about two dozen of our schools. Where schools become the centers of the community, great things happen for kids."¹²

Full-service community schools partner with health care providers to address the medical, dental, and mental health needs of students, offering either school-based or school-linked services. In the school-based model, health providers offer on-site services, often through a student wellness center that operates during and

after the regular school day. According to the National Assembly on School-Based Health Care, at least 1,700 schools in the United States currently offer such services.¹³

A promising alternative to school-based health centers is the school-linked model, an approach that moves beyond the traditional (and often unsuccessful) referral system to build a bridge between schools and community-based health services. In this model, a school-based health liaison makes appointments for students at a partnering health center, works with parents to obtain their active consent, and escorts groups of students from the school to the health center and back.

Both on-site and school-linked models are able to accommodate students' needs for immunizations, regular and athletic physicals, treatment of chronic illnesses, first aid, and ongoing preventive care.

Charles Braman, a middle school teacher at another CAS community school, the Salome Ureña de Henriquez Campus in New York City, notes that, "As a classroom teacher, my primary objective, as well as my area of expertise, is academic. However,

Chronic early absenteeism is highly correlated with health and family problems—two issues that community schools are designed to address.



the reality of working with adolescent students is that their needs stretch far beyond the realm of academics. Oftentimes, my students have needs that I am not equipped to deal with as an English teacher. This is where being a community school comes into play. As part of the community schools program, I am able to refer my students to a doctor, dentist, social worker, psychologist, mentor, or afterschool club/activity. When my students are healthy, active, and engaged in the school community, it is much easier to provide rigorous reading and writing instruction.”¹⁴

Benefit #5: Greater Access to Extended Learning Opportunities

A spate of recent reports has called national attention to the risks and opportunities inherent in the nonschool hours.¹⁵ Among the best of these reports is a publication titled *On the Clock: Rethinking the Way Schools Use Time*, by Education Sector, which explains that there is a relationship between time and student achievement, but that how the time is used is key: “Students who are given more allocated school time have outcomes only slightly better than students who receive less. But the correlation between time and achievement increases when students are given more instructional time, and it is even greater when students’ academic learning time increases.”¹⁶

Such opportunities are central to the concept of community schools and constitute a core element of the strategy. Full-service community schools are open after school and well into the evening all year long, offering a rich array of academic opportunities (both remedial and advanced), in addition to social, cultural, and recreational enrichment opportunities. To Jennifer Archibald, a 28-year veteran teacher in New York City who also teaches at the Salome Ureña campus, the benefits of extended academic and enrichment opportunities are clear:

I taught in a traditional public school for 10 years, and I can tell you that there is a world of difference between traditional schools and community schools. In the traditional public school, students were dismissed at three o’clock and the teachers followed soon after. There were no after-school activities or programs. Community schools, in contrast, provide programs that are inclusive of the whole community.

A wide range of activities and programs are available to the students at our campus. There is the extended-day program, which provides homework help, club opportunities,

tutoring, team sports, and recreational activities ... as well as service-learning opportunities for high school students. The Teen Program during the evenings gives teenagers opportunities to have positive social and learning experiences. They participate in college workshops and are given work opportunities with the program. Students whose families cannot afford to take them on summer vacations have summer camp available to them.

All of these experiences give our students a big advantage. They are better prepared for class. Their social skills improve because when they are involved in the clubs and recreational activities, they form friendships and learn social skills that carry over to the school day, resulting in fewer conflicts. Our partnership with the Children’s Aid Society is truly a blessing to our community.¹⁷

Benefit #6: Enhanced Community Support for Public Schools

Community schools promote better use of school buildings, and their neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents.¹⁸ Now that only 31 percent of American households have children under the age of 18, we have to ensure that the good work of our teachers and students is visible to the voting public.¹⁹ When schools welcome parents and other adults, regularly showcase the work of students and their teachers, and offer opportunities for members of the general (tax-paying) public to benefit from the school’s facilities and programs, they are more likely to get a “yes” vote on a new tax referendum. And

schools that partner in a regular and authentic way with other community organizations are more likely to find allies who are willing to testify with them at city and state budget hearings. Similarly, engaged parents can become an extremely powerful political force, as we saw in the Albuquerque example earlier.

Success begets success. For instance, after 17 years of working with CAS to build community partnerships, the Salome Ureña de Henriquez Campus now has an annual Dominican Heritage celebration that draws over 1,000 participants. The event has become so successful that elected officials—including members of the New York City Council, the New York State Assembly, and United States Congress—don’t want to miss it. This year, U.S. Representative Charles Rangel spoke at the event, which represented a powerful display of an actively engaged constituency for public education.

“I am able to refer my students to a doctor, dentist, social worker, psychologist, mentor, or afterschool club/activity.”

—CHARLES BRAMAN,
MIDDLE SCHOOL TEACHER



Changing Practices, Improving Services

Opening the schoolhouse door to the community is only a first step toward realizing the promise of full-service community schools. What goes on in that building to combine quality education, enrichment, student and family support services, parent involvement, and community development requires more than merely extending the time the building is open. It requires the willingness and commitment of all partners to conduct their business differently.

For example, in CAS community schools, social workers have greatly expanded their roles beyond traditional counseling services by offering classroom consultation to teachers and working with school leaders to address school climate issues, including establishing positive behavioral norms and consistent schoolwide discipline. Afterschool program staff use city and state academic standards to plan academic enrichment interventions, particularly in core subjects such as literacy, mathematics, and science. Physicians and nurse practitioners regularly ask students how they are doing in school and ask to see their report cards. Joint staff development helps teachers and CAS staff share their respective areas of expertise and stay “on the same page” about everything from the overall vision of the partnership to the day-to-day procedures involved in working together.

As the community school strategy has expanded across the country over the past 15 years, one of the greatest challenges for teachers has been the joint use of classrooms. Many teachers have been asked by their principals and partners to move beyond the concept of “my” classroom. And community partners who use classrooms during the nonschool hours have had to learn how to develop protocols and procedures for their staff members on sharing space (and particularly cleaning up). Many community schools have developed a joint system of governance, either through the integration of community partners into the school’s regular governance structures (such as a school leadership team or local site council) or through the establishment of a community school oversight committee. Such structures have provided opportunities for the development of ground rules for working together as well as a forum for joint problem solving.

Although the processes of planning, implementation, and collaboration sound complex, they can be boiled down to one simple concept: building relationships. If an institution is going to be effective in fulfilling its mission, people have to talk to each other frequently and listen carefully. Paul Clarke, a teacher at P.S./I.S. 50 in New York City’s East Harlem neighborhood, observes, “The men and women, boys and girls who share the building each day ... make the community school work. We are the community school. We are the mystery beyond the sum of the parts.”²⁰

Critics sometimes express concern that extending the hours, services, and relationships of the school will result in a loss of instructional time. Experienced practitioners have come to a very different conclusion. Dianne D. Iverson, an education policy advisor for an elected official in Multnomah County, Oregon, explains, “As a former elementary school teacher for 15 years and local union president, I understand the barriers that teachers

face each and every day. When I was a teacher, the item I wanted more than anything was time. Give me more time, and I can give you better results for kids. Community schools give teachers more time to teach and more time to build trusting relationships with students and their parents. Through the community school strategy, teachers have partners in the building who can take care of students’ health needs; provide food for that empty stomach; address the need for eyeglasses, boots, warm coats. Partners can take care of the problems my students face, so that I can focus on building the relationship with the child and am able to teach my students to read.”²¹

It may seem strange in this chaotic economic period to say that the community school movement is alive, well, and growing. Yet such chaos can give rise to collaborative concepts and a willingness to consider new solutions. Out of adversity comes action, and that action is directed toward helping children succeed in an increasingly difficult environment of higher poverty levels, less health insurance, more mental health problems, and a widening gap between social classes. The future is likely to bring more opportunities for the kinds of partnerships described in this article, as educators and policymakers alike discover that our society must create more responsive institutions that address children’s academic and nonacademic needs. □

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The Enduring Appeal of Community Schools

Education Has Always Been a Community Endeavor



MINNESOTA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

The present movement for using the schoolhouse of a city for the promotion of neighborhood life is one that has a long history—as long as democracy.

—REV. SAMUEL M. CROTHERS,
POPULAR ESSAYIST AT THE TURN OF THE 20TH CENTURY¹

BY LEE BENSON, IRA HARKAVY,
MICHAEL JOHANEK, AND JOHN PUCKETT

Community schools are an old American idea. They are based on two premises: that the purpose of schooling is to educate youth for democratic citizenship, and that schools and communities are inextricably intertwined and interdependent. Long before schools looked the way they do today, a nascent form of the community school idea was prevalent in the settlements of colonial America; it continued after the American Revolution in the farming communities and towns of the fledgling nation.

Throughout the 18th century, education was largely informal and rooted in agrarian and mercantile life. Seasonal and haphazard at best, formal schooling was a relatively marginal component of the education of the rising generation. Schooling

typically involved an itinerant teacher who imparted rudimentary literacy skills in whatever ramshackle structure a community might designate for that purpose. The major sources of education, including moral development, were located in “a broad kinship community,” a web of family, church, and neighborly relationships that “naturally extended instruction and discipline in work and in the conduct of life.”²

Responsibility for education and socialization gradually shifted from the 18th century’s informal community networks to the public schools of the rapidly industrializing 19th century. As a result, the nexus of family and community with education and socialization was increasingly attenuated. By the late 19th century, responsibility for these functions was firmly entrenched in the nation’s public schools, especially city schools, which were expected to ameliorate the social problems spurred by burgeoning urbanization, industrialization, and immigration.



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Far left, parents and students posed for the 1895 photo at Lakeland School in Minnesota. Left, at a rural school/community center in Gee's Bend, Alabama, in 1929, teacher Juanita Coleman listens to her 82-year-old student who has just learned to read. Below, in 1940, a young student receives typhoid antitoxin in a school clinic in Louisiana.



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As urban school districts became larger bureaucratic systems, more compulsory, more centralized under stronger superintendents, and more thoroughly under professional control, concerned citizens organized themselves as community stakeholders, pressing their agendas on schools. These “women’s organizations, parent associations, labor unions, Social Gospelers, and Populist and Socialist parties” recognized that schools and schoolchildren needed significant support from the external community to counter the harmful effects of negative social conditions. Municipal reformers, comprised of civic and political groups of diverse ideological suasions, rallied, often for contradictory reasons, behind such experimental schooling innovations as social workers, school playgrounds, visiting nurses, school health inspections, and the wider use of schools as social centers. Embodying tensions between democracy and efficiency, participation and expertise, and localism and centralism, these reforms, especially schools as social centers, contributed to the rise, by World War II, of what we would recognize today as community schools.³

The current resurgence of community-centered schooling

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draws upon these historical roots. As each generation of communities has struggled anew with how social problems affect children and youth, educators have struggled with what role makes most sense for schools in the mix. Today’s community schools recognize that students’ academic success depends in no small way upon factors beyond their walls. They present a range of pragmatic responses to the question of the appropriate relationship between school and community, echoing patterns and tensions evident across history. The governmental and community partnerships that sustain these diverse institutions, however, share a common purpose: providing and integrating the necessary additional supports and services that will enable all children to reach their highest potential.

Inspiration from Jane Addams and John Dewey

The general conceptions and social innovations that form today’s community schools in the United States are traceable at least to 1889, when Jane Addams established Hull House in Chicago. Seeking to address the challenges of its poor immigrant neighbors in Chicago’s Nineteenth Ward, Hull House took a multifaceted institutional approach.⁴ Addams’s work was influenced by

the Victorian-era settlement houses in England (mainly Toynbee Hall, founded by Canon Samuel Bennett in London's East End in 1884), and was based on the theory that social ills are interconnected and must be approached holistically. Her program included college extension classes, social clubs and literary offerings, ethnic festivals, art exhibits, recreational activities, kindergarten, visiting nurses, and legal services. The Chicago settlement house was also a center for labor union activities, public forums, social science research, and advocacy for progressive social change.⁵ Originally settlement houses were based in homes; however Addams, as well as other leaders, soon came to recognize that "though there were very few settlement houses, there were very many public schools."⁶

Probably the most influential leader to recognize a central coordinating role for the public school was John Dewey, whose ideas about education and democracy were directly influenced by Addams and Hull House. In a 1902 address that proved to be a spur to the school-based social center movement, as well as a seminal document that still influences debates about schooling,⁷ Dewey adapted the social change philosophy of settlement houses to schools. Drawing upon Addams's theories of education and democracy, he said, "The conception of the school as a social centre is born of our entire democratic movement. Everywhere we see signs of the growing recognition that the community owes to each one of its members the fullest opportunity for development."⁸

By 1913, 71 cities in 21 states reported having schools that functioned as social centers; by 1914, 17 states had enacted legislation allowing wider use of school facilities by communities.⁹ In 1909–10, with 18 school-based social centers in operation, Rochester, New York, witnessed the first opening of a dental office inside a public school; the use of schoolhouses as art galleries, movie theaters, and local health offices; the establishment of employment bureaus in the libraries of the social centers; and the organization of school-based civic clubs and democratic forums.¹⁰ The social center movement gave impetus to features of elementary schools that we now consider standard, such as auditoriums, gymnasiums, showers, school libraries, restrooms, and school

health rooms.¹¹

With the First World War, however, the progressive movement that had supported social change waned. Resonating with the ethic of "normalcy" that pervaded virtually every social institution in the conservative decade of the 1920s, school social centers abandoned their civic and social reform agendas to become



Above, Velma Patterson teaches an evening adult literacy class at the Mount Zion School in Coffee County, Alabama, in 1939. Left, also in Coffee County, a student receives a checkup in the Goodman School's health room. Below, in 1951, the Fairfield, Iowa, community turns out to repaint its school.



community recreation centers. It was not until the 1930s that approaches rooted in Addams's settlement house movement and Dewey's school as social center ideas were revived in enclaves of rural and urban America.¹²

Depression-Era Revival in East Harlem

In a Depression-era revival of the Addams-Dewey community school, Leonard Covello, principal of Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem, New York City, focused on the community as a starting point for learning. Covello emphasized the school as a means for social problem solving and for training students in effective democratic citizenship. Covello, a southern Italian immigrant¹³ who believed in “education for social living,”¹⁴ saw despair in East Harlem's diverse ethnic neighborhoods and worked to foster the community's social and democratic development. He believed that the school, which was for boys only, had to be “the leader and the coordinating agency in all educational enterprises” because “the surging life of the community as a whole, its motion-picture houses, its dance halls, its streets, its gangs, its churches, its community houses, its community codes of behavior and morals—these will either promote or destroy the work of the school.”¹⁵ Covello was an ethnic “insider” in East Harlem, educated in the New York City schools and at Columbia University, a longtime teacher of Romance languages at Manhattan's DeWitt Clinton High School, and a community organizer. He was also a trained sociologist who, as Franklin's principal, used “social-base” maps of East Harlem's neighborhoods that identified every apartment building (including the ethnicity of its residents), store, church, empty lot, park, school, social club, and so on, in order to understand the social geography in which Franklin students lived. He conceptualized community problem solving as a curricular and cocurricular means to prepare students to be active, publicly engaged citizens.¹⁶ From a school site open continuously from 8:30 a.m. to 10 p.m. to several programs that operated off-site in street units (which we will describe shortly), Covello and his allies strove to build school-community partnerships in East Harlem. In a 1938 article for the journal *Progressive Education*, Covello wrote that his aims were as follows:

1. Adequate service to the community along educational civic, social, and welfare lines.
2. Restoration of communal living, as far as may be possible, in a congested city neighborhood.
3. Creation of more harmonious relationships between Americans of foreign stock and older Americans.
4. Training of local leaders qualified to guide and serve within the community itself in creating the finest background possible for the life of the community as a whole.
5. Development of a complete neighborhood program.¹⁷

Covello spearheaded a community organizing strategy that contemporary democratic theorists label “public work”—activity



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA (HSP), LEONARD COVELLO PHOTOGRAPHS

Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem benefited from extensive community involvement from 1934 to 1956.

that harnesses the cooperative efforts of diverse categories and groups of people, ones that are often in conflict, to accomplish shared social and civic goals.¹⁸ Covello and his allies recognized that for East Harlem to effectively press its claims on the city and state for housing reform, health care, education, and economic development, diverse ethnic and racial groups would have to speak with one voice.¹⁹ To build a shared democratic vision (and the means to attain it) among East Harlem's 34 ethnic and racial groups, students and teachers at Franklin mobilized citizen action (public work) campaigns around education, health and sanitation, citizenship/naturalization, and housing. Students participated as researchers, essayists, peer teachers, demonstrators, and lobbyists (even arguing one case to Mayor Fiorello LaGuardia).

The most notable activity was the four-year housing campaign (1937–41) that brought the first low-income housing to East Harlem: the East River Houses. Covello recognized that the often squalid, congested, and dilapidated housing of East Harlem reduced the impact the school could have in the lives of its students. He also knew from personal experience the toll it could take on families; as a youth, he had watched his chronically depressed mother wither away amid the dark squalor of an East Harlem tenement, and had dropped out of school to help the family cover mounting bills. Coordinated by the school's housing committee—one of six school-community committees involving students, teachers, and community leaders—Franklin High School sponsored public exhibits and films of housing models; discussions in civics, economics, and history classes; essay contests through the English department; studies of local land values and use; public rallies; radio broadcasts; scale modeling of hous-



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA (HSP), LEONARD COVELLO PHOTOGRAPHS

Left, Franklin students lead a parade to build support for the East Harlem Sanitation Campaign in 1948. Below, principal Leonard Covello addresses a meeting of the Association of Parents, Teachers, and Friends.



THE HISTORICAL SOCIETY OF PENNSYLVANIA (HSP), LEONARD COVELLO PHOTOGRAPHS

ing options through the art department; forums with local experts; and translations in Italian and Spanish through the modern languages department.²⁰

Students often played key roles in the campaigns targeting community problems, coordinated through the school. In 1948, a student group, reacting to a flurry of negative press accounts of East Harlem, took to the streets to determine the state of the community. They did not like what they saw: “frightful” sanitation levels (as described by the mayor) that only exacerbated high rates of illness in the neighborhood, diminishing student development in school and out. East Harlem “airmail delivery”—garbage sent flying from windows—was one infamous culprit. In the summer, complained one resident, “the flies are everywhere. They breed in the garbage in the gutters and backyards.” “The truth is the truth,” one student responded, “and instead of complaining about the press, we should see if we can do some-

thing to clean up our neighborhood.” In conjunction with local agencies and community groups, the students organized a sanitation parade (complete with a 50-piece band and 5,000 leaflets), a conference led by the local congressional representative, a cleanup contest sponsored by the *Daily News*, an educational campaign complete with roving sound-truck broadcasts, a science and social science lesson plan for the school, and a successful effort to change the City Sanitary Code to enforce more frequent and effective garbage collection.²¹

Covello’s approach to community problem solving tapped a multimethod urban sociological research tradition, a rather different forerunner to present-day “data-based decision making.” He, staff, and students carried out surveys, case studies, home visits, interviews, photographs, and observations, all in an effort to understand the underlying dynamics of the community in which his students lived. They

also used social-base maps that displayed rich local data, one of which adorned Covello’s office, to provide a detailed picture of the environment in which these educational initiatives operated, and of the factors supporting or frustrating success. Every institution, from residence to deli, was labeled; the dominant ethnicity of each block identified; and every student residence represented by a pushpin indicating ethnicity and whether the student was a first-generation immigrant or not. Covello knew that such details mattered; when fights broke out along Third Avenue between Puerto Rican and Italian youth, with bricks tossed from rooftops, he not only knew which students lived where, but with whom he could work on those blocks to resolve tensions. The school serves as “diagnostician,” claimed Covello, and must “penetrate ... into the ‘sphere of intimacy’ of community life and ... follow, as far as possible, changes in the emotional life, as well as changes of a more material nature.” He knew this

depended upon deep respectful relationships with the community; such analysis, he claimed, “depends upon sincere friendliness in the approach, rather than upon sheer technical skill in making a physical or sociological survey.”²²

One distinguishing feature of Covello’s community-centered approach was the “street unit, ... a unit that functions literally in the street.” Directly challenging and bridging the spatial distinction between school and community, the street units (which were often in storefronts) housed recreation, research, and educational activities that encouraged community members, business owners, parents, teachers, and students (including dropouts) to work together to improve the quality of neighborhood life. Covello tapped the off-site units to address issues embedded within the fabric of the community, and to do so in a manner that

The street units housed recreation, research, and educational activities that encouraged community members, business owners, parents, teachers, and students (including dropouts) to improve the quality of neighborhood life.

recognized that many in the immigrant community would never set foot in the school building. Informal leaders could be cultivated, and the relatively neutral ground allowed the school to establish a “sphere of intimacy” with the community it sought to understand and serve. One unit, the Association of Parents, Teachers, and Friends, had 240 members the fall the school opened (in 1934), and supported the growth of other units, such as the Friends and Neighbors Club. The latter was open to any reputable community organization, and held meetings of the housing committee, school social clubs, and adult education classes, which were part of an extensive Works Progress Administration* adult school program enrolling over 1,700 adults by early 1938. Another street unit housed the Old Friendship Club, an association of Franklin students and dropouts, part of the community web Covello wove to support youth development within and beyond school walls; it also handled overflow demand for meeting space when the Friends and Neighbors Club was filled. A third street unit, the Friends and Neighbors Library, staffed by community volunteers, experienced strong demand despite its original set of only 400 books.²³

Two other street units helped Covello organize local social research efforts while providing services to Italian- and Spanish-speaking community members—the Italo-American Educational Bureau and Hispano-American Educational Bureau. Over 25 research projects were carried out in the first eight years of the school. They included a block-by-block study of ethnic distribution, a study of motion pictures in the life of the school’s students, a study of the home backgrounds of “problem” students, and a study of leisure-time patterns of high school stu-

dents. As the research and services of the street units grew, Covello integrated them under an umbrella nonprofit, the East Harlem Educational and Research Bureau, also initiating the *East Harlem News*, a school-based local newspaper, staffed with faculty, community members, and students, as were all of the street units. Across research, support services, community outreach, and advocacy, the street units reflected Covello’s effort to address the various factors affecting the education of the boys under his charge at Benjamin Franklin.²⁴

Covello’s community school project, which lasted from 1934 to 1956, focused on ensuring that community, and therefore student, needs were met. As part of the engagement process, it recognized that the curriculum could play a role in solving community problems. Unlike other reformers, Covello created a

participatory mechanism—community advisory committees—for jointly involving community organizations, teachers, parents, students, and at-large community members in community problem-solving initiatives. To a certain extent, the work of these committees penetrated the academic curriculum, especially at crisis points in the life of East Harlem. Covello struggled with balancing disciplinary studies with his community problem-solving approach, which is a perennial tension in community schools. Ultimately, World War II and the social forces it unleashed

were major factors in diminishing the East Harlem community school. In the 1950s, ethnic conflict in East Harlem and a staunchly conservative political climate combined to undermine Covello’s experiment in civic education.²⁵

Reflection on and critique of Covello’s work at Benjamin Franklin High School can usefully inform our discussions today on such issues as the centrality of building democratic processes and mechanisms into all aspects of community schools; the deep, collaborative engagement of professionals, practitioners, students, and community members in articulating the visions and goals; and the development of culturally appropriate and inclusive programs. The Covello story, as well as those of other outstanding community school leaders such as Elsie Clapp at Arthurdale, West Virginia (1934–1936),²⁶ suggest that an innovative program, much less a movement, is not likely to be sustained beyond its charismatic leader unless a range of sustained supports are in place to nurture and expand the work over time. It is instructive that no larger partner anchored Covello’s programs for the long haul.

One recurring lesson from the history of community schools concerns the implications for professionals within a community school. While many school staff members described the Depression-era community school work as visionary, inspirational, and career-changing—and the schools tended to attract those most interested in such work—some also expressed concern about overload and community intrusion. The sentiment “I’m an English teacher, not a social worker” has been expressed by overburdened teachers across many community school experiments, including Covello’s. At Benjamin Franklin High School, for example, a math teacher resisted spending time in the commu-

* The Works Progress Administration (WPA) was part of the federal government’s New Deal efforts to lift the country out of the Great Depression.

nity, considering it beyond her professional responsibilities. Similarly, at Elsie Clapp's Arthurdale School, an English and social studies teacher either celebrated or lamented, "You had to live in the community. We did something in the community almost every night. It was either a woman's club or a square dance or something up at the weaving room or something you participated in. You participated in all the community activities. You were just sort of a part of a family. I did something in the community every night. It wasn't just a day job."²⁷

Covello understood community relationship building as critical to the work, and yet knew he had to find the resources to support this effort. Community school success depended upon addressing this potential overload for teachers directly, through additional staff and resources dedicated to coordination, research, and administration of afterschool programs. At Franklin, for example, federal funds lent a critical hand early on: in 1938, Works Progress Administration funds supported 69 staff, only 38 of whom were listed as teachers. Other staff picked up the sundry jobs required to run such an extensive set of community programs and to coordinate with existing agencies in East Harlem.

In the post-World War II era, much of the community schooling movement blended into a wider community education effort that included community-based educational programs operating outside schools. Charles Stewart Mott, a community school pioneer, argued as early as 1912 that schools should "be open for the use of the public, when not in use for school purposes."²⁸

School district educator Frank Manley enlisted Mott's support to fund the Flint, Michigan, city schools to be community centers for youth recreation and school-linked health and social services, the latter provided by the Genesee County Medical Society and the Children's Health Center at Flint's Hurley Hospital. A Mott-sponsored Flint community school construction program lasted from 1951 to 1960, when new elementary schools were built with special facilities to accommodate community programs and older buildings were upgraded with the addition of "community wings." The board of education hired physical education teachers to plan and direct the new "wider-use" programs. A 1961 report on the Flint community schools, authored by Manley and his associates, highlighted the city's myriad wider-use programs for recreation, drama, music, arts and crafts, social clubs, and adult education (basic and vocational).²⁹

By the 1960s, though, community schools were subsumed under the broader community education movement, which centered on community education and adult education, with state-funded programs in Florida, Maryland, Michigan, and Utah in 1970, and federal support through the Community Schools Act of 1974. Government largess did not last. In the 1990s, funding priorities shifted from community education to specialized health and social services for schoolchildren.

Today's Community School Resurgence

In the last two decades, momentum has built on several fronts toward a more expansive and sustainable version of community schools. Beginning in the late 1980s, and expanding in the 1990s, new integrative approaches to wider use of school buildings and extended-day programs were developed. These initiatives

focused on creating collaborative models for a broad range of programming and services needed by young people, families, and the broader community. The school was the locus for services, but outside partners helped deliver them and run programs. Described as "full-service schools" and "safe passage schools," they were responses to the new morbidities of substance abuse, unprotected sex, stress, school failure, and increasing levels of violence. As of the mid-1990s, some 500 school-based health and social services programs were in operation, largely funded through a creative packaging of state and federal categorical funds. (New York was the leading state, with 140 school-based clinics.) The range of these programs included school-based dental clinics, health centers, mental health centers, family resource centers, and afterschool centers; typically,

Schools have never been the sole source of the education of children and youth, and their work is mightily affected by health, social, and economic factors.

the services were provided at a school center, but staffed by local health and social services agencies.³⁰

The last two decades also have seen an emergence of a vibrant literature and notable activity addressing the educational influences beyond school walls, under various related concepts including educational ecology, parent empowerment, civic capacity, social capital, collective efficacy, school-linked services, systemic reform, and community schools.³¹ For many observers, closer school-community linkages seem increasingly pragmatic and promising given heightened pressures for accountability. Especially since the late 1990s, there's been recognition that all youth-serving professionals and leaders "must also become engaged in educational reform, family support, and community development."³² Throughout the 1990s, community-school partnerships grew in response to:

- the call for improved educational quality and academic outcomes among young people;
- the demand for more efficient and effective health and social services delivery designed to meet the comprehensive needs of children and families;
- increased recognition of the developmental needs of young people and the importance of building on their assets; and
- expanded efforts to strengthen the human, social, and economic underpinnings of neighborhoods and communities.³³

By the mid-2000s, cities such as Chicago, Indianapolis, and Tulsa, and counties such as Multnomah in Oregon were sponsoring community schools that provided health, family-support, and youth-development services. In each case, a nonprofit played a

lead role—removing the burden from the schools of developing partnerships, securing funding, and coordinating services. In Chicago alone by 2006, some 110 schools were working together with over 45 agencies that took the lead in expanding school facility use and enhancing health and social services.³⁴

Marking, catalyzing, and promoting this resurgence of community schooling nationwide, the Coalition for Community Schools was formed in 1997. Some 160 education-related, family-support, and youth and community development organizations now comprise the coalition, which advances a “broad vision of a well-developed community school.” Embracing a range of organizations (including the American Federation of Teachers), the coalition advocates for community schools as the vehicle for strengthening schools, families, and communities. Community activists, businesspeople, professionals (e.g., social workers, nurses, and physicians), and college students and faculty support curricular and cocurricular programs to strengthen students’ academic learning and service activities. In addition, each community school works with a coordinator to ensure that all students have health, dental, and mental health services. According to the coalition, over time the community school should integrate “quality education, positive youth development, family support, family and community engagement in decision-making, and community development.”³⁵

Thomas Edison Elementary School in Port Chester, New York, provides one example of this community school vision, echoing the history we have presented above. Over a decade ago, students in the largely poor, immigrant community faced obstacles to learning from poor housing, health care, and other problems. Teachers were frustrated with teaching students who were often ill, and with trying to communicate with parents who could not understand English. Community leaders saw the physical and emotional stresses weighing down what their children could achieve, and parents expressed the need for improved child care, translation services, and guidance.

School staff and community leaders sought to understand these issues, going out into the community with surveys, focus groups, and interviews. They formed a community advisory board representing key stakeholders, meeting each month to plan, implement, and monitor the work. They hired a community coordinator to bring in dollars and partners, and to enhance linkages across the community organizations affecting their students. Partnership initiatives now include (1) a school-based health center, resulting in 94 percent of students having health insurance and receiving ongoing care; (2) therapy and family casework with the Guidance Center, a local mental health agency; (3) weekly bilingual parent gatherings; (4) afterschool enrichment programs; and (5) a partnership with Manhattanville College’s teacher preparation program, including a two-year induction program run jointly by the school and college.³⁶

Community schools also have been built through school-university-community partnerships, including a prominent example in Philadelphia. Since the late 1980s, activist faculty and students at the University of Pennsylvania (Penn) have been involved, with varying success, in collaborative projects to develop university-assisted community schools in Philadelphia, working under the aegis of Penn’s Netter Center (directed by one of the authors, Ira Harkavy). One notable development is the

Sayre High School Health Promotion and Disease Prevention Program, a school-based health care facility and emergent disease prevention curriculum sponsored by Penn’s School of Medicine and supported on-site by hundreds of Sayre and Penn students as well as some 20 Penn faculty members. Integrating community needs and curriculum, Sayre high school students learn about key issues, like obesity and diabetes, while delivering needed health services to their community. Sayre students provide basic intake services—taking blood pressure, measuring glucose levels, and providing vision exams—and refer patients to other services when needed. In chemistry class, they learn about lead poisoning’s impact on child development and identify lead “hotspots” while checking siblings’ teeth for lead traces. Afterschool programs extend the lessons about health through athletic programs, nutrition guidance, and enrichment activities. Community needs in part drive the curriculum, and the curriculum broadens students’ academic knowledge and skills, vocational interests, and public problem-solving competencies.³⁷

From colonial New England towns to today’s immigrant suburbs, Americans have faced the question of how schools and communities can best cooperate for the development of young people. As education evolved from family and community instruction to highly developed professional school systems—and as deep inequities shaped starkly different worlds for children across the nation—the need for school-community integration presented ever varied challenges. Recalling the history of community schools brings to bear the richness of yesterday’s responses, inspiring solidarity to meet today’s challenges, though with no easy panaceas for the present.

As this history reminds us, schools have never been the sole source of the education of children and youth, and their work is mightily affected by health, social, and economic factors. Further, school projects and student learning often have involved mutually beneficial work with the local community. We and other community school advocates insist, moreover, that the current milieu—from families in poverty to schools and youth development organizations with tight budgets—requires that schools serve as centers of community that provide and integrate health and human services, if students are to realize improved outcomes, including higher academic achievement and stronger democratic citizenship. □

Endnotes

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(Continued on page 47)

A Coordinated Effort

Well-Conducted Partnerships Meet
Students' Academic, Health, and Social Service Needs



BY MARTY BLANK, REUBEN JACOBSON, AND
SARAH S. PEARSON

Teachers know that students' academic performance and progress depend on the environments in which they live and learn. Now it's time for the rest of us, citizens and policymakers, to see schools as the centers of communities. We must recognize that community problems,

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such as poverty, violence, family instability, and substance abuse, inevitably become student and school problems.

Without question, our schools must be accountable for students' performance. But just as surely, our schools can't meet students' needs alone. Young people need more connections, more support, more opportunities, and more learning time to be successful. They need everything their families, schools, and communities can give.

When supports and services aren't available, often it's the teachers who step in to fill the void. They do this because they have formed relationships with their students, and because they know that unmet needs impede learning. A teacher's primary responsibility is to educate students. However, any visitor to a school quickly recognizes that teachers have a number of additional demands on their time. For instance, teachers may counsel students, work with parents to develop better discipline strategies, make home visits, search for social services, and in some cases, administer medications. Many students (and their fami-

lies) desperately need this help, but they also need their teachers to devote their time and energy to teaching.

What to do? To us, the answer is clear: respond to the changing needs of students and families by investing in the development of community schools. These schools partner with a variety of youth development, health, and social services organizations to meet students' needs. In community schools, teachers get the supports they need to be able to teach, and students are better served by partners such as family support centers and medical and dental clinics that are literally just down the hall. At their best, community schools become true centers of their communities; open day and night, weekends and summers, there's plenty of time to deliver a strong academic program, extend the school day, support healthy youth development, and over the long term, bring people together to solve community problems.

Community schools have spread to localities across the country in part because they align the assets of students, families, educators, and the community around a common goal—improving the success of our young people.

Defining a Movement, One Community at a Time

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships. It is not just a school with a long list of programs (which all too often are uncoordinated and competing for resources); it is a strategy that integrates academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and civic engagement to improve student learning, develop stronger families, and create healthier communities.

Although each community school is heavily dependent on its unique community context, they all share the following core principles: fostering strong partnerships, sharing accountability for results, setting high expectations for all, building on the community's strengths, embracing diversity, and developing home-grown, sustainable solutions.

When a school becomes the hub of the community, families, local government, higher education institutions, businesses, community-based organizations, and local citizens all join with educators to ensure that:

- Children are ready to learn when they enter school and every day thereafter.
- All children and youth are engaged in rigorous academic experiences and enriching learning opportunities that help them see positive futures and achieve high standards.
- Students are healthy—physically, socially, and emotionally.
- Youth are 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 lifelong learning.
- Students contribute to their communities by engaging in real-world problem solving as part of the core academic curriculum.

Each community school provides services tailored to meet the needs of its unique community, including everything from fam-

ily literacy nights to housing information to nutrition counseling to English as a second language classes to mental health services. It all depends on the students' and the community's particular strengths and needs.

How does all this get done, especially without burdening the teachers or the rest of the school staff? Through partnerships. Just because a service is offered inside or next to the school building doesn't mean it's run or even overseen by school staff. In working with community schools across the country, we've seen that successful, sustainable community schools very often have two key features: a "lead partner" agency and a community school coordinator. The lead partner agency is, simply, the organization that oversees the extracurricular aspects of the community school and connects educators to the community. So while the school is focusing on delivering a top-notch education, the lead partner agency is focusing on the wraparound services that enable students to be attentive, engaged learners.

Of course, the school and lead partner agency staff must communicate, especially to develop shared goals and exchange information on students' needs. And that brings us to the other key feature of a community school: the coordinator. A full-time site coordinator, often on the staff of the lead partner agency but sometimes on the school staff (depending on how grants and other funding sources come together), secures resources, finds additional partners, and coordinates services so they connect seamlessly around the school day. While one agency may serve as the lead partner to multiple schools, ideally each school will have its own coordinator. Often, the coordinator meets not only students' and families' needs, but teachers' needs too.

Supporting Teachers

What does a community school look like in practice? First, it looks like a school where teachers are free to teach and students are ready to learn. For example, when Maureen Simon, a prekindergarten and kindergarten teacher at Pleasant Ridge Montessori School in Cincinnati, Ohio, wanted to teach her students about their place in the larger community and about community outreach, she asked her community school coordinator to organize a visit to the local children's hospital. As she explains it, "When I decided I wanted to do the children's hospital project, ... my next thought was, 'When am I going to have time to set this up?' And then I thought, 'Oh! I can ask Angie [the coordinator] to help.'"¹

Of course, Angie Okuda is there to do more than just help with trips. Her role as a liaison to community resources is at the heart of how she serves both students and teachers. Here's how Simon puts it: "If I have concerns about a child, any kinds of concerns, I can go to her because there may be programs in that community that I'm not aware of, and she can tell me about them and help me point the family in the right direction."

Priscilla Copas, a third-grade teacher at Ethel M. Taylor Academy, also in Cincinnati, agrees that teaching in a community school—and especially having a coordinator—helps teachers in their academic mission. She describes an afterschool program at her school that offers tutoring and homework help. But unlike so many afterschool programs in which the tutors and teachers never speak with each other, in her school the coordinator ensures that the tutors are getting direction from the teachers and know just what each student needs to work on. Noting the

reduced pressure on her as a teacher, Copas also discusses the importance of the wraparound services her community school provides to students. She says, “Their health is better. When their health is better, they’re going to do better academically, ... and none of that is on my shoulders, someone is doing that for me.”²

For Copas, someone is also taking care of the basics, like buying school supplies that used to come out of her pocket. Copas’s class has been adopted by a local bank, which now provides not just supplies, but also funding for field trips and for snacks during testing week, and staff to read with the students and write them letters of support. These tangible benefits are great, but the intangible benefits may be even more important. Copas explains, “The kids, when they know those people are coming in, they just love it. They love the attention, they love ... [knowing somebody] cares about them.”

One more benefit—both tangible and intangible—that Copas notes is the increase in parent involvement, especially after the school hosted a very popular job fair that brought parents and other adults from the community inside the building. Copas

explains, “It’s really beneficial because the parents are less fearful ... of coming to school.... We have parents who come up and help out in the lunch room, ... and that wasn’t happening before.”

The work that community schools do with families and the community brings to life the concepts of family involvement and

While the school is focusing on delivering a top-notch education, the lead partner agency is focusing on the wraparound services that enable students to be attentive, engaged learners.

community engagement, and helps to build the social capital (i.e., social networks that strengthen communities’ ability to resolve their problems) that is so important to the development of our most vulnerable children.

One Idea, Many Models

Community schools come in all shapes and sizes. Sometimes a single school recognizes that it must address all the needs of its children in order to be successful. Often there’s a systemwide initiative that has support at the district level and from essential community partners. Other times a national organization provides a design that schools across the country can adopt.

The field is much too broad and varied to describe fully here, but the following brief descriptions offer an overview of a handful of national, regional, and local initiatives. (For detailed descriptions of a few community school initiatives, see the articles on pages 8 and 37.)

Communities In Schools

Established 30 years ago to prevent students from dropping out of school, Communities In Schools (CIS) is a national network of 194 local affiliates in 27 states and the District of Columbia. CIS affiliates take on the lead partner role discussed in the main article. CIS provides a model with a core set of goals—which it calls the Five Basics—that each site pursues: “a one-on-one relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and

grow, a healthy start and a healthy future, a marketable skill to use upon graduation, and a chance to give back to peers and community.”* At the same time, each site is unique in that the work revolves around assessing students’ needs and finding appropriate services.

So, for example, one site may provide mentors, dental exams, and drug and alcohol education, while another may provide help for teen parents, extended-hours programs, and career counseling. Yet another site may provide all of these things, and more. To learn more about CIS, visit: www.cisnet.org.

Children’s Aid Society

Founded in 1853, the Children’s Aid Society (CAS) has long served New York City’s disadvantaged children with a wide variety of programs. In partnership with the city’s school district, it began developing community schools

in 1992 and now serves as the lead partner in 21 New York City community schools. In addition, it is expanding to assist schools nationally (and internationally) through its National Technical Assistance Center for Community Schools.



*Drawn from the Communities In Schools home page: www.cisnet.org.

Seeing Results

Community schools have spread across the country in the past few decades simply because they make sense. Only in the last several years, as the whole education sector has become more accountability focused, has there been a major push to gather data on community schools. We expect that in the next few years more and better data will be available. For example, the national organization Communities In Schools (CIS) is in the middle of a five-year, nationwide study in which outcomes in schools that faithfully implement the CIS model are being compared with those in schools that do not faithfully implement the CIS model and to demographically similar traditional (noncommunity) schools.³

Despite the relatively recent push to quantify their results, community schools currently do have a promising body of research that reveals a range of positive academic, health, and social outcomes. Broadly speaking, when community school initiatives are well executed, students show significant gains in academic achievement and in important nonacademic areas. In addition, families of community school students show increased family stability, communication with teachers, school involvement, and sense of responsibility for their children's learning. Community schools enjoy stronger parent-teacher relationships,

increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment, and greater community support. The community school strategy also promotes more efficient use of school buildings.⁴

Now let's turn to the specifics. The following is not a comprehensive look at the research on community schools. Rather, it is intended to show the positive impact that well-run community schools can have.

Improved Academic Performance in Reading and Math

Preliminary results from the national evaluation of Communities In Schools indicate that schools that faithfully implement the CIS model show greater gains than matched non-CIS schools in graduation rates, and reading and math scores. More specifically, the well-developed* CIS schools showed net gains over their matched comparison schools of 4.8 percent in graduation rates, 5.2 percent in grade 4 math achievement, 2.3 percent in grade 4 reading achievement, 6.0 percent in grade 8 math achievement, and 5.1 percent in grade 8 reading achievement.

The 150 schools in the Chicago Community Schools Initiative (CSI) have delivered standardized test results from 2001 to 2006

*The study refers to these schools as the "high implementers," meaning that they had the vast majority of the CIS model components in place.

The CAS model provides expanded educational, health, social, and recreational services through: educational enrichment programs (like chess and art classes) offered before and after school, and during weekends and summers; medical, dental, mental health, and social services; parent involvement and adult education programs; early childhood education; and events designed for the whole community. Learn more about CAS at: www.childrensaidsociety.org/communityschools.

SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) Community Schools

With 54 SUN community schools in six school districts, Multnomah County, Oregon, has created a regional approach to providing educational, recreational, social, and health services. SUN community schools are a collaboration of the Multnomah County Department of Human Services, the City of Portland Parks and Recreation, various nonprofits, and local school districts. SUN community schools seek to unite the neighborhood by extending the school day and serving as a community "hub." Extended-day academic and enrichment programs are linked with the school day, and include family involvement and strengthening programs; health and social services for students, families, and community

members; community events; and adult education classes. Direct services are supported by partnerships with other community institutions, such as libraries, parks and community centers, neighborhood health clinics, area churches, and businesses. Learn more about SUN schools at: www.sunschools.org.

Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative

The Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative is another regional approach, serving elementary schools in two districts. A project of Tulsa's Metropolitan Human Services Commission, it is coordinated and supported by the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa, a nonprofit, citizen-led United Way agency. The initiative has a strong health component through a partnership with the Oklahoma University at Tulsa Health Sciences Center. Working groups focus on early childhood, health and health education, mental health and social services, family and community engagement, youth development, out-of-school time, neighborhood development, and lifelong learning. To learn more, visit: www.csctulsa.org/community_schools.htm.

Chicago Community Schools Initiative

Almost a decade ago, a group of Chicago's business and philanthropic

leaders began working with then-superintendent (now U.S. secretary of education) Arne Duncan to create "full-service" schools that would meet students' educational, developmental, and health needs. Today, Chicago has over 150 community schools, each of which has joined with a lead partner agency that has at least three years of experience in adult and youth programming. These schools offer a range of voluntary afterschool and weekend programming for students, including a mix of sports and recreation, arts and cultural activities, tutoring, and academic enrichment. Funding is leveraged among the partnership to provide for additional services, including on-site medical and dental care. Read more at: www.annenberginstitute.org/Idea/Chicago.php.

* * *

These descriptions of community school models demonstrate that there are many different types of community schools, each uniquely tailored to address the specific needs of the students, teachers, families, and community. You may recognize some of what these community schools do in your own school. If so, your school is on its way to becoming a community hub that meets the needs of its students.

—M.B., R.J., and S.S.P.

that show a steady closing of the achievement gap with other Chicago public schools.⁵ While all schools showed improvement, CSI schools improved close to 8 percentage points more than non-CSI schools in both reading and math standardized achievement tests.

In New York City, students participating in afterschool programs in the Children's Aid Society's community schools from 2004–2007 scored significantly higher on their math tests than students who didn't participate in the afterschool program. In 2006–2007, 42.1 percent of students who spent 60 percent or more of their afterschool time in CAS afterschool activities met the Level 3 standard (proficient) on the state math test.⁶

A study of community schools in San Mateo County, California, found that the county's most seasoned community schools improved their Academic Performance Index (API) scores from

increases in elementary, middle, and high school attendance for community schools over their matched comparison group.⁹

- In Iowa, the Eisenhower Full-Service Community School model demonstrated a significant reduction in absences for participants compared with nonparticipants.¹⁰
- The Netter Center for Community Partnerships (CCP) at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia reported that CCP partner schools University City High School and Ecotech had average daily attendance rates of 79 percent and 87 percent, respectively, much better than the city-wide high school average of 65 percent.¹¹
- A study of Communities In Schools indicates that the CIS strategy keeps students in school, and that CIS is the only



Well-developed CIS schools showed net gains over comparison schools of 6 percent in grade 8 math achievement, and 5 percent in grade 8 reading achievement.

the 2002–03 school year to the 2006–07 school year. Comparing results from the 2005–06 and 2006–07 school years, student participation in extended-day activities, student and/or parent participation in mental health services, and parent participation in school programs and activities were all associated with higher scores in 2006–07 on the state assessment. Specifically, 35 percent of youth who participated in extended-day activities moved into a higher achievement level (e.g., from below basic to basic) on the state's English language arts test, while only 26 percent of nonparticipants improved. Over 36 percent of participants moved into a higher achievement level on the state's math test, while only 23 percent of nonparticipants improved. Thirty-eight percent of students who accessed mental health services and/or whose families accessed mental health services moved into a higher achievement level on the state's math test, while just 26 percent improved if neither they nor their families accessed services.⁷

Increased Attendance and Decreased Dropout Rates

Community schools can have a significant impact on increasing attendance and decreasing the dropout rate.

- Students in the Children's Aid Society's community schools who have participated in CAS afterschool programs have better school attendance than students who have not participated.⁸
- Communities In Schools (nationwide) found small net

dropout prevention program in the country to demonstrate, with a high standard of evidence, that it increases both graduation rates and the percentage of students who graduate on time with a regular diploma.¹²

Improved Behavior and Youth Development

Several studies have found beneficial shifts in the actions, attitudes, interests, motivations, and relationships of children and youth who attend a community school. For instance, between 2002 and 2006 Chicago Community Schools Initiative students consistently demonstrated significantly lower numbers of serious disciplinary incidents, compared with schools with similar demographics.¹³ In addition, a study of the Children's Aid Society's community schools found significant increases for all surveyed students in self-esteem and career/other aspirations, and decreased reports of problems with communication across all three study years.¹⁴

Greater Parent Involvement

When families are supported in their parenting role, involvement in their children's learning increases and student performance is strengthened. Consistent parental involvement at home and school, at every grade level and throughout the year, is important for students' sustained academic success.¹⁵ Studies have found that parents of community school students are more engaged in their children's learning and are more involved in their school. In the study of San Mateo County's community schools, parent skills

and capacities saw statistically significant improvements. Survey results show that 93 percent of parents attended parent-teacher conferences and high percentages of parents encouraged their children to complete their homework, talked to them about school, and used everyday activities to teach them.¹⁶

Parents who receive services from the community school that their children attend may be more likely to be engaged in their children's education. For example, at Carlin Springs Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, 95 percent of the adults taking ESL classes in which they learned about the school system attended their parent-teacher conferences.¹⁷

Increased Community Benefits

Community schools promote better use of school buildings and, as a result, neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened



community pride, and better rapport among students and residents. Benefits to families (such as increased physical, economic, and emotional stability) contribute to the stability of their communities. So do more and better relationships among community agencies, businesses, and civic organizations, which also leads to greater awareness of the services they offer.¹⁸

For example, the United Way of Greater Lehigh Valley (UWGLV) launched its ambitious Community Partners for Student Success Community Schools Initiative in 2005. The Lehigh Valley, located between Philadelphia and New York City, is composed of three major urban hubs, various suburbs, and pockets of rural communities. The community schools initiative is a team effort of individuals committed to helping students graduate from high school ready to lead meaningful and productive lives. This approach is consistent with the underlying goals of the United Way of America and serves as a vehicle for addressing critical concerns in Lehigh Valley, such as an alarmingly high dropout rate and an enduring disconnect between the community and public schools.

Believing that schools need the support of an engaged community to address these challenges, UWGLV staff work to build relationships among those who have a stake in, and care for, the health of youth and families in the community. As Susan Gilmore, president of UWGLV, explains, "We're not single-issue focused, we're community focused. It's not just about children and youth, it's about adults, families, and the neighborhood. Our reputation is around work that supports the community as a whole."¹⁹

UWGLV's broad array of partners supports that claim. Its community school initiative engages the business community, medical clinics or linked health care services, family centers, pre-schools and daycares, comprehensive afterschool programs, and community service programs through local colleges and other partners.

Initiatives do not have to be so ambitious to be worthwhile. In Chicago, Burroughs Elementary School and its community partner, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council, provide programming to students who already have graduated from the school, recognizing that they are an important resource to the rest of the community. The school and the neighborhood council asked the community what they wanted and now offer programming for parents ranging from GED and English as a second language classes to cooking and yoga classes. They also started program-

With better use of school buildings, neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents.

ming for neighborhood youth this year, including leadership, art, and dance classes.

Converting Your School into a Community School

With all their other responsibilities, teachers may wonder what role they play in organizing community schools. Here are a few suggestions for teachers who would like to turn their school into a community school:

1. Know the partners who are present in your school so you can take advantage of the services and supports they provide. Encourage the development of a plan for how these organizations can work more effectively with teachers.
2. Get to know the neighborhood around your school. Community partner organizations can help you do this. Teachers can make home visits, walk the neighborhood, connect with afterschool programs at the school and in the community, and participate in school and community events.
3. Advocate for a community school coordinator in your building. The coordinator's job is to build the bridges to the community, government agencies, parents, funders, and other partners.
4. Encourage your local union officers and building representatives to look at how community schools might make

teachers more effective and make their daily professional lives more manageable.

The Coalition for Community Schools and its partners have a number of resources to help teachers, principals, parents, and community members start a community school. (For a quick look at some of those resources, see the box below.) The resources section of the coalition's Web site* has a toolkit that contains all the information you need to create a community school, as well as a list of partner organizations that can provide technical assistance.

* * *

In *Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools*, the Coalition for Community Schools found three advantages that community schools have over schools that act alone. Community schools can:

- Garner additional resources and reduce the demands on school staff.
- Provide learning opportunities that develop both academic and nonacademic competencies.
- Build social capital—the networks and relationships that support learning and create opportunity for young people while strengthening their communities.

The community school movement is growing as these advantages become more broadly recognized and more necessary in our troubling economic times. Together, we can create the partnerships and resources that are necessary to ensure that all our students receive the comprehensive education they require. □

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Establishing Your Community School

Transforming your school into a community school may seem overwhelming; fortunately, many excellent resources are available online. The reports and Web sites highlighted here cover the major issues of planning, funding, evaluating, and sustaining community schools. As the main article explains, educators should start by partnering with a community organization that will take the lead in securing funding and coordinating services.

Growing Community Schools: The Role of Cross-Boundary Leadership examines the development of community schools in 11 cities. Ranging from the Tukwila School District in Washington (with just over 2,000 students) to the Chicago Public Schools (with more than 400,000 students), these communities have differing needs and resources. Nonetheless, they've all brought the community school idea to scale so that students are served citywide.

www.communityschools.org/CCSDocuments/GrowingCommunitySchools.pdf

Community and Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works offers six keys to community engagement. These keys, based on interviews and focus groups with dozens of principals from community schools, are then applied in detailed discussions of how to engage families, staff, partners, and the public. www.communityschools.org/CCSDocuments/CommunityAndFamilyEngagement.pdf

The Basics: Building, Assessing, Sustaining, and Improving Community Schools assists staff at school and community organizations with implementation. It reviews the stages of community school development and provides all the meeting agendas, presentations, and planning activities needed for eight workshops, from initial collaboration to lessons learned. <http://johnwgardnertestsite.pbworks.com>

The Coalition for Community Schools offers a wide array of resources,

including a toolkit with guidance on everything from planning, funding, and facilities to evaluation and sustainability. It also has links to state affiliates and organizations that provide technical assistance.

www.communityschools.org/index.php?option=content&task=view&id=11&Itemid=33

The Finance Project, a nonprofit that aims to help leaders “finance and sustain initiatives to build better futures for children, families, and communities,” offers many useful publications that are applicable to the development of community schools. Its Children and Family Services publications provide research on the costs and benefits of various services (including recent reports on out-of-school-time programs and mentoring), as well as guides on planning, funding, and implementation. www.financeproject.org/all_pubs.cfm?cat=3&p=1



From the Ground Up

Cincinnati Is Rebuilding Its Schools and Revamping Its Student, and Family, Services



Top left, Donald, a student at Oyler, and tutor Bill Moss are finding places discussed in a book they are reading. Top right, nurse Christina Tarter tends to Ashley, a student at Taylor. Center, Winton Hills student Nah'Zerrie meets Cincinnati Bengals safety Marvin White during a visit to Xavier University.

There are many ways to develop a community school. Working with an experienced partner is one option (see article on page 8). Another is to bring together local organizations, community members, and resources to craft a homegrown strategy. That's what Cincinnati is doing with its "community learning centers." Although the effort only has been under way for a few years, students already can access a wide array of health services, afterschool programs, social services, and summer enrichment activities previously unavailable to them. To find out how these community learning centers got started, why they're important, and how they support student learning, *American Educator* sat down with four key players: Annie Bogenschutz, resource coordinator at Ethel M. Taylor Academy, a prekindergarten through grade 8 school; Darlene Kamine, consultant to the Cincinnati Public Schools for the development and management of community learning centers; Julie Sellers, president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers; and Joe Wilmers, social worker at Winton Hills Academy, a prekindergarten through grade 8 school.

—EDITORS

Editors: What are community learning centers (CLCs)?

Julie Sellers: CLCs are schools that have been opened to the community and that have formed partnerships with community organizations to provide a wide variety of desperately needed services during the school day, after school, on weekends, and over the summer. For example, CLCs offer students medical, dental, and vision care. From my perspective as a classroom teacher and as president of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, one great benefit of the CLCs is that they increase attendance because students are getting their health needs taken care of at the school instead of staying home.

Most of the services CLCs offer exist in the community already. The CLCs just bring those services to the students. A lot of our families do not have transportation to go to the clinic, the doctor, the free store, or the food bank. This really is an easy way to provide needed services.

The CLCs also build community connections, even in simple ways like keeping the gym open so the community can form a vol-

Right, students in Oyler's alternative education program work toward their diplomas. Middle, after school, Oyler becomes a Boys and Girls Club, with activities for students like Kameron. Bottom, college access advisor Sam Stupak helps Oyler students Tonly and Lester make their postsecondary plans.

leyball or basketball league. With the interaction between community and school, the community feels ownership of the school.

Joe Wilmers: I believe that schools should be used as much as possible by people in the community; they should not close when the last student leaves. The facilities and some programs should be available to the community at large. This is especially true in my school, Winton Hills Academy, which is surrounded by a huge federal housing project. Since becoming a CLC, Winton Hills is open seven days a week. During the week we have afterschool programs until 5:30, and then the building stays open for the neighborhood to use the gym or hold a community council meeting.

Editors: Why are CLCs needed?

Joe Wilmers: Economically, we have a large population that really struggles. From helping families fill out paperwork for scholarships and grants, I know that many of our families make less than \$10,000 per year. In addition, we have as many homeless students as any school in the city. Every week we have at least one new homeless family, and many weeks we have two or three or four. A big part of my job is to refer them to shelters, make sure they have some emergency food, and tell them where the food pantries are.

Darlene Kamine: The demographics of the Oyler School, another CLC, are similar: very poor and isolated. Oyler serves primarily an urban Appalachian population in an industrial area near the Ohio River called Lower Price Hill. About 25 percent of the adult population is functionally illiterate, and more than 60 percent did not graduate from high school. The school is right next door to one of the city's most active homeless shelters. The school building, which is roughly 100 years old and about to be completely renovated, is the hub for the whole neighborhood.

Annie Bogenschutz: Ethel M. Taylor Academy is located in the Millvale neighborhood. It's in the middle of a housing project, though we also get students from the surrounding neighborhoods. This used to be a highly industrial area; today there are some abandoned warehouses, but not much else. No post office,

no grocery store, no library. There is a recreation center with a city-run health clinic inside, so when Taylor was rebuilt a couple of years ago it was moved a few blocks to place it right in front of the rec center. As in Winton Terrace, there is violence and drug trafficking, many single-parent families. Before the CLC initiative, Taylor opened at 7:30 a.m. and closed at 2:15 p.m. Now the school and rec center are like one big campus.

Julie Sellers: The CLC becomes an important part of our students' lives. Many of our students don't really have anything to go home to. A large percentage of our parents work second shift or multiple part-time jobs, but live below the poverty level. If





Left, Tonya and Elizabeth enjoy the computer lab as part of Oyler's afterschool Boys and Girls Club. Below, Briana gets a wellness exam by Dilruba Rahman, a nurse in Oyler's health clinic.



students go straight home after school, no one is there. The children can't play outside because their neighborhoods are not safe. The most they can do is watch TV or play video games. In contrast, the CLCs offer afterschool programs with structured activities and supportive adults. The kids are happier; they are doing fun things that enrich their education. And, they see the school as a place where they feel secure and where they want to be. The parents also feel more secure because their children are in a safe and structured environment so they don't have to worry.

Joe Wilmers: As a former special education teacher and a former administrator, I can speak to how it has been a real godsend to have an afterschool program as part of this CLC. Instead of kids leaving at 2:10, many now stay until 5:30. It not only allows our parents to have full-time jobs and know that their kids are safe, but our students have extra learning opportunities. We have a couple of teachers who also work in the afterschool program, which is run by the YMCA, and they ensure that our study sessions after school reinforce what students are learning in the regular school day. More than half of our children are reading below grade level, and we have a number of special-needs students, so every extra minute they spend in a learning atmosphere really helps. Usually the first hour of the afterschool program is academic. But the program is a little over three hours per day, Monday through Friday, so there is also time to be on the computer, do crafts, etc. We have rotating enrichment and recreation activities. About 95 kids, or 20 percent of our population, attend the afterschool program—and about 100 more would attend if the YMCA had the money to accommodate them.

Editors: When and how did Cincinnati start developing CLCs?

Darlene Kamine: In the 1990s, a United States Government Accountability Office study found that Ohio had the worst public school buildings in the U.S.—and that Cincinnati's buildings were in the worst shape of any in Ohio. That was one of the factors prompting a court case in the late 1990s in which the Supreme Court of Ohio found that the condition of the state's public school buildings was so poor as to be in violation of the state's constitutional guarantee of an adequate public education.

As a result, the state legislature organized the Ohio Schools

Facilities Commission to direct the renovation or rebuilding of school buildings all around the state. Some of the construction is fully funded by the state of Ohio, and some is funded partially by the state and partially by the district, depending on the valuation of real estate in the school district. In Cincinnati, 23 percent of the funding comes from the state.

Many Ohio districts were uneasy about asking taxpayers to fund an entire district renovation; they targeted a few schools or planned to do the construction in phases. Cincinnati Public Schools created a comprehensive plan to provide state-of-the-art learning environments for all students. But before asking the taxpayers for support, the board of education developed this vision of creating CLCs through a community engagement process. When we went to the taxpayers in 2003, the levy to support the \$1 billion plan passed. According to the pollsters, the district's commitment to build the schools as CLCs was very important.

In each neighborhood, the process of community engagement starts with identifying a core team of the people who are leaders, officially and unofficially, of that community. We develop those core teams through conversations in people's living rooms, in the coffee shops and bingo halls—wherever people feel comfortable meeting. It is unlikely that people would have responded to me passing out fliers or the principal sending home a note inviting everybody to a meeting. The planning is completely dependent upon developing that core team in each neighborhood that then takes responsibility for bringing together their friends, neighbors, and networks. Many of our community engagement teams involved a committed group of more than 100 people working together for years.

The community engagement process remains the fundamental bedrock for the development of this whole CLC infrastructure. Everyone in the community—parents, teachers, staff, students, neighbors—creates the shared vision; they map assets, assess

Left, many Winton Hills students head home at the end of the school day. But about 20 percent, including Braniya (below), stay for the afterschool program run by the YMCA.



needs, develop priorities, and ultimately select their CLC partners. Even the design of the building is developed by the community planning team working with the architects and the district's construction team. In some cases, the community engagement process drives changes in the academic program, as when Oyler added high school grades to create a pre-K-12 program and another community transformed its struggling school into a thriving Montessori program.

To do all this, Cincinnati Public Schools built my position into the funding for the facilities plan, and KnowledgeWorks provided some additional funding for us to work with the Children's Defense Fund and the Community Building Institute at Xavier University.

From the beginning, our model included a resource coordinator in each CLC. This was intended to be a kind of chief operating officer who could continue the ongoing community engagement, develop and manage partnerships and resources, ensure alignment with the school's academic goals, and track accountability. We felt it was important that the resource coordinator be employed and funded outside the district's operating budget to ensure sustainability despite the budget cuts that are typical to public school systems. Two private foundations, United Way and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, committed to funding nine pilot sites for four years. Meanwhile, the district repurposed other funding to increase the number of resource coordinators to 20, putting us well ahead of our goal to grow to 20 sites by the end of five years. Now we hope to have a resource coordinator in every building in the next couple of years.

Editors: Please describe a few of your partnerships in detail. What services do they offer and how do they help meet the students' and community's needs?

Joe Wilmers: One of our good partnerships is with the Winton Hills Medical and Health Center, which we call WinMed, across the street from the school. WinMed implemented a Fast Track program in which parents can permit the school nurse to take a child to the health clinic. That way kids get the care they need and parents don't have to take time off from work. We work closely with the health clinic staff; doctors, nurses, and therapists

come to our school to meet with the principal, resource coordinator, and me. WinMed also does some health education. For example, they ran a fair in which they gave out nutritious food and taught the community about good health.

We have a wonderful new program that started last year, Adopt A Class, created by a successful local businessman. He convinced businesses around town to develop an ongoing relationship throughout the year with one class. Currently, every class but one has been adopted; various organizations are involved: Procter and Gamble, our local television station, a construction firm, a law firm, a life insurance company, a graphic arts company, a real estate firm, a police precinct, etc. The classes and outside groups write letters to each other, and a few times a year the groups bring food and talk to the kids about what they do. In December, there's a holiday party and they bring small gifts for the students—and we make sure the students write thank-you notes right away. Some of those groups, like Metropolitan Life, send people every Friday to tutor kids. Everyone is encouraged to come to events, especially when we have awards assemblies. Last year one class visited Procter and Gamble; they saw an experiment going on in the laboratory and had lunch in the company lunch room.

Before, if you asked the students what they want to be when they grow up, they would say basketball player, rapper, or hairdresser. Now, they say they want to work for Procter and Gamble or one of the other Adopt A Class partners.

Some of the Adopt A Class people have really gotten attached to their students and become mentors. Almost half of our mentors have come from this program, and I'm trying to recruit more. These are successful people who can do so much for our students, whether it's taking them to a museum or helping them think about college.

All of these ongoing programs are there to support our main mission, which is to raise the academic level of all children, to get all children learning, graduating from high school, and going on to college.



Top, through a partnership with Xavier, Winton Hills students visit the university's campus and enjoy games with college athletes like soccer player Mason Kelly. Middle, Dr. Yvette Casey-Hunter does a follow-up exam with Winton Hills student Dre'Quan. Bottom, Emanuel does his homework during Winton Hills' afterschool program.



lots of arts, including theater.

Since developing the CLC, our community has changed. Now, even parents are becoming partners. One parent came up to me earlier this year and suggested we have a job fair. I said I thought that was a great idea, but I couldn't plan it right now. She offered to plan it. She contacted nine businesses and we sent out fliers, which the Cincinnati Metropolitan Housing Authority helped with by offering to walk door-to-door together through the housing project. When we opened the doors for the fair, 60 people came flooding in. They were dressed up. Some were parents, some were community members. It was the first time we had 60 outside adults in the building at once. The parent who organized the fair followed up with the companies afterward—a little more than half of the people who applied for jobs received them.

This parent also saw that people often came to the school to ask for help with basic things like food and clothes, and that I was always referring to four different community directories to help them. So she compiled one directory that the parents could use. All of this was done by a parent who wouldn't have been active in the school before; she would not have even walked in the building.

Editors: Does the tutoring offered through the CLCs reinforce what's being taught during the school day? If so, how?

Annie Bogenschutz: You could have a thousand tutors in the building, but if they're not working on what the teachers need them to be working on, it's a waste of everyone's time. So we have a full-time tutor coordinator who works in the school building but is employed by the YMCA. The tutor coordinator finds appropriate tutors, trains them, and ensures that they are supporting the teachers' work. The tutor coordinator

also looks at the benchmarks and practice test scores to ensure that students are getting targeted help. Some teachers give the coordinator the week's homework packet every Monday. Some teachers stop by every day to talk about certain students. Most of the tutoring is in reading and math, but one of our Adopt A Class partners is an architectural firm that does a lot of science with the kids. Some of the teachers conduct their own tutoring after school as well, so we coordinate the kids' schedules. Most of the kids are tutored twice a week, but some come every day. And most of the tutoring is after school, but we do have some school-day tutoring too. So that kids don't miss class time, the tutor comes into the classroom and offers one-on-one help.

Annie Bogenschutz: We have partnerships similar to those Joe described. For example, our afterschool program offers students many opportunities they may not otherwise have. It is provided by a local mental health organization called Central Clinic, which hired a full-time afterschool coordinator. In addition to tutoring and computer time, the program has great enrichment activities—some contracted and some volunteer. So far this year, our kids have gotten to do drumline, African dance, DJ class (in which they learn to spin records and make CDs), Signing Safari (sign language), karate, Mad Science, and

Right, Dave DeWeese tutors Taylor student Breaysha to improve her automaticity in reading. Middle, as part of the community learning center initiative, Taylor was moved a few blocks so that it would share a campus with the rec center. Bottom, behavioral health counselor Tiffany Zeigler helps Taylor student Rasean work through anger issues.

Editors: The community engagement process sounds time-consuming. Is it worth the effort?

Annie Bogenschutz: It's absolutely worth the effort. I've found that the ongoing community engagement is just as important as that initial engagement. For example, in planning our after-school program, one thing we discovered was that parents felt comfortable with the sixth- through eighth-graders going to the rec center, which is a drop-in facility, on their own after school. So we tailored our afterschool program to the younger kids, up to fifth grade. If we had created an afterschool program for the older kids, it would have been a waste of time and money.

Here's another example: I thought, from the demographics of the neighborhood, we should have some GED classes. After talking to parents and other community members, I learned that they wanted something else—a library and Internet access. So we decided that at night, after the afterschool program ended, we would keep the computer lab open another hour for the community. Now we're trying to create a library for the adults. We even have some Eagle Scouts building the bookshelves for us.

These are just a couple examples. The point is that we can bring in lots of different services, but if they are not what the people in that neighborhood need and want, then they are a waste of everyone's time and resources.

Darlene Kamine: At Oyler, we've been engaging the community to prepare for the building renovation, but we aren't waiting on the construction to add partners and services. For example, we learned that many parents would have their children drop out rather than go to a high school outside the community, so the community worked for several years to convince the district to add high school grades to the pre-K–8 school. Now we have a regular high school and an alternative program for students at risk of dropping out.

Dozens of partners and programs extend the activity in the building until almost 11 p.m. every night. Even in the old building, the Oyler CLC truly is the programmatic, spiritual, service, and cultural hub of the community. It has made a big difference

in the climate of the school.

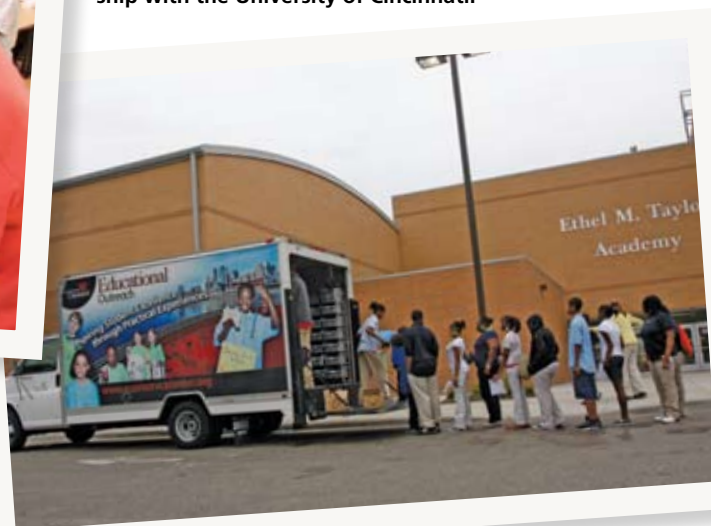
I was a juvenile court magistrate for 18 years, and I recently had the pleasure of taking the chief magistrate of the juvenile court on a tour of the school. He used to have a lot of "customers" in that school; since he hadn't had many lately, he wanted to see what was going on. Walking down the hall, he said, "There is real learning going on in this building now." I think that's how I would best describe it. There are a lot of activities and partnerships, but the core of this is all about how we support learning.

Julie Sellers: Once a CLC is established, the neighbors, parents, and students feel a greater connection with the school. The new schools are clean and attractive. You don't see trash or graffiti.





Left, Taylor students have dinner as part of the afterschool program. Below, with good behavior, Taylor students earn credits that they can exchange for cameras, iPods, T-shirts, and more at this mobile store, made possible by a partnership with the University of Cincinnati.



It's welcoming to the community and builds community respect for the school.

As a teacher at a CLC, you see the parents in the building more often so you can develop a better connection with the family. As parental involvement increases, students become more successful. The parents build relationships with the teachers through the CLC's community activities. Then, when a teacher calls, they already have a relationship and parents are less intimidated and more supportive of the school.

Editors: Here's a practical question: to what extent are you using the classrooms after school and how is it that the school is ready for academics again the next morning?

Annie Bogenschutz: The CLC has required a shift in thinking at Taylor. For instance, the cafeteria used to be cleaned right after lunch. Now we have the afterschool program that has dinner at 5 p.m., so schedules had to be changed. Space is also an issue, but since we are in a building designed to be a CLC, we have the luxury of five open spaces called extended learning areas. Picture an open pod in the middle and the classrooms off of it. This has been helpful for the afterschool and community programming. There have been times when we have had to go inside classrooms because we needed more space. But, for the most part, we've used the extended learning areas, cafeteria, gym, and library.

Darlene Kamine: The district has always had a janitor or plant operator in each building until at least 10 p.m. In the past, they cleaned the building on their own schedules. Now their schedules are coordinated with the afterschool and evening activities. The resource coordinator is very helpful in managing it all, including the development of relationships with the cleaning staff, the lunchroom staff, and the front office staff.

While all of the partnerships and programs must provide their own funding, the district does provide office space and furnishings, janitorial services, and other basics such as Internet access and phone service for the resource coordinator, afterschool coordinator, health providers, and other colocated partners. The new and renovated schools have air conditioning so that we can continue to serve the community during the summer. Reducing the costs of utilities was one of the incentives that prompted the

district to adopt green and sustainable design policies, which have earned the district recognition as one of the greenest in the United States.

Editors: Community schools often operate year-round. What are you able to offer during the summer?

Annie Bogenschutz: This summer, Taylor and 15 other schools identified as low performing are having extended learning time, called fifth quarter, during June. The morning is focused on math and reading, and the afternoon is enrichment. For instance, our seventh-graders asked for ballroom dancing. They are also doing CPR training. Sixth-graders wanted Spanish classes and to learn about different weather patterns—specifically tornadoes and lightning. So a meteorologist from one of our local news stations is coming once a week. These enrichment programs go until 2:30. But the parents said they needed a program until 4:30, and we wanted to partner with the rec center, which has traditionally served these kids over the summer. So at 2:30, the kids go to the rec center, which has a pool, lessons like knitting, and other activities. In addition, the tutor coordinator is ensuring that students have access to tutoring throughout June.

In July, we've partnered with the rec center for all-day programming, then in August school starts again. Throughout the summer, our mental health partner is continuing to work with certain students and groups. Our nurse is full time, and is also doing some health education that she hasn't had time for during the school year.

Editors: How do the CLCs affect teachers' work?

Julie Sellers: The teachers are thankful that the services are in the building because they know that the students' needs will be met. For example, for students whose families don't have enough food over the weekends, there are some CLCs that give out bags of food—called Power Packs—every Friday. All of the food is nutritious and child friendly. That not only meets a dire need, it

makes the students feel more secure, which leads to better behavior.

Annie Bogenschutz: Developing a CLC could be overwhelming at first, but the partners—especially the health and mental health partners—address the needs of the kids. Therefore, they free the teachers to focus on academics. The kids, in turn, are ready to learn.

Joe Wilmers: We have one partner in particular that is a huge help to teachers: St. Aloysius. It serves kids throughout Cincinnati with serious mental health and behavioral problems—it even has a hospitalization program. We have six therapists (three of whom are part time) from St. Aloysius at Winton Hills. One runs the antibullying program, and the others see individual students on a weekly basis. They also are available to do crisis intervention as needed. In addition, a psychiatrist from Cincinnati Children's Hospital comes to the school; he meets with parents and prescribes medicine. I work hand in hand with everyone from St. Aloysius. As a school social worker, part of my job is to be out in the community, particularly to contact parents who don't show up to sign papers for their children's medicine or ongoing therapy. Also, I'm our point person for abuse and neglect, and contacting child protective services. All of us work together and consult each other constantly.

Editors: What have you learned from this community engagement and partnership process?

Annie Bogenschutz: I've learned the importance of community engagement. I could have come into Taylor with programs already established, but they would only be successful if they were what the community wanted. Community engagement is the only way to meet community needs.

Darlene Kamine: As a society, we just say to teachers, "Here, do it, fix it." We drop kids and all their problems off at the teacher's door. I think that when we started this process, teachers, parents, and community members were very skeptical. They thought we were asking them to work with us in designing all this, but that their input would not alter what we were going to do. The way Cincinnati Public Schools

has given communities, teachers, parents, people without children, and children themselves an opportunity to take ownership of their school buildings has created a tremendous sense of community. This is reflected in the fact that we are increasing enrollment, adding jobs, and passing levies. The idea behind all these partnerships is to create the conditions for learning. The partnerships add new supports and enrichments; they do not replace existing jobs. What makes this work is that every community has wonderful resources and people, whether it's a small neighborhood or citywide.

Julie Sellers: Before we had CLCs, many students went without services. They went without counseling, without afterschool options. Many students were home alone or, as they got older, were hanging out on the streets.

With CLCs, there is more guidance for the students. They have more positive adult role models, and they learn how to interact with one another. During the school day, we don't have a long enough recess for children to learn appropriate interaction and sportsmanship. But they can learn these things in the afterschool activities. In addition, we have specific programs for the older students to pull them off the streets. For instance, we have boys' and girls' groups that build leadership. The kids love it. Even older kids would rather be in a structured club than on their own.

The times are changing, and we need to change with the times. Families are stressed, trying to get the services—the tutoring, child care, counseling, and medical care—their children need. With CLCs, communities are better able to meet families' needs and, because those needs are met, schools are better able to educate students. It is a great model.

Joe Wilmers: This is my 35th year working with kids and my 30th year in Cincinnati Public Schools, so I'm an old-timer who has been around. It's a shame that most schools are only open for seven hours a day. In my previous school, several of us voluntarily got the keys to the building and had activities like a chess club and a band. It has always been my personal dream that all schools would be more than a seven-hour-a-day phenomenon. Tax-

payers should have a right to the school after hours.

In my experience, the key for anything working is having buy-in. The principal has to believe fully in the importance of having a wide array of people get involved with the school. The principal has to articulate that to the whole staff and also has to designate somebody to coordinate all of the partners and schedules. You don't want a partner to arrive when the students are on a field trip.

With the buy-in firmly established, the other key is to make it easy for parents and community members to get involved. Groups often start small—like bringing pizza for our monthly attendance awards. They have lunch with the kids and tell them what a great job they've done getting to school every day. Once they do that, they fall in love with the kids and offer to do more. I think schools sometimes put up barriers that make it difficult to get involved. We always welcome people, and we let them know that we appreciate them.

I've always felt that I am blessed to have the opportunity to work with kids. If you want to make a difference, there's no better place to be. □

Equalizing Opportunity

(Continued from page 7)

income children with asthma are about 80 percent more likely than middle-class children with asthma to miss more than seven days of school a year from the disease.³¹ Children with asthma refrain from exercise and so are less physically fit. Drowsy and more irritable, they also have more behavioral problems that depress achievement.³²

Medical Care

Children without regular medical care are also more likely to contract other illnesses—some serious, others minor—that keep



them out of school. Despite federal programs to make medical care available to low-income children, there remain gaps in both access and utilization.³³ Many eligible families are not enrolled because of ignorance, fear, or lack of belief in the importance of medical care.

Even with health insurance, low-wage work interferes with the utilization of medical care. Parents who are paid hourly wages lose income when they take their children to doctors. Parents who work at blue-collar jobs risk being fired for excessive absence, so are likely to skip well-baby and routine pediatric care and go to doctors only in emergencies.

Use of Alcohol

Youngsters whose mothers drank during pregnancy have more difficulty with academic subjects, less ability to focus attention, poorer memory skills, less ability to reason, lower IQs, less social competence, and more aggression in the classroom.³⁴ On into adolescence, these children continue to have difficulty learning.³⁵ Fetal alcohol syndrome, a collection of the most severe cognitive, physical, and behavioral difficulties experienced by children of prenatal drinkers, is 10 times more frequent among low-income black children than middle-class white children.³⁶

Smoking

Children of mothers who smoked while pregnant do worse on cognitive tests and their language develops less well. They have more serious behavioral problems, are more hyperactive, and commit more juvenile crime.³⁷ Because secondhand smoke causes asthma, children whose mothers smoke after pregnancy also are more likely to have low achievement.

Birth Weight

Low-income children are more likely to be born prematurely or with low birth weights and to suffer from cognitive problems as a result; low-birth-weight babies, on average, have lower IQ scores and are more likely to have mild learning disabilities and attention disorders.³⁸ Thirteen percent of black children are born with low birth weight, double the rate for whites.³⁹ Even if all children benefited from equally high-quality instruction, this difference alone would ensure lower average achievement for blacks.

Nutrition

Poor nutrition also directly contributes to an achievement gap

Poor nutrition directly contributes to the achievement gap. Iron deficiency anemia also affects cognitive ability; 8 percent of all children suffer from anemia, but 20 percent of black children are anemic.

between lower- and middle-class children. Low-income kindergartners whose height and weight are below normal for children their age tend to have lower test scores.⁴⁰ Iron deficiency anemia also affects cognitive ability; 8 percent of all children suffer from anemia, but 20 percent of black children are anemic.⁴¹ Anemia also makes it more probable that children will absorb lead to which they have been exposed.⁴² Compared with middle-class children, the poor also have deficiencies of other vitamins and minerals.⁴³ In experiments where pupils received inexpensive vitamin and mineral supplements, test scores rose from that treatment alone.⁴⁴

Like social class differences in childrearing, each of these differences in health—in vision, hearing, oral health, lead exposure, asthma, use of alcohol, smoking, birth weight, and nutrition—has only a tiny influence on the academic achievement gap when considered separately. But together, they add up to a cumulative disadvantage for lower-class children that can't help but depress average performance.

To make significant progress in narrowing the achievement gap, three tracks should be pursued vigorously and simultaneously. First, school improvement efforts that raise the quality of instruction in elementary and secondary schools are essential. Second, comprehensive early childhood, afterschool, and summer programs must be implemented, so that lower-class children can have the same enriching experiences as their middle-class peers. And third, we must change our social and economic policies—and especially our approach to health care—so that all children can attend school more equally ready

to learn.

For nearly half a century, the association of social and economic disadvantage with a student achievement gap has been well known to economists, sociologists, and educators. Most, however, have avoided the obvious implication of this understanding: raising the achievement of lower-class children requires amelioration of the social and economic conditions of their lives, not just school reform. □

Endnotes

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Enduring Appeal

(Continued from page 29)

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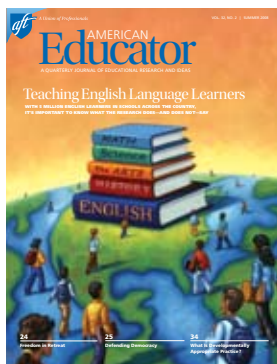
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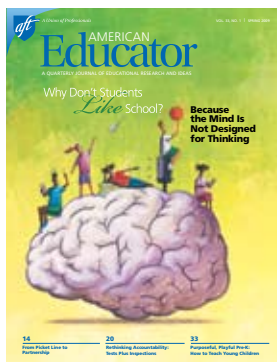
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