



# Financing Community Schools

LEVERAGING RESOURCES TO SUPPORT STUDENT SUCCESS

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Community schools are one of the most efficient and effective strategies to improve outcomes for students as well as families and communities. Community schools leverage public and private investments by generating additional financial resources from partners and other sources.

This report looks at how community schools finance their work. It describes the resources, partnerships, and activities community schools generate with the dollars they have; where monies come from; and the mechanisms community schools use to leverage additional funding and build their capacity to achieve agreed upon results. The report draws on survey results and case studies from a purposeful sample of experienced community schools—both individual sites as well as district-sponsored initiatives.

Community schools are built on the simple logic that schools and communities are mutually dependent and that strong and purposeful partnerships between them are essential to students' academic success. Whether in small towns, urban areas, or big cities, non-academic factors—hunger, safety, health, and other issues—spill into the classroom, affect learning, and create challenges well beyond what schools should be expected to handle alone. Community schools are one of the only school-reform strategies specifically designed to address both academic and non-academic issues by integrating and leveraging funds, working across silos, and partnering with local organizations to maximize resources. Inside community schools, we see an intentional leveraging of federal, state, and local funding streams—public and private—to provide supports and opportunities that students need to thrive both academically and beyond.

In this period of stripped down budgets, educators, community leaders and policymakers are more aware than ever of the need to use scarce resources to maximize results. Most schools, health and social service providers, youth development organizations, higher education institutions, public and private agencies and government officials work in isolated “silos,” concentrating on single issues. Experience teaches that these single issues overlap and that diverse stakeholders are all, in effect, responsible for the same children, the same families and the same communities. But bureaucratic organization and fragmented funding streams make it hard for their respective sectors to work together to better meet community and family needs.

The financial advantage of community schools is clear: community schools connect these multiple sectors and build the capacity to make a comprehensive approach efficient, effective and sustainable. For nearly two decades, educators, community leaders and policymakers have used the community school strategy to organize and leverage resources to achieve shared goals. Through partnerships, community schools align and integrate strategies to support students, strengthen schools, engage families, and help build entire communities where learning happens.

## Coalition for Community Schools

Because Every Child Deserves Every Chance



## FINDINGS

Findings show that in the experienced community schools in this report:

- ▶ **The bulk of resources go directly to assist schools in meeting their core instructional mission, while also strengthening the health and well-being of students, families and neighborhoods.** As Figure 1 shows, community schools dedicate approximately 57 percent of their expenditures to support learning through academic enrichment and after-school activities, early childhood education, service learning and civic engagement, life skills, and sports and recreation.
- ▶ **Community schools leverage diversified funding streams. For example, community schools leverage district dollars 3:1.** (See Figure 2.) The experience of the initiatives and sites in this report suggest the importance of public funding to provide core support and the value of dollars from private, faith-based, and community-based organizations (CBOs) to build depth and quality. Just as important is the public funding that is leveraged from initial investments by community groups and foundations. Community schools increase and sustain capacity through diversified financial support.
- ▶ **Collaborative leadership structures support finance and other key functions at the site and system level.** In the communities represented in this study, a variety of collaborative organizational designs are used to coordinate resources and create a community school initiative. What the various structures have in common is a similar *collaborative leadership structure* and a set of functions

that enable them to initiate, sustain and expand community schools at both the site and initiative levels. Central to this structure is an “intermediary” organization with the technical and political capacity to connect initiative and site level functions and to drive the initiative forward.

- ▶ **A mix of public and private sector partners expands financial, as well as technical and political capacity.** Provided there is clarity regarding goals and objectives, a broadly diverse set of partnerships can greatly expand an initiative’s financial, technical, and political capacity. Community schools in this study partner with public agencies, local and state government, large non-profit agencies and CBOs, the foundation and business communities, and universities and community colleges.
- ▶ **Full-time site coordination contributes essential site level capacity at minimal cost.** Site coordination accounts for just 7 percent of the total funds reported collectively by initiatives and individual school sites in this study. Sites typically employ a full-time staff person to mobilize partners, coordinate resources, and manage site-level programming. They often work with a lead agency, such as a community-based organization, higher education institution, or public agency to provide additional site coordination. In addition, sites may develop multi-tiered school/community teams to integrate planning, oversight and day-to-day management at the site. Coordination is an important but relatively inexpensive component of funding a community school.

Figure 1: How Resources Are Used

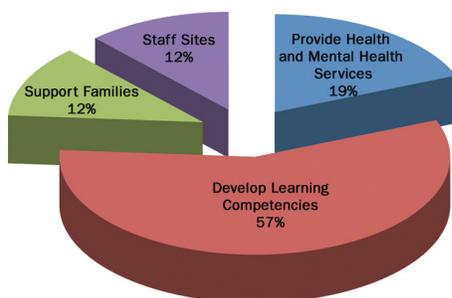
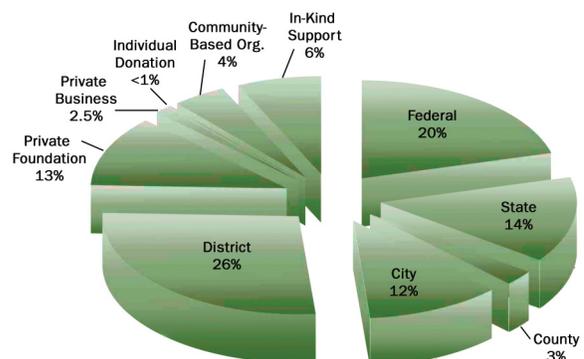


Figure 2: Where Resources Come From—Combined Initiatives and Individual Sites



## RECOMMENDATIONS

A community school is an investment in the community itself. With the coming reauthorization of the Elementary and Secondary Education Act, federal, state, and local agencies should take legislative and practical steps to mirror the culture of alignment, leverage, and coordination demonstrated by the community schools featured in this report.

The Coalition for Community Schools, representing over 160 organizations interested in the well-being and academic success of students, calls on policymakers at the federal, state, and local levels to recognize—and promote—community schools as a seasoned and powerful strategy for school reform and community revitalization. In order to support the sustainability and expansion of community schools, the Coalition recommends that policy makers:

- ▶ **Define and support a community school strategy through laws, regulations and guidelines.** The community school strategy should be defined in district, local government, state and national policy. It should be supported by legislation, regulations and guidelines for all programs providing funding that touches the lives of children, youth, and their families, in the journey from early childhood to college.
  - The community schools strategy should be included as an allowable use of funds under Title I.
  - The Full Service Community Schools (FSCS) program should be authorized and funded at a substantial level as a vehicle to help provide a continuing impetus for the development of community schools and serve as a learning laboratory for effective practices.
  - Funding for technical assistance and capacity building should be available to speed the learning of FSCS grantees and other developing community schools and to support learning among policymakers at all levels.
- ▶ **Provide incentives in ESEA and other legislation that move schools and community partners toward results-driven public/private partnerships.** Policymakers should incentivize partnerships by awarding additional points in grant competitions, rewarding greater flexibility in

funding, and setting aside bonus funding for those who meet the following priorities:

- Priority for using a comprehensive results framework.
  - Priority for those who demonstrate alignment and coordination of funding streams.
  - Priority for partnerships and consortia, over single entities.
- ▶ **Fund site coordination and site coordinators in support of community schools.** Our findings suggest that coordinators are the fulcrum of a community school. They leverage and integrate resources and have proven their value to principals, allowing school administrators to focus on instructional improvement. In order to support these necessary coordination functions, we recommend that:
- The Full Service Community Schools Act (H.R. 3545 and S. 1655) should be authorized by Congress as part of ESEA.
  - The reauthorized ESEA should provide an option to include the funding of a community school coordinator for all Title I schools.
  - Other federal and state agencies that finance opportunities and services for children, youth or families at schools or linked to schools should specify in grant guidelines that a portion of funding may be used to pay for the salary of a community school coordinator or for site coordination.

**“For every dollar spent [on community schools], we were getting back five, six, seven dollars from the business community, from non-profits, from the social service agencies, from the state [and] the federal government.”**

—Arne Duncan, Secretary,  
U.S. Department of Education

▶ **Support the work of intermediary organizations that help align and leverage resources and integrate funding streams to get results.** Our finding on intermediaries tells us that they are an essential component to a successful and sustainable community school initiative.

- In federal grant guidelines, priority should be given to applicants demonstrating how they support a broad results-focused framework with related indicators for the academic, social, emotional, physical and civic development of young people.
- Local policies should support organizations that have the legitimacy and credibility with local stakeholders to perform key intermediary functions.
- State policies should support and define clear expectations for Children's Cabinets or state non-profit organizations whose work cuts across agencies as well as public/private boundaries.

▶ **Promote interdepartmental coordination in support of community schools at the federal, state, community and district levels.**

Community schools epitomize the key principles of place-based policy that are being advocated by the Obama Administration. In this context:

- The White House should organize an Interdepartmental Task Force to develop an action agenda for community schools that develops common language to be included in multiple grant programs of federal agencies so that the end users—schools and community partners—can more readily access and integrate this funding into strong, sustainable, and aligned efforts.
- Policymakers should consider administrative flexibility in grant funding that would ease the integration of education programs during the school day so that they are more effective and efficient and reduce the administrative burden on grantees.
- Policymakers should respond to regulatory and administrative challenges identified by state and local leaders that impede community schools development.

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▶ **Fund professional development that enables people working in schools, with community partners, and in federal and state agencies to learn how community schools work and how policy can support them.** Movement to a community school strategy requires a shift in mind-set among people working in schools and in community partner organizations.

- At the federal and state levels, we suggest interdepartmental learning opportunities to help personnel learn how locals are putting together resources to get better results and how policy must change to support them.
- At the local level, school administrators and educators need to know more about how to work with families and community organizations. Likewise, staff of community partners need to know more about how schools work.
- Title II funds should be used to establish a national center focused on preparing instructional materials and professional development opportunities that assist principals and teachers to work more effectively with community partners and provide a focus on the community where students live.

Leveraged funding, collaborative partnerships, and the purposeful integration and alignment of assets enable a community school to deliver quality programming and serve student and family needs. The findings and case studies presented in this report illustrate how community school leaders are effectively, efficiently, and creatively blending funding to do whatever it takes to support student success. ■



*Because Every Child Deserves Every Chance*

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