

Community Schools

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SEF Position

SEF supports the implementation of a community schools approach or the provision of comprehensive wraparound supports for all students, but especially low-income students and students who have experienced childhood trauma.

Background

Community schools are public schools that partner with families and community organizations to provide comprehensive educational and non-academic services for school success. The schools help facilitate services such as access to affordable health care, stable housing, and affordable and healthy food. Each community school, even within the same district, is planned by identifying the specific needs of the school as well as the assets of the larger community that can address the needs identified in the “Needs and Assets Assessment.” There are four key pillars that together create the conditions necessary for students to thrive: (1) integrated student supports, (2) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities, (3) active family and community engagement, and (4) collaborative leadership and practices.



Benefits of a Community Schools Approach

- Research shows that community school interventions can result in improvements in a variety of student outcomes, including attendance, academic achievement (including reducing racial and economic achievement gaps), and high school graduation rates.
- Community schools are efficient and cost-effective. They coordinate the delivery of services to avoid duplication and maximize student supports. Research by the Children's Aid Society shows that Community Schools programs offer a strong return on investment of up to \$15 for every dollar invested.
- Numerous studies show that community schools, when implemented effectively and given sufficient time to mature, can help close achievement gaps for students from low-income families.¹
- They also help make communities more equitable by investing in neighborhoods that have been marginalized by historical disinvestment.
- These benefits help to create a more equitable society and increase the number of young people who are prepared to succeed in college, career, and civic life.



SEF Recommendations

States should increase or begin funding for community schools, including providing funding for conducting an initial needs and asset assessment, a planning year, and the hiring of a full-time coordinator in each school or district to help build and maintain the relationships required to sustain wraparound supports.

End Notes

1. Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence. Washington, DC: Learning Policy Institute, 2017. https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/sites/default/files/product-files/Community_Schools_Effective_REPORT.pdf.