

Community Schools - *Blueprint for Reform: The Reauthorization of the ESEA*

Dear Chairman Harkin, Ranking Member Enzi, and Members of the Senate Health, Education, Labor and Pensions Committee,

The Coalition for Community Schools (CCS) is the nation's largest alliance of organizations in education, youth development, health and mental health services, social and emotional learning, community development and related fields, involving more than 150 organizations. The Coalition advances opportunities for the success of children and youth, as well as their families and communities by promoting the development of more, and more effective community schools.

The community schools strategy is a results-based, systemic approach to education reform that addresses the whole child. **Community schools draw community assets into school reform efforts—aligning, coordinating, and leveraging public and private resources to achieve a common result—high academic achievement for all.** Common partners include community-based organizations, local governments, colleges and universities, health and social service agencies, youth development groups, business, and other untapped civic resources. Community schools have grown through the innovative use of federal, state, and local resources and strong local leadership and they are in every community.

Multiple components have emerged from the Department of Education's (DOE) reform strategy that are part of the community schools approach:

- Increased learning time, including enriched learning opportunities through service-learning, experiential learning, and work-based learning;
- Comprehensive services to high need students;
- Family and community engagement;
- Opportunities for social and-emotional development;
- Partnering with parents and parent organizations, faith- and community-based organizations, health clinics, other State or local agencies, and others to create safe school environments that meet students' social, emotional, and health needs; and
- Curriculum and instruction that reflects a deeper understanding of the community served by the school.

Community schools are reporting results that impact students and communities.

- Reduced dropout rates.
- Increased classroom attendance.
- Improved student behavior.
- Improved tests scores in math and reading.
- Increased parental involvement in the education of their children.
- More efficient of school and community in difficult fiscal times

Building on successful local community schools strategies, the community schools approach has been gaining visibility in public policy. Community schools are included in the Administration's *Blueprint for Reform*. The full services community schools grant program (\$10m) now administered by the DOE has spurred local action. The incorporation of community schools as an allowable use in the DOE's ARRA Title I uses guidelines, dated September 2009 is yet a third significant step. In this context the Coalition recommends that ESEA reauthorization specifically recognize the community school as the primary vehicle for aligning federal programs with state, local, and private funding streams to support student success.

ESEA RECOMMENDATIONS

1. We propose that community schools be explicitly included in the ESEA statute as an allowable school intervention model.

Struggling schools require comprehensive supports that address the unique needs of their students. Community schools are a flexible and proven model that offer such an approach, addressing the whole child through an aligned curriculum, standards and assessments; collaboration and shared responsibility between school and community partners; professional development for teachers; differentiated instruction; extended learning and enrichment time; family and community engagement; and comprehensive services for students and their families. We recommend that Congress consider offering districts the option to choose the community schools model, and we recommend that this model be available to all schools.

By including community schools as an allowable model, ESEA will create incentives to grow and sustain community partnerships, so schools and communities will work together to improve student achievement. Through this model, local education agencies and community partners leverage their resources to prepare students for college, career, and citizenship. Furthermore, the community school strategy provides incentives for results-driven partnerships to align numerous funding streams – public and private; this is the kind of efficiency our constituencies are asking for, especially in the current economic environment.

2. Integrate *Community* into Key Aspects of ESEA

The Coalition proposes that Congress:

- Set a community engagement policy that ensures LEAs work together with community partners to prepare plans to address non-academic factors influencing student success and to offering engaging and enriching learning experiences during the school day and beyond. Ensure that LEAs engage community stakeholders in planning and decision-making with regard to school reform models.
- Incorporate families and community partners into all references to strategies aiming to improve performance of Title I schools and persistently low-performing schools.
- Require states and LEAs to collect and publish data on non-academic factors related to student learning and development, e.g., attendance, truancy, early chronic absenteeism, reading by 3rd grade.

3. Build On Title I Recognition of Community Schools (Title I Uses Guidance, September 2, 2009)

The Coalition proposes that Title I of ESEA:

- Cite community schools as an allowable vehicle for integrating the various elements of support needed for student success in the school reform models.

- Include language defining community schools (see definition below) and authorizing community schools as a strategy under Title I to include an array of supports and opportunities including after school enrichment, college preparation, and mentoring.
- Explicitly authorize use of funds to finance community school coordinators (site coordinators), a key component of community schools.

Definition: A community school as both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. It provides academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and community engagement, and brings together many partners to offer a range of support and opportunities for children, youth, families, and communities. The school is generally open for extended hours for everyone in the community. Community schools may operate in all or a subset of schools in an LEA. This definition specifically allows spending on coordination. (Source: <http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/leg/recovery/guidance/titlei-reform.doc>, p. 29.)

4. **Authorize Full Service Community Schools Program**

The Full Service Community Schools grant program was started through Congressional appropriation. We suggest that the Full Service Community Schools Act (H.R. 3545, S. 1655) be officially authorized under Title IV of ESEA. A robust and flexible funding stream for community schools can expand the visibility of the approach; help develop a stronger knowledge base; support deeper research on community schools; and demonstrate how to glue together the assets of schools and communities together in the shared enterprise of educating our children and youth.

5. **Consolidate Federal Programs with a Caveat:** We support the 21st Century Community Learning Centers program, the Well-Rounded Education, the Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students Program, and Promise Neighborhoods proposed in the ESEA *Blueprint*. We are concerned that such consolidation does not lead to reducing funding however. We propose that these programs reflect a common results framework to ensure effective integration at the school site. (See recommendation #6). We also ask that 21st CCLC remain a state formula grant program. Significant progress has been made in numerous states to build an after school system that has resources from multiple funding streams. Returning 21st CCLC to federal control is likely to diminish this program.

6. **Alignment and Coordination of Education and Other Federal Agency Resources.** In a time of scarce resources it is imperative that Congress find ways to make the most effective and efficient use of federal dollars. The Coalition proposes the inclusion of specific provisions that provide explicit incentives for alignment and coordination of federal funding streams at the local level based on a results framework. Through this approach federal funds can leverage other streams, such as public and private funding to support student learning and development.

We ask Congress to include **common language** in the programs of ESEA to facilitate alignment and coordination at the school site. ESEA should give priority to applicants that demonstrate how the program will be integrated into a comprehensive school-based strategy to improve student achievement and student growth. ESEA should require schools and communities to develop comprehensive results frameworks and expect that ED programs will be aligned with these results frameworks. Specifically, we propose that grantees demonstrate:

- A. How their work fits into a comprehensive results framework. Results might include:
- Children are ready for school;
 - Students are engaged and achieving;

- Students are physically, mentally, socially, and emotionally healthy;
 - Schools and neighborhoods are safe and provide a positive climate for learning;
 - Families are supportive and engaged in their children’s education;
 - Graduates are ready for post-secondary education & 21st Century careers; and
 - Students are contributing to their communities.
- B. How funding from one program will be integrated and aligned with other federal funding streams (e.g. Title I, 21st Century Learning Centers, and the proposed new programs: Well-Rounded Education; Successful, Safe, and Healthy Students).
- C. Identify a mechanism at the school site to manage the alignment and coordination of programs under ESEA as well as community partners. Community schools research shows that this role is best played by a community school coordinator.

Supplemental Education Services (SES)

Increased flexibility is needed in SES to allow LEAs to respond to the unique needs of students and their families in low performing schools in their communities. As LEAs seek to pursue the different models to turn around the lowest performing schools, we propose that Congress **broaden the definition of SES** to include comprehensive supports for students and families, extended learning opportunity, and more intensive parent and community engagement, as well as tutoring. Evidence based strategies should be required. To use SES funds in this way, LEAs would provide a needs assessment to justify specific services.

National Capacity Building Center for Community Schools

In order to align, coordinate, and integrate the array of education programs as well as funding from other federal agencies, a **National Capacity Building Center should be authorized in ESEA**. A National Center is essential to highlight the intent of Congress to better align and coordinate multiple federal programs through the community schools approach. Such a Center would provide tools, resources, training and technical assistance to local education agencies, communities and states seeking to better align and integrate funding streams. It also would prepare instructional materials and resources and professional development opportunities to assist principals and teachers to provide more engaging instruction including a focus on the community where students live.

Community Schools Evaluation

We propose that Congress **invest in a national community schools evaluation strategy**. Currently, federal funds do not exist for the evaluation of community schools. The national evaluation can be informed by the Coalition’s recently developed Results Framework for Community Schools.

Family Engagement

We propose that Congress:

- **Redefine Family Engagement** as the following: *A shared responsibility of families and schools for student success, in which schools and community-based organizations are committed to reaching out to engage families in meaningful ways and families are committed to actively supporting their children’s learning and development. This shared responsibility is continuous from birth through young adulthood and reinforces learning that takes place in the home, school and community.*
- **Incentivize effective family engagement** and encourage local solutions by increasing the set-aside for effective family engagement from 1% to 2%.
- **Expect states to develop a statewide infrastructure** for effective family engagement, including refining the role of the Parental Information and Resource Centers to focus on statewide leadership, capacity-building, training, and technical assistance.

Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High Quality Teachers and Principals

Teachers and principals must be able to work more effectively with families and community partners to reach our national education goals. We ask Congress to more explicitly require all teacher and principal preparation and professional development to include a focus on:

- Working effectively to engage families in the education of their children;
- Working with community partners to support students and their families and overcome barriers to learning;
- Offering more engaging instruction in core academic subjects, including a focus on the context of the community where students live; and
- Providing enriched learning opportunities during and after school including community-based learning opportunities such as service-learning, experiential learning, work-based learning, civic and environmental education.

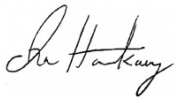
National Commission on School and Community Partnerships

We urge Congress to **establish a Cabinet- level interdepartmental commission** including leaders from the public and private sectors and states and local communities, to report on how the federal government, can more effectively integrate resources across federal agencies to support student learning and healthy development and enable all students to be college and career ready.

Conclusion

Finally, we ask that the Committee **hold hearings on how communities are mobilizing their resources to support student success**. There is much to learn from local leaders involved in such efforts. The Coalition would be pleased to work with you to arrange such a hearing.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide our input.



Ira Harkavy

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Martin J. Blank

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Lisa Villarreal

*Co-Chair, Coalition for
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The Coalition for Community Schools Partners

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT/ COMMUNITY BUILDING

Center for Community Change
Community Agencies Corporation of NJ
Development Training Institute
National Congress for Community Economic Development
National Council of La Raza
National Neighborhood Coalition
National Trust for Historic Preservation
National Urban League
Police Executive Research Forum
The Harwood Institute

EDUCATION

American Association for Higher Education
American Association of School Administrators
American Federation of Teachers
American School Counselor Association
Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development
Center for Community Partnerships, University of Pennsylvania
Council of Chief State School Officers
Council of the Great City Schools
Developmental Studies Center
Learning First Alliance
National Association for Bilingual Education
National Association of Elementary School Principals
National Association of School Psychologists
National Association of Secondary School Principals
National Association of State Boards of Education
National Association of State Directors of Special Education
National Center for Community Education
National Education Association
National Parent Teachers Association
National School Boards Association
Pacific Oaks College, CA

FAMILY SUPPORT / HUMAN SERVICES

Alliance For Children and Families
American Public Human Services Association
CASEL (Collaborative for Academic Social and Emotional Learning)-U. of Illinois at Chicago
Child Welfare League of America
Family Support America
National Center for Family Literacy

The Educational Alliance
United Way of America

GOVERNMENT

Local and State Governments

National League of Cities
National Association of Counties
National Conference of State Legislatures*
National Governors' Association*
The U.S. Conference of Mayors

Federal Government

Learn and Serve America
21st Century Community Learning Center Program
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

HEALTH AND MENTAL HEALTH

American Public Health Association
American School Health Association
National Assembly on School-Based Health Care
National Mental Health Association
Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation
UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools
Center for Health and Health Care in Schools, George Washington University

LOCAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL NETWORKS

Achievement Plus Community Learning Centers, St. Paul, MN
Alliance for Families and Children, Hennepin County, MN
Baltimore Connections, MD
Bates College/Lewiston Public Schools, ME
Birmingham Public Schools, AL
Boston Connects, MA
Boston Excels, MA
Boston Full Service Schools Roundtable, MA
Bridges to the Future, United Way of Genesee County - Flint, MI
Bridges to Success, United Way of Central Indiana - Indianapolis, IN
Bridges to Success, United Way of Greater Greensboro - Greensboro, NC
Bridges to Success, United Way of Greater High Point - High Point, NC
Chatham-Savannah Youth Futures Authority, GA
Chelsea Community Schools, MA

Chicago Coalition for Community Schools, IL
Chicago Public Schools - The Campaign to Expand Community Schools in Chicago
Community Agencies Corporation of New Jersey, NJ
Community College of Aurora/Aurora Public Schools, CO
Community-School Connections, NY
Community Schools Rhode Island, RI
Dorcas Place Adult and Family Learning Center
Jacksonville Partnership for Children, FL
KidsCAN!, Mesa, AZ
L.A. Urban Education Partnership
Lincoln Community Learning Centers Initiative, NE
Local Investment Commission (LINC), Kansas City, MO
Minneapolis Beacons Project, MN
Montgomery County Public Schools - Linkages to Learning
New Paradigm Partners, Turtle Lake, WI
New Vision for Public Schools, NY
Project Success, IL
Rockland 21st Century Collaborative for Children and Youth, NY
School Linked Services Inc., Kansas City, KS
SCOPE (School and Community Organized to Provide Excellence), Central Falls, RI
St. Louis Park Schools, MN
St. Louis Public Schools, Office of Community Education, MO
Schools United Neighborhoods (SUN), Portland, OR
University of Alabama-Birmingham/Birmingham Public Schools, AL
University of Dayton/Dayton Public Schools, OH
University of Denver/Denver Public Schools, CO
University of Kentucky/Lexington Public Schools, KY
University of New Mexico/United South
Broadway/Albuquerque Public Schools, NM
University of Rhode Island/Pawtucket Public Schools, RI
West Philadelphia Improvement Corps (WEPIC)

NATIONAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL NETWORKS

Beacons Schools Youth Development Institute at the Fund for the City of New York
Children's Aid Society
Communities in Schools
National Community Education Association
Schools of the 21st Century, Yale University

PHILANTHROPY

Carnegie Corporation
Charles Stewart Mott Foundation
Families of Freedom Scholarship Fund
Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation
KnowledgeWorks Foundation
Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation
Polk Bros. Foundation
Rose Community Foundation
The After-School Corporation
The Wallace Foundation

POLICY, TRAINING AND ADVOCACY

After School and Community Education Resource Network
American Youth Policy Forum
Children's Defense Fund
Coalition of Community Foundations for Youth
Coalition for Our Children's Schools
Collaborative for Integrated School Services, Harvard Graduate School of Education
Cross Cities Campaign for Urban School
Education Development Center
Eureka Communities
Family Friendly Schools, VA

Foundations, Inc.
Institute for Educational Leadership
Institute for Responsive Education
Institute for Social and Education Policy, New York University
National Center for Schools and Communities, Fordham University
Joy Dryfoos, Independent Researcher
National Child Labor Committee
National Coalition for Parent Involvement in Education
National Youth Employment Coalition
Parents United for Child Care, Boston MA
Public Education Network
RMC Research
The Finance Project
The Rural School and Community Trust
The Summer Learning Association

SCHOOL FACILITIES PLANNING

Concordia, LLC
Council of Education Facilities Planners International
National Clearinghouse for Educational Facilities
New Schools / Better Neighborhoods
Smart Growth America
21st Century School Fund

STATE ENTITIES

California Center for Community-School Partnerships/Healthy Start Field Office
California Department of Education
Child and Family Policy Center
Community Schools, RI
Colorado Foundation for Families and Children
Education Leadership Beyond Excellence
Foundation Consortium, CA
Illinois Community School Partnership / Voices for Illinois Children
Nebraska Children and Families Foundation
New Jersey School-Based Youth Service/Department of Human Services
Office of Family Resource and Youth Services Centers, Frankfort, KY
Ohio Department of Education
State Education and Environment Roundtable
Tennessee Consortium of Full Service Schools
Washington State Readiness-To-Learn Initiative

YOUTH DEVELOPMENT

Academy for Educational Development
AED Center for Youth Development and Policy Research
America's Promise
Association of New York State Youth Bureaus
Big Brothers, Big Sisters
Boys and Girls Clubs of America
California Afterschool Partnership/Center for Collaborative Solutions
Camp Fire USA
Families of Freedom Scholarship Fund
National Collaboration for Youth
National Institute On Out-of-School Time
National School-Age Care Alliance
Partnership for After-school Education
The Forum for Youth Investment
The Summer Learning Association
YMCA of the USA