Community Schools Defined

A community school is two things: 1) a public school and 2) a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families, and communities.

Community schools differ from traditional schools in the following ways:

- Garner additional resources through the use of lead agencies that work in partnership with the school to mobilize and integrate community resources and reduce the demand on school staff for addressing all the challenges that students may be facing.
- Use evidenced-based programming and practice that cuts across a broad spectrum of approaches.
- Focus on results for students, families, and communities that cuts across multiple domains.
- Apply community-based learning approaches, such as service learning and place-based education that involve students learning in the real world.
- Converge expertise from both the school and the community, which enhances student learning and supports families and community.

Ultimately, community schools build social capital; they create networks and relationships that support learning and opportunity for young people while also strengthening communities.

The Research

The research on childhood development finds that children progress along multiple, interconnected domains: social, emotional, physical, cognitive, civic, and moral. These domains must be fostered and addressed simultaneously in safe environments such as the home, school, and community. If one domain is ignored, other domains are likely to suffer. These domains provide:

- Varied and rich social experiences
- Educational opportunities that build on children’s individual learning styles (verbal, visual, kinesthetic, etc.)
- Support basic needs of children and their families, including health, nutrition, and economic and social well-being

While traditional schools focus primarily on cognitive development, community schools attempt to address all the domains and factors in a child’s development.
Community School
Fact Sheet

The Results

The following is a list of outcomes that have been achieved by various community schools across the country.

| Improved kindergarten readiness and greater reading proficiency | More parent time with children |
| Fewer dropouts and higher college attendance | Fewer suspensions |
| Improved nutrition for families | Increased parent leadership |
| Decrease in achievement gaps | Higher immunization rates |
| More instructional time by decreasing the need for principal office referrals | Increased help for students in crises who may face disciplinary problems and academic failure |
| Improved average test scores | Higher attendance rate |

Community schools help develop and nurture the whole child by:

- bringing together the assets and resources of communities and families in schools to help support students
- ensuring that the school sees the community as an important partner and resource

Sources:
Coalition for Community Schools, Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools, May 2003.