

A COMPANION BRIEF TO THE "COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PLAYBOOK"

# FINANCING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS:

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## A Framework for Growth and Sustainability

Sharon Deich with Meghan Neary



PARTNERSHIP  
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**FUTURE of**  
**LEARNING**

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## Individuals who provided case studies and interview content:

<b>ABC Community Schools, Albuquerque, NM</b>	Danette Thompson, Executive Director ABC Community School Partnership
<b>Hartford Community Schools, CT</b>	Tauheedah Jackson, Former Executive Director Partnership for Student Success  Nuchette Black-Burke, Chief of Family and Community Partnerships Hartford Public Schools
<b>Greece Central School District, NY</b>	Kelly Sperduto, Community School Coordinator Greece Central School District
<b>Fairfax County, VA</b>	Jesse Ellis, Prevention Manager Fairfax County Department of Neighborhood and Community Services
<b>Asheville Buncombe, NC</b>	Laura, Elliot , Director of Community Schools Leadership and Strategy Development United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County  Nona Workman, V.P. Finance and Operations United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County
<b>Grand Island Public Schools, NE</b>	Jennifer Worthington, Chief of Strategic Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement, Grand Island Public Schools
<b>Cincinnati Community Learning Centers, OH</b>	Nerferife (Ife) Bell, Community Partnership Manager Cincinnati Public Schools  Darlene Kamine, Executive Director Community Learning Center Institute

**Oakland Joint Powers  
Commission, CA**

Lisa Villarreal, Former Exec Director  
Oakland Joint Powers Commission

**United Way Worldwide**

Ayeola Fortune, Senior Director, Impact and Global Results  
United Way Worldwide

**Lincoln Community Learning  
Centers, NE**

Barbara Bartel, President  
Lincoln Community Foundation

Nola Derby-Bennett, Director, Lincoln Community Learning Centers  
Lincoln Public Schools

**Communities in Schools**

Gary Chapman, Executive Vice President, Business Development  
Communities In Schools National Office

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Suzanne Kerbow, Program Director for Education  
Polk Bros Foundation



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## INTRODUCTION

*"The ability to read, write, and analyze; the confidence to stand up and demand justice and equality; the qualifications and connections to get your foot in that door and take your seat at that table—all of that starts with education."*

— Michelle Obama

Our public education system is the bedrock of democracy and a place where young people develop the skills, knowledge, and relationships necessary to thrive while also preparing them to tackle the challenges of the future. However, the educational success of young people is impacted by a variety of social factors including health care, stable housing and affordable, healthy food. Longstanding inequities in access to these foundational components of well-being negatively impact students' learning outcomes, limiting the potential of young people and imposing barriers on equal educational opportunity.

Enter community schools: an evidence-based strategy for leveraging community assets to address the comprehensive needs of students and families and level the playing field for success. Community schools create the conditions necessary for students to thrive by focusing attention, time and resources on a shared vision of success for both young people and their communities.

Community schools are a vital component of an equity strategy that helps to make society more fair by investing in communities that have been marginalized by historical disinvestment.

In 2018, the [Partnership for the Future of Learning](#) produced a [Community Schools Playbook \(Playbook\)](#) to accelerate the development of community schools. The Playbook elevates the research case for community schools (CS) and lays out a range of policy strategies that can be implemented to grow and sustain them.<sup>[1]</sup> The Playbook also includes ideas and options for engaging federal, state, and local policymakers and policy influencers to leverage and expand options for financing for community schools.

This brief is a companion to the Playbook, introducing a framework for financing community schools that reflects tested practices. It also provides examples of how community schools at varying stages of development can identify and implement financing strategies. The examples in the brief are intended to highlight the many ways that communities are financing their community schools. Some of the included initiatives are well known; others, less so. Together, they demonstrate how a diverse set of communities are weaving together funding to support their community schools. The brief concludes with several longer examples of how community school leaders are putting financing strategies into practice.

## What the Four Pillars of Community Schools Look Like in Action

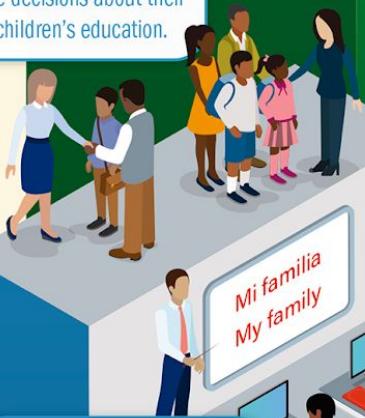
Enrichment activities emphasize real-world learning and community problem solving.



After-school, weekend, and summer programs provide academic instruction and individualized support.



Promoting interaction among families, administration, and teachers helps families to be more involved in the decisions about their children's education.



Schools function as neighborhood hubs. There are educational opportunities for adults, and family members can share their stories and serve as equal partners in promoting student success.

Active Family and Community Engagement

Parents, students, teachers, principals, and community partners build a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using strategies such as site-based leadership teams and teacher learning communities.



Collaborative Leadership and Practice

A dedicated staff member coordinates support programs to address out-of-school learning barriers for students and families.



Mental and physical health services support student success.

Integrated Student Supports

## What Are Community Schools?<sup>[2]</sup>

Community schools are public schools that partner with families and community organizations to provide well-rounded educational opportunities and support for students' school success. Like every good school, community schools must be built on a foundation of powerful teaching that includes challenging academic content and supports students' mastery of 21st century skills and competencies. What makes community schools unique is the combination of four key pillars that together create the conditions necessary for students to thrive:

- 1) Integrated student support**
- 2) Expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities**
- 3) Active family and community engagement**
- 4) Collaborative leadership and practices**

Because each community school is a reflection of local needs, assets, and priorities, no two look exactly alike. What they share, however, is a commitment to partnership and to rethinking—and at times rebuilding—relationships based on a strong foundation of trust and respect. School staff, under the leadership of the principal and community school director, work with families and community partners to create and implement a shared vision of student and school success.

# SETTING THE STAGE FOR EFFECTIVE FINANCING: GUIDELINES AND CONSIDERATIONS

When it comes to financing community schools, leaders must find partners and funding to provide services and resources to support the work of coordination and collaboration, which is referred to as the infrastructure of community schools throughout this brief. Financing for community schools requires some combination of tapping and/or redeploying resources already available across a variety of programs, and finding additional funding to fill in gaps.

While this sounds reasonably straightforward, creating a financing plan isn't just about spreadsheets and funding sources. It requires nuanced relationship building, sound policies and programs, and a well-developed strategy. The following guidelines and considerations can help community school leaders with the complex work of developing and implementing financing plans that support all four pillars of community schools. As these guidelines show:

## TIP

Local needs and asset mapping, conducted as an early step in the development of a community school, are a key resource for identifying local strengths, challenges and priorities. In addition, some communities undertake fiscal mapping to better understand the financial landscape in which they are operating. Fiscal maps can help to identify resources for short-term and longer-term financing strategies, and to identify places where partnerships may be necessary to access resources.

## 1

**Context matters.** When considering how to finance community schools, the context or local environment sets the frame for strategy development. Some communities will have supportive mayors and superintendents, a robust and supportive philanthropic community, and engaged and committed parent and community leaders calling for a community school approach. Others may be facing budget shortfalls, leadership transitions, and shifting demographics and priorities. Regardless of the specific circumstances, all districts and localities face a mix of opportunities and challenges. An important first step is understanding this local context, as this will shape the community schools' structure, focus, and financing.

## 2

**Community schools operate in a unique, dynamic environment** that is constantly changing. Some changes are due to policy changes—federal, state, or local—and subsequent changes in practice and programs. Leadership transitions also bring shifting visions and approaches with implications for community school growth and sustainability. A well-developed and broadly owned community school vision, accompanied by jointly established policies and practices, helps to anchor community schools and promote sustainability. Community school leaders and supporters should also work to stay nimble, examining each new change with an eye towards opportunities for expanding or deepening partnerships and financing. Creating systems, policies, and practices that empower leaders to regularly explore “what’s new” can help avoid funding shortfalls while taking full advantage of new opportunities.

## TIP

During leadership transitions, some community schools host visits for new leaders (and sometimes candidates) to showcase their work and its impact. This is an effective strategy for generating buy-in and support for maintaining momentum as new leaders take the helm.

A growing proportion of people from varied cultural, ethnic, and socioeconomic backgrounds are calling Fairfax County, Virginia home – a trend that is expected to continue over time.<sup>[3]</sup> While the county remains one of the most affluent in the country, recent demographic changes have led to a growing number of families in need of county support and services. In response to this shift, Fairfax County has turned to community schools as a strategy for ensuring that every child has the resources needed to be successful in school and life. In 2017, a committee of county and district leaders—the Successful Children and Youth Policy Team (SCYPT)—first commissioned information and a proposal for implementing community schools. Shortly after, the local United Way approached county and district staff about piloting a community school with a lead agency model in a local middle school. Community school leaders seized this opportunity, recognizing that having a pilot school could help them strengthen a proposal for county-wide implementation and build a data case for expansion. Armed with pilot data, the SCYPT is developing a proposal for additional community schools and programmatic guidelines to support expansion.

## 3

**Financing the infrastructure is critical to success and sustainability.** Finding funding for community school infrastructure—including the ability to knit together resources from multiple agencies—is critical to the success, scale, and sustainability of the work. Successful community schools begin their work by tapping available resources and deploying them at schools. This may include after-school programs being provided by local organizations; health services supported by Medicaid; or nutrition support provided by local food banks. This work cannot happen without a corresponding

infrastructure. At the school level, the infrastructure includes staffing capacity to carry out the work. The person selected for this role is widely known as the community school coordinator. The coordinator can be an employee of the district, or work for a closely aligned local agency. While the role of community school coordinator may look different from place to place, this person is responsible for supporting the building-level infrastructure by managing programming at the school, mobilizing and coordinating partners, and working with school staff to align the community school strategy with the vision and goals of the school.

## TIP

Make funding a coordinator position a top priority. It is common wisdom and a best practice for successful community schools to have a full-time person responsible for each community school.

In addition, as community school initiatives grow, there is a need for increased systemic capacity, including staff to coordinate across individual schools, and to support planning,

collecting, and analyzing data and communications. Here too, systems capacity can be supported by district staff or by a local agency acting as an intermediary.

Community school leaders in **Hartford, CT** recognized a need to finance staff roles to tend to the infrastructure during early expansion phases. The Hartford community schools initiative was launched through a partnership among Hartford Public Schools, the City of Hartford, the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, and United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut—known as the Hartford Partnership for Student Success (HPSS). The HPSS provided support for site-based infrastructure, including full-time coordinators, through grants to lead agency partners. HPSS also provided resources for system support including a director housed at the district, and a technical assistance support role the following year. The community schools work is now transitioning away from HPSS leadership and being absorbed by the district, where it is supported by a team of people and overseen by the new Chief Outreach Officer in a restructured Office of Outreach, Family Engagement & Community Partnerships. The lead agencies continue to support work in the schools. As part of this transition, the district has a plan for expanding to additional schools.

## Community School Systems Level Functions

The Coalition for Community Schools defines seven system functions for supporting community schools. These functions can live within a district, another public agency (city or county), or in a non-profit organization (often referred to as an intermediary organization). As community school initiatives mature, their system home may shift. For instance, in Hartford, responsibility for community school operations is shifting from non-profit, intermediary organizations to the school district with the goal of promoting better alignment with district priorities and resources. Likewise, in Cincinnati, the district is building internal capacity to manage key aspects of their growing community schools system (including developing a new data system) while maintaining a strong relationship with their non-profit partners. Each home—district, city/county agency, or intermediary—comes with its own set of benefits and challenges. What is most important, however, is that all system functions are supported, and that the initiative embraces an approach that leads to shared ownership for the work. This may mean sharing system responsibilities across partners. In Los Angeles, for instance, the L.A. Compact, Los Angeles Unified School District, and the United Teachers of Los Angeles jointly share responsibility for community schools. The relationship is grounded in a school district resolution and a Memorandum of Understanding between the school district and the United Teachers of Los Angeles. Together, they manage the work of coordinating resources and services at all schools, evaluating effectiveness, and promoting community schooling achievement.

## 4

**A mix of funding is essential.** Diversity is the holy grail of financing. Securing a mix of shorter- and longer-term funding from multiple public and private sources allows community school leaders to develop a sustainable funding base. This often requires community school leaders to take full advantage of currently available resources while building a longer-term, stable base of funds. Diversity also means building a portfolio of funding that includes both public and private sources. In an ideal scenario, public funding would support the community school infrastructure and key

services (health, mental health, family engagement, etc.). Private sources, which are typically less reliable and therefore used for short-term investments, would be used to support start-up of new schools, incubation of new programming, quality enhancements, and evaluation. In reality, community school leaders must always be on the lookout for available funding sources—and be prepared to advocate for new sources—to protect against the inevitable shifts in funding priorities, while deepening and sustaining their work.

In Lincoln, NE community schools were piloted using \$100,000 in seed money from the local community foundation. Even in its early stages, initiative leaders were wary of relying on a single stream of funding. Costs for site-based coordinators were split between foundation resources and contributions of lead agencies partnering with each of the four schools. Now Community Learning Centers are rooted in 29 of the district's 59 schools, and funded through 16 sources including district and city general funds, Title I, a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant, financial and in-kind contributions from lead agency partners, and private foundation grants. According to leaders, this funding mix protects the work from a decrease in any given source.

## TIP

When it comes to funding, it is important not to let the tail wag the dog – to avoid “mission creep.” Community school leaders may have to make hard choices about accepting or declining funds that may not be well aligned with goals and objectives, or the needs of the community school.

## 5

**Financing strategies should align with the developmental stage of a community schools initiative.** As community schools mature and expand, they develop more robust management systems and deeper partnerships. The scope and complexity of their support, services, practices, and systems also grow. In turn, more well-developed systems create additional potential for implementing complex financing strategies that require substantial tracking and resource management. The following developmental framework, adapted

from the National Center for Community Schools at the Children’s Aid Society, is intended to provide community school leaders and partners with ideas for financing strategies that are commonly associated with the developmental stages. These are not meant to be prescriptive or exclusionary: for example, an emerging community school initiative may have the opportunity to test a financing strategy typically associated with schools in the excelling stage of development. A longer description of each stage can be found in the Appendix.

## TIP

As part of community school needs assessments, leaders can gather information about how they can best promote regular communication with stakeholders.

## 6

**Transparency is key.** Successful community school initiatives create multiple ways to promote transparency, starting with effective systems for sharing information with partners, families, and other stakeholders. Web sites, data dashboards, public meeting notes, email blasts, and social media are some of the ways that community schools share information and promote transparency and trust. Another way to support transparency is to create welcoming spaces in buildings for parents and family

members. As districts modernize facilities, for example, they can add parent and family rooms. Transparent systems ensure that stakeholders can share in successes together; e.g., celebrate new funding or other good news. They also involve partners and stakeholders in difficult decisions, such as how to allocate resources equitably across schools. When the community is kept informed of changes and challenges, and is engaged in identifying solutions, trust is maintained.

## Success Metrics

As community school initiatives mature, they often expand their success metrics to track both implementation and impact. Measures can also focus on short-, intermediate-, and long-term outcomes. For example, attendance and disciplinary rates are likely to improve in the shorter-term, whereas test score increases are likely in an intermediate to long-term timeframe.

## 7

**Data and results can help to drive consistent funding.** In this era of limited education resources, showing results helps community school leaders and advocates unlock continued funding and demonstrate ongoing improvement. With outcomes spanning multiple domains—achievement, attendance, behavior, relationships, and attitudes—community school leaders have many options for choosing measures to make the financial case for their work.<sup>[4]</sup>

For instance, community schools may begin to demonstrate their value with a simple metric that shows the amount of additional resources brought into a school and/or district by the community school team. It is also important to consider the local priorities of the community schools initiative when focusing on success metrics. For example, if health is a local priority, leaders might consider using health-related metrics to promote the value of community schools.

Some initiatives, like the ABC Community School Partnership in **Albuquerque, NM** have taken this work to the next level and created a return on investment (ROI) metric to demonstrate the added value of coordinators. (See ROI Textbox.) While studies on the economic returns from community schools are limited, they all point to a positive return from bringing additional support and services into schools to address students' multiple needs. [5]

A hallmark of the **Asheville-Buncombe County** community schools approach is an early warning and response system that gives schools and community partners real-time data to help them meet the needs of students and track the effectiveness of programs and support. Local partners were eager to fund the system—the first of its kind in North Carolina—and convened to inform its development, which set the tone for collaboration on other community school-related issues. After several years of implementation, leaders believe that they are poised to start sharing impact data from the system, which will help them continue to make the case for ongoing funding and expansion.

## Return on Investment Studies

As the evidence of community schools' contributions to student and school success grows, some community school initiatives are working to demonstrate the financial value of their investments. In Albuquerque, for instance, the ABC Community School Partnership has calculated a return on investment (ROI) for its community school coordinator position by utilizing the Coalition for Community Schools standards. [6] According to their case study, at one school, "there was a seven dollar monetized benefit from the coordination of existing and new relationships and resources to meet students and family's interests and needs." [7] Other ROI studies for community schools and integrated student support programs point to rates of return from \$3 to \$15, depending upon the specific cost and benefits included. [8] *The Coalition for Community Schools will release an ROI tool in 2020 to support community schools' effectiveness, advocacy efforts, and work to create fiscally efficient communities.*

ROI studies require detailed data to first determine the costs for the coordinator, a set of services, or the initiative as a whole. These may include costs for staff, materials, supplies, overhead, and in-kind contributions (e.g., facilities, food, volunteers), as well as those for professional development, training time, and evaluation.

Also required is information about the benefits associated with investments. Here, careful estimation is needed to accurately represent

the impact of community school interventions —on issues from crime prevention to student earnings to health outcomes. Many of these benefits will be longer-term, and therefore not directly empirically measurable in the shorter term. Community schools may find that they need additional or different data from what is regularly collected to calculate an ROI. Furthermore, it is important that ROI estimates make clear the assumptions used to determine costs and benefits so that all stakeholders understand what's included and why.

# A FRAMEWORK FOR FINANCING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Community schools coordinate resources from across the community to meet the varied needs of young people and their families. This means that there may be a variety of resources with the potential to support schools or the initiative more broadly. Depending on the identified needs and approaches for meeting them, funds for early care and k-12 education, health and mental health, parent and family engagement, workforce, community development, or other areas could be used.

Financing community schools largely involves covering the cost of services by tapping or redeploying resources already available across a variety of programs and funding streams. New or additional funding will likely be needed to support the community school infrastructure coordination and management, and to fill service gaps. Identifying and deploying appropriate resources, both public and private, relies on three key funding strategies:

- 1) Accessing Existing Resources
- 2) Coordinating and Leveraging Resources
- 3) Developing New Resources

Taken together, these strategies can unlock a stable set of resources needed to start, grow, and sustain community schools. The challenge is figuring out how to take full advantage of each strategy while combining them for maximum effect.

There are a few more things to note about the strategies and related resources:

- When it comes to community schools, resources are defined as people, time, and money. The role of each may look different for each strategy, but they all play important roles.

- The strategies increase in complexity; accessing existing resources is usually easier and requires less management effort than developing new resources. Smaller initiatives, or those that have been in operation for a shorter period of time, are likely to focus on strategies one and two; more mature initiatives that have stronger backbone support and more well-developed partnerships are better poised to tackle the third strategy.
- The strategies often build upon and reinforce each other. In fact, community school leaders may have to show that they have taken full advantage of existing resources as a condition for accessing new funding.
- There is no formula for when or precisely how to implement the strategies. The individual circumstances of each community will dictate readiness to pursue them.
- When considering whether to pursue a particular strategy or funding source, community school leaders must consider if the return is worth the effort. For instance, spending time on a proposal that generates about the same amount of funding as the value of the time spent securing and processing the contract is not likely a good use of resources.

The following Framework for Financing Community Schools illustrates how initiatives at varying stages of development might implement each of the three strategies.

# FRAMEWORK FOR FINANCING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT: EXPLORING

ACCESSING EXISTING RESOURCES	COORDINATING AND LEVERAGING RESOURCES	CREATING NEW RESOURCES	TIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify local organizations currently delivering services at schools</li> <li>Secure dedicated time for district planning</li> <li>Identify resources to support coordination by expanding current positions (e.g., after-school coordinators, family liaisons) or adding new ones to take on coordination duties</li> <li>Explore savings from co-locating services with other local providers</li> <li>Track local government, federal, and state funding opportunities and their current purposes</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify funds that support needed services or particular student groups (e.g., school district Title I, II, IV dollars; funds from other sectors like workforce, housing, parks and recreation, social service, health, etc.)</li> <li>Identify a lead (the “Community Schools Coordinator”) from the district, other local government, or community partner that brings knowledge and capacity to support the infrastructure</li> <li>Review district and city/county budgets to gain a fuller understanding of funding landscape</li> <li>Explore use of memorandums of understanding or other structures to formalize funding agreements</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Solicit donations through in-kind and local fundraising</li> <li>Introduce public and private funders to community schools</li> <li>Research strategic priorities of local corporations, foundations, and community organizations to identify possible strategic alignment</li> <li>Work with community organizing groups to create support and promote funding for community schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider how funding will support infrastructure costs, including a full-time coordinator, as well as services</li> <li>Learn more about how other local jurisdictions are implementing community schools</li> <li>Align initial strategies with district priorities —chronic absence, early childhood, college and career readiness—to promote interest and funding</li> </ul>

## STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT: EMERGING

ACCESSING EXISTING RESOURCES	COORDINATING AND LEVERAGING RESOURCES	CREATING NEW RESOURCES	TIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for funds as part of local budget processes</li> <li>Work with local community-based organizations to identify a wider set of funding opportunities and to build public will</li> <li>Seek support from local universities for evaluation</li> <li>Identify options for repurposing current funding including redeploying dollars to support infrastructure and services</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Combine funds from multiple sources to develop and expand positions and programs</li> <li>Establish additional staffing, whether from a single organization or cross-sector collaborative team, to provide support and management</li> <li>Secure matching funds to leverage private-public dollars</li> <li>Convene partners to identify new funding opportunities and make joint requests to funders</li> <li>Create processes, formal agreements, and/or memorandums of understanding for partners and providers to codify and preserve financing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Secure funds from local funders (United Way and community foundations, etc.) to pilot or expand community school offerings</li> <li>Educate local, state, and federal policymakers on value of CS schools</li> <li>Organize community-wide fundraising events</li> <li>Join advocacy campaigns for expanded youth programs and other programs such as health, mental health, and workforce development that support students and families</li> <li>Work with champions to engage new funders</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Begin tracking outcomes to demonstrate results by identifying metrics aligned with key priorities; putting data tracking systems into place; and tracking implementation and short-term outcomes</li> <li>Invest in expanded mapping of partners and resources</li> <li>Attend conferences, meetings, and trainings with other community school staff and leaders</li> <li>Explore other community benefits of community schools such as neighborhood safety and beautification, and small business partnerships</li> </ul>

## STAGE OF DEVELOPMENT: EXCELLING

ACCESSING EXISTING RESOURCES	COORDINATING AND LEVERAGING RESOURCES	CREATING NEW RESOURCES	TIPS
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expand infrastructure to access additional funds and resources from partner organizations: for example, hire a lobbyist; provide professional development; bolster communications; hire grant writers and evaluators; or enhance data and financial systems</li> <li>Establish structures and policies to a wider range of federal funds</li> <li>Apply for federal funds and other grants requiring established local partnerships</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt a single, equitable, cross-agency request for proposal process for schools and partners to access and report on funding</li> <li>Work with policymakers and funders to enhance flexibility in how funds are used</li> <li>Make infrastructure costs part of existing public and private budgets</li> <li>Formalize infrastructure by creating collaborative intergovernmental structures (e.g., joint powers agreement, children's cabinets)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish line items for community schools in public budgets</li> <li>Create dedicated local revenue within city and county structures</li> <li>Participate in state and local advocacy</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Invest in leadership development internally and with partners to ensure that community schools become the standard for schools</li> <li>Expand data tracking systems and analytic practices; move toward more formal program and/or ROI evaluations</li> </ul>

# STRATEGY DEEP DIVE

## Strategy 1: Accessing Existing Resources

Many community schools fund initial operations by drawing together resources available from schools, school districts, city and county agencies, aligned community partners, and local philanthropic organizations. The table below

lays out key federal, state, and local public funding options often used by community schools, along with possible private sources for consideration.

### FUNDING SOURCES FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TO CONSIDER

FEDERAL	STATE	LOCAL	PRIVATE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Elementary and Secondary Education Act Titles I, II, and IV</li><li>21st Century Community Learning Center grants</li><li>Title IV-A Student Support and Enrichment grants</li><li>Individuals with Disabilities Education Act</li><li>Statewide Family Engagement Centers program</li><li>Full-Service Community Schools grants</li><li>Child and Adult Care Food Program and Summer Food Service Program</li><li>Medicaid</li><li>Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services</li><li>Workforce Investment and Opportunities Act</li><li>AmeriCorps</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>State education funds</li><li>State community school grants</li><li>State after-school grants</li><li>State summer programs</li><li>Public and school-based health funds</li><li>Health and nutrition programs</li><li>Early care and education programs</li><li>College access funds</li><li>Family Resource Center</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Parks and recreation departments</li><li>Housing authorities</li><li>Juvenile justice and crime prevention programs</li><li>Local education/school district funds</li><li>Library funds</li><li>Local dedicated revenues from cities and counties</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Philanthropy</li><li>Local businesses</li><li>Chambers of Commerce</li><li>Nonprofits and intermediaries</li></ul>

While there are many federal funds that have the potential to support community schools, the following three programs are among the most common sources:

- Title I is the largest federal education program** and is focused on providing additional resources to schools that serve students from low-income households. While

Title I primarily supports classroom-focused activities, districts have the flexibility to use them to provide a range of support and services. For instance, some districts and schools use a portion of their Title I money to support community school coordinators or after-school programs for struggling students.<sup>[9]</sup>

## ESSA and Community Schools

The Every Student Success Act (ESSA) provides school leaders, educators, and state and local policymakers opportunities to support whole child approaches that lead to school improvement. Title I, which is a part of ESSA, requires states to identify low-performing schools and set aside seven percent of Title I, Part A funding for school improvement efforts. Each state submits a plan to the federal government detailing how they intend to use their federal funds. More than a dozen states have identified community schools as an evidenced-based strategy for school improvement in their ESSA plans, paving the way for Title I funds to be applied to community school initiatives.<sup>[10]</sup>

- **21st Century Community Learning Centers (21CCLC)**, which is part of Title IV, is the only federal program with dedicated funding for after-school programs. Each state receives a portion of 21CCLC funds, which is distributed to districts and then to schools through a competitive process. After-school programs are a cornerstone of community schools; as such, this funding can be a key source of support. In addition, the most recent reauthorization of 21CCLC indicates that funding for a coordinator is an allowable expense that can help support the backbone functions of an after-school program as well as a community school.
- **The United States Department of Agriculture's Child and Adult Care Food Program (CACFP) and Summer Food Service Program** fund meals and snacks for students attending before school, after-school, and summer programs. Meal subsidies are one of few remaining entitlement programs (providing benefits to all who qualify); funding for these programs is awarded on an as-needed basis. These programs provide a small but consistent revenue source, and help make sure students have the nutrition they need to be ready to learn. Additionally, many community schools partner with area food banks to enhance meal offerings for students.

### TIP

Two sources of federal grant information are [Grants.gov](#) and the Catalog of Federal Domestic Assistance ([CFDA](#)). Users can search and apply for federal grant opportunities and sign up for funding updates from agencies of interest via these free resources. Descriptions can also help leaders to understand if and how a particular funding source might support a need in your community.

- The United States Department of Education Full-Service Community Schools Grant program supports planning and operating full-service community schools. Each year the U.S. Department of Education awards a

limited number of five-year grants that can provide up to \$500,000 per year. These grants are highly competitive, with approximately ten awards per year.<sup>[11]</sup>

State and local public sources often make up a significant part of funding for community schools. Many state and local programs already provide services to students and their families, just not in ways that are connected to schools or in partnership with other service providers. In these cases, accessing these resources is about creating a new venue—schools—for providers to reach their target audience. For example, by working with local public health agencies, many community schools are able to set up vision and dental screenings for students during and after school. The health agency has funding and personnel to deliver the screenings; the work comes in creating the arrangement that allows them to operate in schools and potentially bill for these services.

**In Greece, New York** a community schools coordinator was first funded through short-term discretionary state aid and a small district contribution. Now, a portion of the state's education funds are earmarked for use on community schools, which pays for two coordinators and a district-level director. This team sees their primary role as bringing community resources into schools: expanded learning programs, mental health counseling, a food pantry, and community gardening program, among others. Additional resources, including Title I funds, help to pay for services and programming from the lead agency and other partners. The common thread for all of these funds is the focus on improving student achievement.

**Grand Island, Nebraska** is just getting started with community schools. In its pilot site, a designated community schools coordinator, the school social worker, and principal are working together to integrate support and services. The district coordinator, supported by Title I funds, is responsible for establishing the community partnerships, securing agreements, and scheduling the programming. District staff, from the office of Strategic Partnerships and Stakeholder Engagement, also support the work by assisting with translation services, working directly with parents to establish goals for their families, and on fulfilling requests for programming. With limited resources available, the community schools team focuses on bringing programs and services already provided by community partners into the school. Some of these partners are providing immunization clinics, dental check-ups, financial planning, healthy cooking, youth/child yoga, mindfulness meditation, and homework help. With the success of the pilot school, the district will open its second community school in school year 2020-21 following the same model.

For other existing state and local resources, such as school district funding, tapping into sources requires leaders to make a case for redeploying funding towards community schools. For example, to convince district leaders to invest in a community schools coordinator, one could argue that a coordinator would bring a host of new resources to schools, making it a smart and effective use of funds. When schools and community partners work together, everyone wins; community partners have access to more students, and schools gain access to additional resources to help more students succeed.

## Georgia Funding Funnels

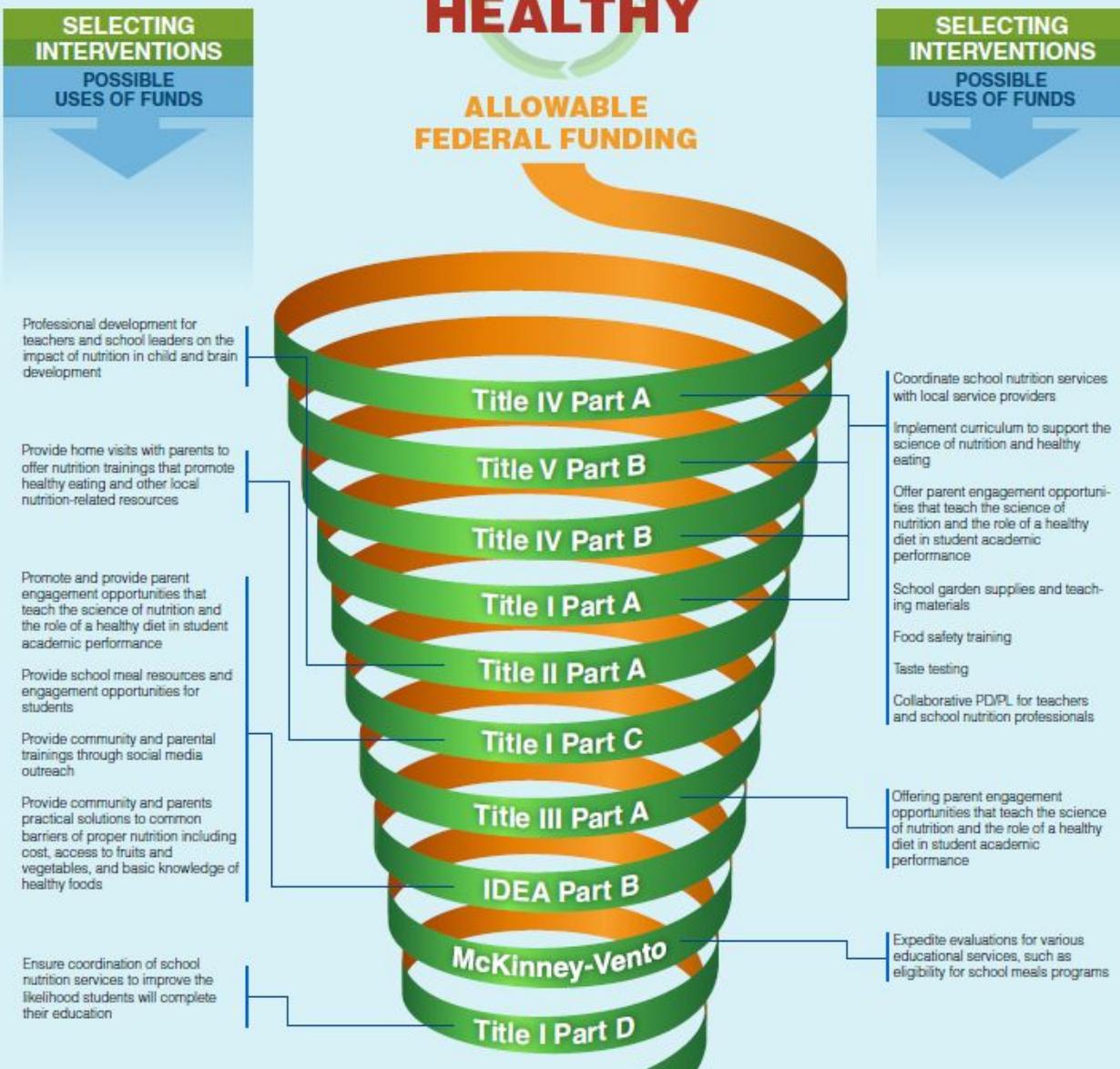
Georgia is in the early phases of adopting a statewide community schools strategy as part of a whole child approach to education. The state has hired a Director of Whole Child Supports and Strategic Partnerships and adopted five key tenets, or areas, for support: Healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged. It has also created funding funnels for each tenet and focus area to promote the use of multiple federal funding sources when addressing related needs.

It has also created funding funnels for each tenet to promote the use of multiple federal funding sources when addressing related needs.

The power of community schools comes from knitting together resources to serve the multiple needs of students, families, school staff, and community members. In identifying where to start, and which funds to target, new community schools can focus first on finding resources to address the most pressing needs of their students and taking advantage of readily available resources. Equally important is

finding funding to support a community schools coordinator position to make needed connections inside and outside of the school. Additionally, new community schools can seek out resources and technical assistance to support coordination and partnership building, as these can be new skills for educators and coordinators.

# WHOLE CHILD TENET: HEALTHY



GaDOE.org/wholechild  
wholechild@doe.k12.ga.us

## Strategy 2: Coordinating and Leveraging Resources

As community schools mature, both their need and ability to coordinate and leverage resources increase. Utilizing multiple funding sources is likely to increase the variety of site-level activities, resulting in the need for more technical assistance, expanded evaluation, additional training, and other operational support. Having a set of well-defined, agreed-upon goals can help partners bridge funding silos to create a broader, more integrated set of community school support.

Two ways to coordinate resources are by blending and braiding funding. These approaches produce similar results but differ in their administration.

- **Blending or pooling funding** involves using two or more funding sources together to support specific services, programs, or initiatives. When funds are blended, organizations generally do not have to track and report use of funds by individual sources. Instead, they can create and submit one report for all funders. Blending funds, especially public dollars, requires negotiated arrangements or changes to rules and regulations that can take significant time and resources to put in place. Once established, however, it is much easier to administer and track funds. Blending and pooling funds is most often accomplished at the systems level, where an intermediary or other agency (public or private) with the know-how and capacity can assist with funders to streamline and satisfy reporting requirements.

### TIP

Groups of funders can pool their resources to create a fund to support a variety of programming, including after-school and summer programs. Funders benefit by being able to spread their collective resources more effectively across programs. Community schools can then apply to the fund, eliminating the need for multiple applications.

- **Braiding funding** also involves using two or more funding sources together to support specific services, programs, or initiatives. But here, all funds need to be allocated, tracked, and reported according to the rules of individual funding sources. Braiding funds requires that organizations use cost-allocation methods to ensure that there is no duplicate funding of service costs, and that each funding source is charged its fair share across the partners. When braiding streams, community school staff need to be clear about exactly what each funding stream can pay for and what information will need to be reported to

each funder to avoid reporting missteps. Braiding can be accomplished at the school or systems level. Splitting the cost of the community schools coordinator between two funding sources is one way funds can be braided. More complicated scenarios are when policies or procedures need to be changed to support the co-mingling of funds.

While blending and braiding require organizations to manage funds differently, the goal of each approach is to provide a seamless set of services to students and families.

## TIP

Most school districts braid funds on a regular basis when they use a combination of grants and general fund dollars to support positions from school coaches, to special education aides, to after-school staff. Look to district partners for guidance and support when it comes to managing and reporting braided funds.

In **Greece, NY** the school district works closely with several non-profits, including one established by the teachers' union and the district's education foundation. These partnerships allow the district to access funds only available to non-profits, and to braid them with other public and private resources to expand offerings. Strong relationships between the district and the non-profits are credited for the success of these arrangements.

As the **Hartford Partnership for Student Success** matured, it became savvier about experimenting with braided funding from partners, grants, and resources accessed by schools and intermediaries. For example, school-based budgets allowed partners to see which schools were receiving 21st Century Community Learning Center grants, which impacted the level of private support needed. They also had to make sure they were using funds for allowable expenses. When restrictions were placed on buying refreshments with city or district funds, HPSS made sure those costs were covered by funds from private partners where such were allowable costs.

The **United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County** has been able to blend funds—and raise new ones—to pay for systemic and programmatic support for community schools. Being able to include unrestricted donations from The United Way (in addition to other competitive grants) has helped them to start transitioning to hubs of service to better match services and support specific needs of school communities. Also, the United Way has invested in a new director of major gifts to help increase funding from donors in specific geographic areas to support community schools.

## United Way: A Key Asset for Community Schools

In many communities, local United Way organizations are playing an important role in starting, growing, and sustaining community schools. These connected organizations bring strong ties to local leaders, businesses, and community partners, and can help to connect community schools with other local efforts to support children and youth: from third grade reading, to college and career readiness. Across the country, United Ways are helping many community schools to launch, implement, grow, and sustain. In addition to providing funding for support and services, local United Ways are assisting community schools by:

- Acting as a backbone or intermediary agency to coordinate resources, services, and partners
- Helping to scale and sustain programming
- Promoting the use of data sharing
- Sharing expertise around identifying and measuring outcomes
- Making connections to champions from business and industry, and other local organizations and agencies

**Leveraging resources** is using one source of funds to gain access to other sources. One common way to leverage funding is through matching grants, through which a funder requires commitment from other funders as a condition of the grant. Leveraging funds can be very attractive to funders for several reasons: first, when funds are leveraged, it shows that other investors see enough value and have enough interest in community schools to commit resources; secondly, if multiple funders have a stake in the work, there is a greater chance of it being sustained. Many federal discretionary grants, including the Full-Service Community Schools grant, require matching funds as a condition of awards. Additionally,

local funders often look to leverage funding through challenge grants and fundraising campaigns.

Finally, when thinking about how best to leverage funds, it is important to **be clear about requirements for in-kind and cash commitments**. Some funders, including many public funders, are willing to consider in-kind matches from partner organizations. These leveraged resources can help to deepen partnerships as multiple organizations come together to contribute their time and human resources. Other funders may want to see a cash contribution.

In Lincoln, Nebraska a commitment from the city and district inspired a private match. In 2018, public officials established an interlocal agreement, solidifying a recurring investment in Community Learning Centers from each entity's general fund. This public investment piqued the interest of private funders: The Sherwood Foundation now matches a portion of funds contributed through the interlocal agreement.



*Still from [On the Rise: Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers](#), film produced by MediaSutra & the Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2020.*

## Joint Powers Authorities: Coordinating and Leveraging Resources

A Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) allows two or more public agencies to create a legal entity or establish a joint approach for addressing a common problem. In Albuquerque, the City, Albuquerque Public Schools (APS), and Bernalillo County created the ABC Community School Partnership (ABC) through a joint powers agreement in 2007 to provide structure and financing for the community schools strategy. This structure provides many benefits for community schools. As a permanent body, it offers stability through the natural cycle of leadership change and continued engagement of key stakeholders. The board of directors includes the mayor; two city councilors; the superintendent; two school board members; the county manager or designee; and two county commissioners. The ABC board also has four seats that can be filled by organizations committed to supporting the growth and development of community schools. These seats are currently filled by the University of New Mexico, United Way of Central New Mexico, and the Hispano Chamber of Commerce, each of which brings knowledge, clout and resources to the table.

ABC has been instrumental in securing financial commitments that have spurred the growth of community schools. At the start of the initiative, each of the three governmental agencies,

along with the United Way of Central New Mexico, contributed \$100,000 to initiate community schools. In 2012, the lead agencies added additional funds to hire an executive director, accelerating the work. One early win for ABC was its ability to leverage after-school funding to expand early childhood programming through a matching grant from the Kellogg Foundation —their first braided funding. Since then the initiative has continued to grow.

ABC now manages contracting processes, data collection and reporting, as well as quality support for all APS after-school programs and community schools. With the JPA, the three agencies can and do move resources across agencies to support community schools without always having to undertake a lengthy request for proposal process. This makes it easier to get the needed services to the right schools more quickly. Their impact can also be felt outside schools. When community issues arise, partners come together and can act more nimbly to apply resources and solutions. Other cities, including Oakland, CA and Las Cruces, NM also have Joint Powers Authorities that support community schools.

### Strategy 3: Developing New Resources

While the first two strategies focus on making use of existing resources, this final strategy focuses on creating new revenues that can provide on-going support for community schools.

**Dedicated local revenue sources** are increasingly being explored as a way to support programming for children and youth. Dedicated revenues can be raised through voter-approved ballot measures or by legislative action. There are many ways that localities have implemented dedicated revenues, including sales tax; taxes on tobacco, marijuana, and alcohol (sometimes called “sin taxes”); and specialty taxes on soda, coffee, etc. Local revenue development provides a pot of flexible funding and a boost to partnerships; the time partners spend together advocating for dedicated streams bolsters relationships, which, in turn, fosters collaboration.

In comparison with one-time fundraising events, dedicated revenue sources tend to yield relatively stable and predictable funding over time. Dedicated revenues also can provide some protection from the ups and downs of annual appropriations, as they are separate from local or district budgets. Finally, like other new public revenue, new local funds can sometimes be used as a match for other public- and private-sector funding. Sometimes a

dedicated funding source will be focused on a particular activity, like after-school programs. More likely, the new revenue will support a broad set of activities, such as child and youth programming.

**Dedicated local funding to support child and youth programming** has been growing in popularity. A recent study from the Harvard Education Redesign Lab indicates that more than three dozen communities have implemented this funding strategy.<sup>[12]</sup> While more localities are exploring this option, it's worth noting that creating a dedicated revenue source is an extremely time consuming and expensive process. It usually requires a team of people to develop a plan and a broad-based advocacy campaign to build the support needed for passage.<sup>[13]</sup> And in places where any talk of new taxes is a non-starter, this strategy is not likely to be feasible.

**Dedicating funds in public budgets** is another way to create more stable funding for community schools. A growing number of states and localities are adding community schools into their annual budget appropriations. For instance, New York state has dedicated funding for community schools, and Minnesota and California have introduced legislation to fund community schools. In other states such as Kentucky, Tennessee, and Utah,

funds are being provided for better coordinating resources at the district and school levels, which can be accomplished through community schools. Cities are also making room for community schools in municipal and

school district budgets. Baltimore, Philadelphia, New York City, and many of the cities highlighted in this brief are all investing local resources in community schools. The following examples show several additional approaches.

For 40 years, **Communities in Schools** has been refining an evidenced-based model of integrated student support to help more students graduate from school and succeed in college and careers. As a part of its financing strategy, CIS has built state advocacy capacity to encourage legislators and governors to increase funding for Communities In Schools in Texas. Working in Texas with advocates and lobbyists, they recently convinced the legislature to increase support for Communities In Schools from \$20 million to \$35 million annually.

In school year 2018-19, **Chicago Public Schools** launched the Sustainable Community Schools Initiative, a new pilot program to connect select schools with neighborhood organizations to provide students and families with academic and non-academic services in their communities. This program was included in the Chicago Teachers Union labor contract negotiated with CPS in 2019.<sup>[14]</sup> As required by the contract, the program was funded at \$10 million and provides a range of services for the school community, including medical or mental health services; restorative justice coordinators; expanded after-school programs for students and use of facilities for residents; professional development for parents, students, and staff; food pantries; and support for students in temporary living situations. Negotiations from a 2019 teacher strike solidified funding for the pilot for another five years.

In **Cincinnati**, the roots of Community Learning Centers can be traced back to the 1990s, when the first federal 21CCLC grants helped to support building coordinators in nine schools. As the 21CCLC grants ended, the district began to fund coordinator positions through a variety of sources: District funds, Title funds, and support from community agencies and partners. Now with 44 Community Learning Centers and plans to add 20 more schools, the district has increased its investment in community schools, and allocates general funds to support coordinator positions, training, and coordination with lead agencies.

## Union Support for Community Schools

The American Federation of Teachers (AFT), the National Education Association (NEA), and their affiliates have a long history of supporting community schools. The unions support local and national coalition work to build grassroots support for Community Schools; this eventually results in board policy or Collective Bargaining Agreements on Community Schools and other issues central to the respective coalitions. The Chicago example mentioned above shows one way that a union successfully garnered support for community schools as part of their collective bargaining agreements. Community schools in Los Angeles are benefitting from a similar arrangement. Finally, unions also provide limited, usually short-term support for start-up, support staff, and technical assistance.



*Still from [On the Rise: Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers](#) featuring Darlene Kamine, Executive Director of Community Learning Centers Institute, films produced by MediaSutra & the Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2020.*

# FINANCING IN ACTION

These vignettes show how community schools initiatives at various stages of development have applied financing strategies to deepen and sustain their work.

## *Building on existing structures and support from a local intermediary to jumpstart community schools*

In 2017, the Fairfax County Board of Supervisors and School Board adopted One Fairfax—a social and racial equity policy that commits the county and schools to consider equity when making decisions, or developing or delivering programs or services. In 2011, the county launched its first Opportunity Neighborhood: a coordinated, place-based effort to link residents, community-based partners, Fairfax County Public Schools, Fairfax County, and other partners together to deliver needed resources and support to vulnerable youth and their families. One Fairfax also heavily influenced the work of the county's Successful Children and Youth Policy Team, a committee of county, school and community leaders, which saw community schools as a natural extension of Opportunity Neighborhoods, and a way to shore up achievement and opportunity gaps in schools. The SCYPT asked county staff to learn about how community schools have been established in other places and to create a proposal for bringing them to Fairfax.

Before that proposal was drafted, however, the local United Way – already involved in supporting middle school transformation – approached county and district staff about piloting a community school with a lead agency model in a local middle school located in an Opportunity Neighborhood. County and district leaders jumped at the chance and went a step further, contributing existing funds from the Opportunity Neighborhood work to support a similar approach at an elementary school in its feeder pattern. This particular elementary had some experience with partnering around service provision on site, housing a social worker from a local nonprofit as well as a staff

## Exploring: Fairfax County, Virginia

*"The opening of Fairfax County's first Community Schools is an exciting milestone and demonstrates the shared commitment of the county, FCPS, and our partners at United Way, to achieving the vision of One Fairfax: a community where all residents have the opportunity to reach their fullest potential."*

— Fairfax County Official

### **Number of Community Schools: 2**

#### **Primary Funding Sources:**

- United Way of National Capital Area
- Communities in Schools
- Fairfax County Government
- Fairfax County Public Schools

#### **Infrastructure System:**

- United Way
- Successful Children and Youth Policy Team
- District and County Staff
- Schools: Coordinators (Lead agency staff)

#### **Financing Strategies:**

- Using existing resources

member from the Department of Family Services. The new coordinator is focused on building out after-school options, bringing more health services to the school, and establishing mentoring programs. Both the elementary and middle school sites were launched in fall 2018.

One year into implementation, county and district staff have some anecdotal data about the success of the community school approach, including improved academic outcomes and a reduction in chronic absence. This helps to build continued interest from the SCYPT in a county-wide strategy.

They are again developing a proposal and plan for structuring community school expansion, tying it closely to existing work in Opportunity Neighborhoods. It will also include information

to frame the county-wide strategy: How do we choose community schools? How do we align and connect with the core work of schools? What will governance look like?

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*Blending and braiding funding: The power of an intermediary partner*

In Asheville and surrounding Buncombe County, community schools were born from a focus on bringing resources that support the health, education, and financial stability of the whole community by using local middle schools as a hub for services. A community assessment highlighted the need to increase after-school opportunities and family engagement, and to rally more resources around schools and students. In response, the local United Way helped launch community schools in four middle schools with the idea of enhancing services at these schools so that each K-12 feeder pattern had a community school at its middle. United Way leaders responsible for the initiative made learning from national best practices a priority from the start, adapting programming and structures that support the Playbook's Four Pillars, and building on lessons learned from Albuquerque, Salt Lake City, and other communities.

A significant share of the current community school investment is dedicated to staffing and infrastructure. Positions include school-based coordinators, an initiative director, and staff focused on development, data and evaluation, community partnerships, as well as coaching and supporting coordinators and principals. Other investments are made in programming that addresses needs uncovered through an asset and needs assessment process. There has also been a focus on increasing community partner to expand services; there are now more than 50 partners supporting all four pillars of community schools.

## **Emerging: Asheville City and Buncombe County, North Carolina**

*"When we first started the community schools work it was new and different. When funders figured out that community schools can leverage partners including faith-based , local business and grass roots organizations, people really wanted to be a part of that."*

— United Way Leader

### **Number of Community Schools: 4**

#### **Primary Funding Sources:**

- United Way of Asheville and Buncombe County
- Asheville City Schools
- Buncombe County Schools

#### **Infrastructure:**

- Systems: United Way
- Schools: Community school coordinators

#### **Financing Strategies:**

- Using existing resources
- Leveraging and coordinating resources

United Way leaders work hard to blend and braid together public and private sources to pay for community school positions and services. They have secured grants from regional foundations by making a return on investment case for community school coordinators, and encouraging various partners to contribute financially to a first-in-North Carolina (and also a national model) early warning and response system. Adding a director of major gifts position boosted their capacity to run directed fundraising campaigns for specific programs (e.g., homework diners) and/or for specific schools. Initiative leaders are also blending money from various sources and then pushing it out to schools in a way that lessens the

administrative burden for schools and partners. Moving forward, United Way will continue to consolidate funding into community schools to expand their ability to act as hubs of services. They will also use undesignated contributions to the United Way to expand community school support. With the United Way taking the lead on fundraising, school-based staff and partners are freed up to focus on effective services and programming.

When it comes to results, the United Way has adopted a results-based accountability

framework where the partners identify measures and track performance with the goal of seeing population level changes. In addition, using data from the early warning system, they are able to track results related to attendance, behavior, and grades that allow staff to target students and services. Early results show significant growth in family and community engagement and in students accessing services – precursors to student achievement gains, where they are beginning to see measurable returns.

#### *Creating an interlocal agreement to support expansion and sustainability*

Lincoln's Community Learning Centers are more than 20 years in the making. The first four schools were supported through funds from the Lincoln Community Foundation and matching contributions from lead partner agencies jointly paying for coordinators. The following year, the district received a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant and created two more community schools, using the new funding to support coordinator positions. Now, 29 of the district's 59 schools are CLCs, which are funded through 16 sources, including district and city general funds; Title I funds; a 21st Century Community Learning Center Grant; financial and in-kind contributions from lead agency partners; and private foundation grants. Funding priorities continue to be securing partnership capacity at the system and school levels. To that end, investments first target site coordinator and system coordinator roles; programmatic funding is leveraged from partners once those needs are satisfied.

As the CLCs expanded, it became clear that a more permanent structure was needed to support the growing system. With strong mayoral support, the city and district created an interlocal agreement, solidifying their commitment to contribute ongoing resources from their general funds to CLCs. This

### **Excelling: Lincoln, Nebraska**

*"Now that we have the big picture figure out we are focusing on how to get this better sustained. We need to make sure that all partners, especially the lead agencies, are financially sound."*

— Foundation Leader

#### **Number of Community Schools: 29**

##### **Funding Sources:**

- Private foundations
- City of Lincoln
- Lincoln Public Schools
- Title I
- 21st Century Community Learning Center grants

##### **Infrastructure:**

- System: Inter-local
- Schools: Coordinators: (Lead agency staff)

##### **Financing Strategies:**

- Using existing resources
- Leveraging and coordinating resources
- Raising new resources

agreement also prompted the creation of a new 501c3 home for system-wide community learning center coordination, which is managed by a CLC director, administrative support personnel, curriculum consultant, family and neighborhood specialist, evaluator, and development specialist. Under the interlocal

agreement, the city and the district now provide funding from their existing general funds for community schools. Not only did the interlocal solidify commitments and structures for CLCs, it also garnered the attention of state philanthropic partners: the Sherwood Foundation matches a portion of the funds contributed through the interlocal agreement.

The Lincoln Community Foundation, responsible for launching the work in 1998, is

#### *Using networks of providers to equitably distribute high-quality services across schools*

Like many industrial cities, the later part of the 1900's was a time of declining industry, tax base, and population in Cincinnati. Furthermore, the city was under court order to upgrade its school facilities with an estimated price tag of one billion dollars. A small group of community leaders, including the Cincinnati Board of Education Superintendent, school board members including former Governor John Gilligan, and staff from the Children's Defense Fund, believed in the transformative nature of education and knew that the link between schools, families, and the community was essential to reviving the city and district.

In 2001, after two years of community engagement and planning, and with a promise that community schools would leverage and maximize city and state resources with no impact on the school operating budget, the Community Learning Centers (CLC) initiative was launched.

A district resolution established its guiding principles, including the stipulations of site-based autonomy; governance responsible for ongoing community engagement; and the selection of the partnerships that would be responsive to the unique vision and needs of each school and neighborhood. That the

now considering how it can strengthen its support, including by dedicating new unrestricted funds to support an aspect of the CLC strategic plan: community engagement. Their and others' long-term commitment to growing and supporting Community Learning Centers have kept CLCs central to how schools serve their students, families, and community at large.

### **Excelling: Cincinnati, OH**

*"With a well-established system in place, the district is now focusing on weaving all this work into the fabric of the schools."*

— School District Leader

#### **Number of Community Schools: 44**

##### **Funding Sources:**

- Private
- Local Non-profits
- Cincinnati Public Schools

##### **Infrastructure**

- System:
  - Network of Community Partners
  - School District
- Schools:
  - Resource Coordinators (Lead agency staff)
  - School Decision Making Committee

##### **Financing Strategies**

- Using existing resources
- Leveraging and coordinating resources
- Raising new resources

partners would work in alignment with the school to achieve shared goals and outcomes, the work had to be aligned with the curriculum, and that co-located partnerships would not require any district financial contribution. In this 20-year span, the work grew steadily, and by 2019, 44 CLCs are operating across the district

with plans to add 20 more over the next few years. Throughout this period of growth, funding for coordinators was shared between the 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, the local United Way, and the Greater Cincinnati Foundation.

To support the infrastructure for a growing number of CLCs, the district worked with community agencies to ensure the equitable distribution of partner resources. Agencies and other service providers who are committed to the community learning center model are invited to become part of a collaborative network. Each partnership network is an independent, financially self-sustaining entity that is dedicated to building capacity of community partners, helping to broker the selection of partners by each community learning center, and continuing to work with each CLC site to successfully onboard and assist the partnership.

There are about a dozen partnership networks organized around key areas of demand for services, each with a coordinating entity. For instance, providers of health services or dental care joined a network of local providers interested in being considered for partnership with a school. The partnership network leader works with a team at the school to identify their needs, ensure that there is adequate space and site-based readiness, and then provides a list of interested agencies to be interviewed. Once the partner is selected, the partnership network leader helps to onboard the partner, including setting up operational systems and developing the business model. In exchange for free rent and no overhead costs, the support of the community learning center resource coordinator and coordination with other partners, network providers must agree to provide services to all students in the school who come to their clinic – with or without insurance. Providers are also expected to serve children and families in the neighborhood. Nearly half of the schools in Cincinnati have a

full-time, comprehensive, and financially self-sustaining school-based health clinic in partnership with a dozen different providers. Any build-out for additional space and equipment is provided by the partner or through other fundraising by the partnership network. The district continues to engage with current networks to expand capacity to support equity, and to explore additional networks to address service gaps.

Effectively managing the networks and opening the doors to new partnerships has helped with buy-in and support for the CLC model. The Community Learning Center Institute is one of many partners dedicated to the ongoing development and support of Cincinnati Public Schools Community Learning Centers (CPS CLC). They coordinate the Cross Boundary Leadership Team, a collaborative of the partnership networks that continues to build the capacity necessary to ensure that all community learning centers have the choice of equitable, financially self-sustaining, quality partners, responsive to the vision, goals and preferences of each school and its neighborhood in partnership with Cincinnati Public Schools.

During this period of expansion, the district also invested in its capacity to scale and manage community schools. They now have a Manager of Community School Partnerships and five staff members. This staff supports the successful implementation of the CPS CLC model and framework, including alignment of outcomes, day-to-day operations, and system functions for the CLCs; this includes data management; professional development and technical assistance; and engaging community stakeholders both at the school-community and district-community level.

After 20 years of persistent and intentional growth, Cincinnati's CLC founders' vision is being realized: Families are moving back into the city and sending their children to district schools.

## FINAL REFLECTIONS

This brief was informed by interviews and conversations with community schools' field leaders. Their thoughtful conversations made clear that at each developmental stage, as the capacity of community schools and their infrastructure increases, options for financing also grow. Sometimes, with an infusion of funding and leadership, community schools can quickly gain traction. Most often, however, building community schools takes time and evolves slowly as practices change, partner relationships deepen, and progress becomes apparent. Savvy community school leaders are

finding many ways to support this work, starting by taking full advantage of available resources, then coordinating and leveraging other resources - all while building longer-term support for more funds for further growth and expansion. With a framework for considering financing options and opportunities as well as examples from across the country, it is hoped that this brief will help community school leaders and advocates move the needle on growth and sustainably so that every child, family, and community can thrive.



*Still from [On the Rise: Cincinnati's Community Learning Centers](#) featuring Darlene Kamine, Executive Director of Community Learning Centers Institute, films produced by MediaSutra & the Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2020.*

## APPENDIX: COMMUNITY SCHOOLS DEVELOPMENTAL STAGES FOR FINANCING

<b>STAGE 1: EXPLORING</b>	<b>STAGE 2: EMERGING</b>	<b>Stage 3: Excelling</b>
<p><b>Community schools are moving from a set of one-off partnerships to a strategy for providing support and services that are interconnected and tied to shared outcomes for a single school or a cadre of schools.. A key focus is hiring a coordinator and establishing basic services and support that address the four pillars of community schools.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A coordinator begins to assume responsibility for budgets, volunteers, programs, data tracking, etc.</li> <li>• The coordinator works with stakeholders to determine what is needed at each school.</li> <li>• Partnerships are developed or enhanced to support growth of a single or set of community schools.</li> <li>• Community school strategies are included in school improvement plans and integrated into school operations.</li> <li>• Financing strategies focus on tapping existing resources in the community to fund a coordinator and build out an initial set of services.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community schools expand to add more services across the pillars. There is a focus on building the infrastructure by establishing systems and processes to support, deepen, and grow community schools and partnerships and to promote new ways of school staff and partners to work together.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community schools deepen established relationships, invest in backbone operations, create processes to support effective operations (e.g., MOUs), expand services (both in existing schools and to new schools) based on identified needs; and use data to determine progress and improve quality.</li> <li>• Community schools become part of district strategic plans.</li> <li>• A dedicated director facilitates alignment of resources at the initiative level.</li> <li>• Community schools maintain adequate staffing, programming, and support.</li> <li>• A clear supervisory and communications infrastructure is emerging.</li> <li>• Financing strategies expand to include seeking new grant funding, experiment with braiding funds, and participate in shared advocacy.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community schools support all four pillars, implement quality enhancements for programs, are part of school management and organizational structures, and measure and share results. Community schools are business as usual. Focus here is creating more enduring structures to promote growth and sustainability.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for CS coordinators and infrastructure (data, initiative staff, quality, etc.) become part of on-going budgets for schools and other public and private agencies.</li> <li>• New interagency agreements are put into place to provide on-going support for community schools</li> <li>• Financing strategies further expand to include more blending and braiding of funds, revising administrative requirements to simplify funding, creating new funding sources, and leading advocacy efforts at state and local levels.</li> </ul>

<sup>[1]</sup> The foundational research for the Playbook comes from Maier, A., J. Daniel, J. Oakes, & L. Lam (2017). Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence. Washington, DC: Learning Policy Institute and the National Education Policy Center.

<sup>[2]</sup> Excerpted from: Partnership for the Future of Learning (2018). Community Schools Playbook and Maier, A., J. Daniel, J. Oakes, & L. Lam (2017). Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence. Washington, DC: Learning Policy Institute and the National Education Policy Center.

<sup>[3]</sup> PolicyLink and USC Program for Environmental & Regional Equity. (June 2015). Equitable Growth Profile of Fairfax County.

<sup>[4]</sup> Daniel, J., Welner, K., & Valladares, M. R. (2016). Time for Improvement: Research Based Expectations for Implementation of the Community Schools Initiative in New York City. Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center. Retrieved 02/24/2020 from <https://nepc.info/publication/community-schools>

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[13] The messaging chapter of the Playbook contains suggested language that can be used for to help build support for community schools.

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<https://news.wttw.com/2018/08/08/cps-spending-10m-sustainable-schools-pilot-program>