

I. Introduction to CPS Community Schools



Community Schools in Chicago

"Schools should be anchors of their communities, providing educational resources for the entire family. These are the guiding principles behind our Community Schools Initiative, which turns neighborhood schools into community learning centers that are open well into the evening hours -- so they can provide educational and social-service programs, not just to the students, but also to their parents and other family members."

-Mayor Richard M. Daley, January 28, 2003

The Chicago Public Schools (CPS) places a high priority and commitment to providing quality after school programs particularly for underachieving students attending low-performing schools. CPS believes that after school activities have the potential to counteract the effects of a range of negative factors that contribute to students' lack of opportunities and underachievement. For children who face academic or behavior obstacles to success during the regular school day, the after school hours can be a time to eliminate barriers and improve the education of the "whole child."

Under the leadership of former Chief Executive Officer Arne Duncan, CPS is dedicated to engage families and the community within our schools. This commitment has been demonstrated in a number of ways, including the establishment of the Office of Extended Learning Opportunities (formerly the Office of After School and Community School Programs) in 2001 to provide the overall leadership and guidance to ensure that every CPS student has access to quality programs beyond the regular school day.

The Office of Extended Learning Opportunities (OELO) coordinates and supports ten major out-of-school time initiatives including the Community Schools Initiative. OELO currently funds programs that serve over 200,000 children in 500 elementary and high schools. CPS is focused on the need to engage parents and the community in efforts to improve academic achievement and in doing so makes it possible for schools to keep their buildings open after the regular school day. **GOAL:** To provide year-round programming outside of the regular school day that operates three to four hours a day, five to six days per week, 39 to 44 weeks per year.

To be most effective in supporting student achievement, these programs should be part of a Community School that works with public agencies and nonprofit organizations to offer comprehensive academic, enrichment, health and social services to students and their families. This year we have 110 Community Schools; our goal is to make all of our schools Community Schools within five years. (Source: Chicago Public Schools, "On the Same Page: Celebrating Progress, Moving Forward," 2007.)

CPS Community Schools Initiative (CSI)

Community school partnerships bring together the academic and social supports needed to ensure that all students succeed by offering programs before and after the school day for students and their families. The programs are designed to support the school's academic program and expand the services offered within the community. Programs offered at each community school vary, but most community schools in Chicago offer some combination of academic enrichment activities for students, adult education and English as a Second Language classes, student and adult technology training, art activities, recreation and health services.

The CPS Community Schools Initiative began the FY 2009 school year with 150 schools and is home to the largest community schools initiative in the nation.

Program Model

Each CPS Community School *must*:

- **Partner with at least one non-profit organization (NPO)** with a minimum of three years experience implementing after school programs and/or a demonstrated track record of providing successful educational related activities that enhance academic performance and encourage the positive development of CPS students.
- **Hire a full-time resource coordinator at the local level to oversee programs**, help identify and engage additional resource providers, perform necessary administrative duties, coordinate with the NPO partner and Advisory Committee, and supervise student and/or community workers. The coordinator is also the critical communication bridge between all community school stakeholders, including students, parents, teachers, school personnel and leadership, external partners, and community members.
- **Establish an advisory committee** that includes teachers, parents, the school principal, community members, a representative from the NPO partner and other key school and community stakeholders. The primary responsibility of the advisory committee is to oversee program planning, guidance and promotion. Led by the Advisory Committee, each CPS Community School annually conducts a needs assessment or asset mapping to determine the types of programs and services that are needed and identify resources that currently exist.
- **Ensure that all out-of-school time activities relate to and support the school's academic program**. Whether a school is running a culinary course, creating a school newspaper, or offering an arts integration activity, the activities intentionally include both academic and social outcomes.

Community schools are required to serve a **minimum** of 75 students and offer a **minimum** of 12 hours per week of out-of-school time activities at each school site, including parent programming. Most CPS Community Schools have programming until 5 pm or 6 pm, including health and social services, and many have Saturday and summer program offerings.

To fully meet the needs of any school community, partnerships are encouraged to identify the particular needs and assets of their school community using a variety of tools and techniques. Using this analysis as a foundation, school partnerships then may plan and develop programming that best suits the goals for their Community School.

Sustainability

As part of CPS' commitment to high quality programming and sustainability, community school principals, resource coordinators, teachers and social workers are provided with a variety of professional development opportunities. All community schools may receive initial and ongoing assistance through external consultants. This technical assistance is designed to keep principals, resource coordinators and non-profit partners working together to create unique activities for their students and families. The Office of Extended Learning Opportunities also publishes a quarterly newsletter, and Community School partnerships receive a bimonthly electronic digest.

In addition, all new schools receive training in the nuances of running a community school. Resource coordinators, principals and non-profit partners are brought together to share best practices and are provided an opportunity to work together in creating a service plan that works for all participants. OELO also provides schools with an after school manual that outlines programming, best practices, job descriptions and various methods for improving after school activities. Professional development is a large part of our effort to ensure excellence, as are our ongoing evaluation efforts.

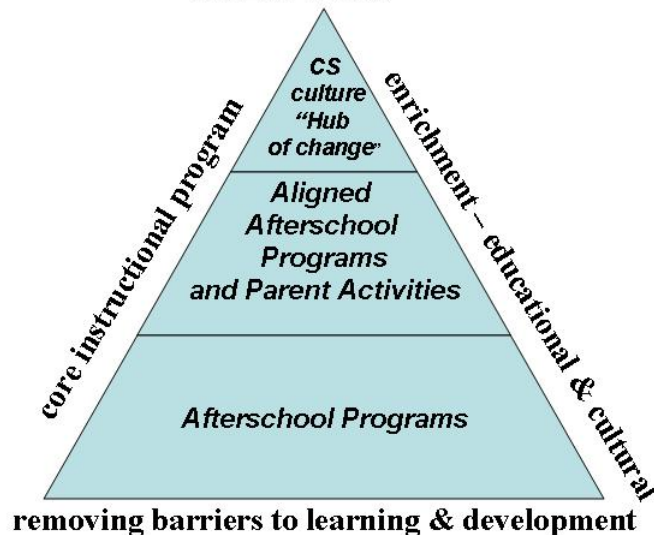
School partnerships *cooperate fully* with CSI on all evaluation activities including participating in meetings and interviews, as well as submitting written materials, surveys and other data upon request. School partnerships are also required to enter attendance information into the Cityspan system on a regular and timely basis.

Conclusion

Chicago Public Schools' commitment to community schools is clear. The District has worked hard to craft and attain a broad vision for after school and community school programs, which includes providing comprehensive programs for students in out-of-school time, and incorporates needed programs and services for parents and community members. The CPS Community Schools Initiative has leveraged new resources that have dramatically increased the programs and services offered to students and their families.

Quality partnerships, both with the business community as well as in community neighborhoods, are key if this program is to succeed for students, parents and their communities. In Chicago over fifty lead non-profit partners have been secured, and over 400 additional community partnerships have been developed to support these schools. These partnerships bring a wealth of services including one-day events, such as health fairs and violence prevention workshops. **These are vital steps in ensuring that each school is truly an anchor for its community.**

Community School Building Blocks



- health
- dental
- mental health
- social services



(Adapted from: The Children's Aid Society, NY)

