



**A POLICY APPROACH TO CREATE AND
SUSTAIN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**

***PROMOTING POLICIES THAT STRENGTHEN SCHOOLS,
FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES***

SUMMARY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

A WORK IN PROGRESS, APRIL 2000

The Coalition for Community Schools mobilizes the resources and capacity of multiple sectors and institutions to create a united movement for community schools. Its partners include local community school networks, state and national organizations in education, youth development, family support, health and human services, community development, as well as philanthropy and government. Community schools integrate the efforts of many partners, offering a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities – before, during and after school, seven days a week. Coalition partners have a wealth of experience in developing and implementing policy and believe that policy – public and private – is critical to the long-term effectiveness of the movement.

This document, *A Policy Approach to Create and Sustain Community Schools*, is addressed to Coalition partners and to other local, state and national leaders who are developing policy options for strengthening community schools and are in a position to influence policy decisions. It is intended to serve as a template for individuals considering policy related to community schools and related aspects of the relationship between schools and communities. We trust that it will be a useful resource for policy dialogues about community schools. ***This Policy Approach does not necessarily reflect the specific positions of individual partners.***

Copies of the full Policy Approach are available in the tools section of our web site, www.communityschools.org, or by calling (202) 822-8405, ext. 45. Also, participate in our Policy Discussion Forum, www.communityschools.org/cgi-bin/ubbcbgi/Ultimate.cgi.

Every person, organization and institution has a part to play in creating and sustaining community schools. To find out more about the Coalition and how we can work together, please contact:

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Coalition for Community Schools



Strengthening schools, families & communities

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SUMMARY OF POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

UNIVERSALITY & EQUITY

- **Make community schools accessible to all.** Community schools are an important resource and should be available and accessible to strengthen *all* children, youth, families and communities across America.
- **Align resources with needs.** In allocating funds, policy makers, both public and private, should provide more intensive resources to high poverty schools and communities where the need is greatest.
- **Develop systems of community schools.** Local communities should bring together all stakeholders to seek and allocate resources to move beyond single-school models toward large-scale systems of community schools.

ACCOUNTABILITY FOR RESULTS

- **Provide funding geared to results.** Local, state and federal governments, working within and across departments and disciplines, should identify the common goals they are seeking for children, youth, families and communities. Within these goals, local initiatives should define specific priority results for which they will be held accountable.
- **Link academic achievement with comprehensive development.** Funding should be designed to support results for children and youth in academic, social, youth development, career development and other related areas, and for the quality of life in communities.
- **Expect local accountability for results.** Funders should give priority for support to communities and schools that have developed systems for tracking and reporting their progress toward achieving results.
- **Build and disseminate the knowledge base.** Funders, policy makers, researchers and practitioners should promote efforts to expand research and disseminate information about the importance of comprehensive development, building youth and community assets, and interactions among academic, health and human services, youth development, community development, lifelong learning and related strategies.

GOVERNANCE

- **Use school-community teams at the site level to integrate resources and strategies.** Policy makers should encourage the use of school-community teams to plan and oversee community school activities. These teams, including school staff, community partners, students, families, neighborhood residents and others, have the task of integrating the resources of the school and community partners into a community school strategy.
- **Honor and encourage existing school-community governance arrangements.** Policy makers should make clear that where a community already has a collaborative governance arrangement in place that has demonstrated capacity to address specific results and that engages:
 - Families, youth, and citizens of the community;
 - Business, civic and religious leaders;
 - Key governmental entities including schools, municipalities and counties; and
 - Community-based organizations

It can serve as the governance group for new community school initiatives.

- **Support local decision-making.** Funders should provide sufficient discretion in spending for genuine decision making by partners in community governance groups and school-community site teams to address priority local needs.

FINANCING

- **Provide stable funding sources.** Federal, state and local governments should provide the ongoing, sufficient sources of core funding that are critical to developing and sustaining successful community school strategies. Programs that provide time-limited “seed money” for new initiatives frequently cannot be sustained long enough to demonstrate improved results for children, youth, families and communities.
- **Allow communities to determine the most appropriate fiscal agent for community schools.** Communities should be able to select a public or private agency or organization with appropriate expertise and demonstrated capacity to manage public and private funds for programs operating in a community school context.
- **Improve coordination of funding streams.** Federal, state and local policy makers should work to improve the coordination of existing funding streams supporting community schools (e.g., by creating pools of funds among various agencies administering these funds and through formal interagency agreements).

- **Direct existing resources to community schools.** School boards, local and state governments and private funders such as United Ways should find ways to direct existing funding and services toward community school strategies.
- **Build the infrastructure for community schools.** A portion of funding for community schools should be directed toward building infrastructure. Elements of the infrastructure include systems to track and report results, capacity-building and technical assistance, professional development, licensing to meet specific program requirements, program coordination, and planning and evaluation activities.
- **Fund community school facilities.** As communities build and rehabilitate schools, they should fund and design buildings that can serve as safe and enriching centers of the community. Cooperation among school boards, cities, counties, library systems, health and human services entities, urban redevelopment authorities, public safety agencies, recreation and parks departments and other entities responsible for constructing public facilities is essential to providing adequate funding for community schools.
- **Negotiate joint-use arrangements.** School boards, units of local government and other authorities should work together to find ways to finance the continuing use and multiple functions of these community facilities.

STAFFING/PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

- **Manage the school-community relationship.** Schools and community partners should work together to manage the school and community relationship. Effective management by a full-time coordinator can ensure that services provided by community schools can operate effectively, and that most school personnel are able to focus their energies on improving teaching and learning for all students.
- **Strengthen pre-service and in-service development.** Institutions of higher education, including community colleges, that train teachers and school administrators, health and human services professionals, youth workers and other youth-serving professionals should be encouraged to include community schools concepts and competencies in their respective curricula.
- **Support inter-professional initiatives for personnel working in community school initiatives.** New federal and state funds for community schools should include resources for professional development to ensure that efforts to improve results for children, youth, families and communities are of high quality. Institutions of higher education should design and operate initiatives designed to build awareness and understanding of the multiple approaches (including education, youth development, family support, health and human services and community development) used in community schools.
- **Create and sustain capacity-building organizations.** At the local and state levels, capacity-building organizations are valuable in supporting and strengthening the work of

community schools initiatives. These groups can carry out various professional development activities and support the infrastructure needed to sustain systems of community schools.

- **Link existing targeted technical assistance efforts.** When federal and state programs provide resources for professional development for specific categorical programs or initiatives, they should create common banks of professional development resources available to communities, blending professional development funding from existing programs to provide support for community schools.
- **Build, support and strengthen the field.** Policy makers should provide career ladder incentives, benefits and adequate pay to attract and retain quality staff in community schools.

FAMILY, YOUTH & COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT

- **Strongly promote family, youth and local citizen involvement.** Policy makers should strongly promote the involvement of families, youth, and local citizens as equal partners with other stakeholders in the planning and oversight of community school initiatives.
- **Provide resources to enhance the participation of youth, families and other members of the community.** Community school initiatives require support for youth, family and resident leadership development. Resources for training, staffing and intensive outreach are also necessary to do the job.
- **Provide flexible resources for supports and opportunities to engage families.** Funders should provide sources of funding that are flexible enough for staff, families and community members to work together to develop affordable, cost-effective responses to family and community needs.