Strategic Communications Tips

- Identify your Goal:
  - Funding
  - A new partnership
  - Policy change
  - Public awareness and support

- Communicate messages that support your goal, then back them up with assertions, examples, statistics, and other facts that make it true

- Use personal anecdotes to reinforce your point: "Where I teach, I have seen a huge increase in parental engagement since becoming a Community School…"

- Practice bridging away from questions that move away from your key messages and your goal

- If you don’t know an answer, don’t wing it – offer to follow-up or refer them to another leader
# Community Schools are Smart Schools.

Community Schools are an innovative 21st Century solution to improve school effectiveness and enhance the lives of communities and families.

## Assertions

Community Schools crowd source and leverage human capital by combining proven historical approaches (like school nurses) with new ideas about networking and collaboration. By connecting school and community resources, Community Schools are efficient and effective. In an era of tight public resources Community schools are a great investment. Community schools offer a scalable approach beyond Smart Schools to include smarter school districts, and smarter systems of community services, and ultimately, smarter communities.

## Programs that demonstrate this "back to the future" idea:

- In Cincinnati, Ethel Taylor’s center partners with more than four dozen agencies to offer mentoring, college help, mental health services and other programs. In 2009-10, the school, which has a 100 percent poverty rate, posted strong gains in math and reading and boosted its overall performance index score - a state measure of achievement - in all tested subjects at all tested grade levels. [Ethel M. Taylor Academy Wins National Honor](#)

  The Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation worked with local organizations to build a web of support to nurture schoolchildren from “diaper to diploma.” A local bank rents a building for $1 a year to district administrators and leaders of community partners. It’s now a one-stop shop for families seeking a range of services. [Ed Week: School’s A Community Effort in Indiana District](#)

- In St. Paul, plans include a database so that service delivery partners “will gain a holistic picture of children as they proceed along the service continuum.” The program also includes building hubs throughout the community where parents can receive services and access information. [It Takes a Village: Community-based Solutions to Closing the Achievement Gap (Minnesota)](#)

## Programs that demonstrate efficient & effective service delivery and positive impact:

Wraparound means bringing all of the interested parties who work on behalf of a child back into the same room, to coordinate the delivery of services that impede a student’s ability to be successful in class. [In the Arms of Wraparound (Today’s OEA Cover story on SUN Schools)](#)

While facing budget cuts, the school maintained extracurriculars, mentoring and truancy-prevention programs, tutors, and a host of other “extras” that help teachers focus on instruction and keep students coming to school. The secret? Robust community partnerships. [Greater Involvement by Community and Staff Fills Gaps at Phil. School](#)

The Department of Education has recognized the effectiveness of the Community Schools approach in their guide to new funding strategies. [The Art of Leveraging Resources: Community Schools Highlighted by USD OE](#)

## Secretary of Education Duncan asserts that Community Schools leverage precious public dollars:

“Where schools truly become the centers of the community, great things happen…. we don’t have to do this ourselves as educators; you can bring in great nonprofits...The money I spent on this in Chicago was arguably the best money I spent because it was so highly leveraged. You had all these phenomenal partners coming in working collaboratively and collectively...it’s about partnership, collaborating and understanding what our kids need today to be successful.” Cited on the [Afterschool Alliance website](#)

Chicago leveraged millions of dollars: [The Million Dollar Value of Chicago Community School Partners](#)

Study of Chicago Community Schools showed that outside partner agencies brought more than $25 million in services, programming and human capital – exclusive of any public funding ties to the community schools initiative.

## Case studies show how Community Schools lead to positive systems change

[Scaling Up Community Schools Case Studies](#)
Community schools help students learn.

**Community Schools provide impactful and enriching learning experiences that improve educational outcomes and student achievement.**

### Messages

By providing children an array of health and social support and broader, richer learning opportunities, Community Schools lay the foundation for more enriching and impactful learning.

### Assertions

Community Schools have been proven to improve student outcomes.

Teachers feel they are more effective in Community Schools.

### Supports

#### Addressing chronic absence:

- **Oakland Takes on Chronic Absence Using Community Schools Model**
- Oakland High School has cut its chronic absence rate in half by using data smartly, creating systems to support students, coordinating interventions with staff and community partners, and building relationships.

#### Food and nutrition programs:

- **Philadelphia’s Urban Nutrition Initiative**
  
Through student internships and peer education at local high schools, the Philadelphia Urban Nutrition Initiative teaches nutrition through in-school gardens that benefit the school and the broader community.

#### Health screenings:

- **Oakland’s McClymonds High is a Full-Service School**
  
At McClymonds’ High, a Children's Hospital Oakland clinic free medical care is available to all students and their siblings, no appointment necessary.

#### Extended Learning opportunities:

- **Cincinnati Public Schools’ Fifth Quarter Initiative**
  
More than summer school, each afternoon during Fifth Quarter community partners have stepped up to provide enrichment activities including fine arts, technology, fitness and environmental education — at no cost to the district.

#### Service learning:

- **The Powerful Impact of a Quiet Leader (CSC Newsletter)**
  
In Seattle, Community Schools connect young people to service learning opportunities in community health, including combating obesity and encouraging participation in civic debates about public smoking.

#### Mentorship programs:

- **Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative Key Player in Mentorship Program**
  
The Tulsa County Mentoring Coalition, works in partnership with the Community Schools Initiative to increase the number of mentors working with local schools.

#### In three years, Cincinatti Community Schools see a 42% improvement in academic outcomes

- **Cincinnati Community Learning Centers Year in Review**
  
- Hartford study shows steady increase in program participation and systems development necessary for improvements in student achievement. An Evaluation of Hartford Community Schools 2009-2011

- Community Schools improve results across entire school.
  
- Community School System Results
  
- Report shows Maryland Community Schools positively impact Kindergarten-readiness. Report on Student Progress at Judy Centers in Maryland

#### Four ways that Community Schools support effective teaching:

- **Reduce health-related issues** that would otherwise cost students instructional time.
- Services help students and families stay in the community create classroom stability.
- **Offering family programs**, such as English language learner classes, can encourage parents to communicate with teachers support teachers’ work in the classroom.
- The help of community partners and service providers, can free teachers to concentrate on instruction with fewer worries about nonacademic student needs, which reduces their stress levels and burnout tendencies.

- Related: Lightening the Load: A Look at Four Ways that Community Schools Can Support Effective Teaching

- Teachers in Community Schools feel a greater sense of support for their efforts. Julie Sellers, President of the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers, talks about the benefits of community schools for teachers at this Center for American Progress panel (video)

- Teachers and Teachers unions see the value in Community Schools and are taking leadership roles in their development.

- Across the country, teachers and teacher unions are taking a leading role in the Community Schools movement. The Crucial Role of Teachers and Teacher Unions

- In West Virginia, the teachers union is leading the effort to bring “wrap around services” to an impoverished district. Teacher Union Leads Effort to Turn Around West Va. School System
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Messages</th>
<th>Community Schools build strong communities. Community Schools are designed to meet the needs of individual communities, strengthening both communities and families.</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assertions</td>
<td>Community Schools engage their communities in creating vibrant schools that support families and students. Working with shared leadership, Community Schools contribute to the overall health and development of the community. Recognizing the vital role of parents and families in the education of children, Community Schools strengthen families by providing vital services and programs.</td>
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<td>Supports</td>
<td>Community engagement process that helped to inform the development of a Community School: In Tulsa, the public schools and a host of early learning, post-secondary education and health care providers came together to build a continuum of solutions. <strong>Tulsa Promise Neighborhood</strong> Community Schools tap into the unique attributes and needs of a community: In Cincinnati, a failing school in one of the poorest neighborhoods was turned around, <strong>Cincinnati’s Oyler Elementary Finds Winning Formula to Fight Poverty</strong> There is no single blueprint for a Community School. The National Forum provides guidelines and best practices to help schools meet their community’s unique needs. The 2012 National Forum brings together nearly 1,200 school administrators, staff, teachers, neighborhood advocates, and policymakers to learn how they can plan, implement, and scale up community schools to tailor-fit the needs of their unique communities. Over 20 organizations are bringing teams of more than 5 to the Forum – more than a dozen orgs are bringing teams of 10 or more.</td>
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<td>Learning Garden responds to and builds community: In San Francisco, Tenderloin School families asked if a garden could be built into the school. The Learning Garden is a gorgeous space that provides a hands-on experience of how things grow and what plants need to thrive. Staff works with the teachers to connect the garden to classroom activity. <strong>Bay Area Women and Children Center’s and Tenderloin Community School partnership</strong> School-based health clinic serves all <strong>Delaware Community Schools Expand Health Resources</strong> This school-based clinic is open to students, families and the community, providing services to the insured and uninsured and provides health education classes on chronic disease management, such as diabetes. Examples of parent and family-focused programs offered at Community Schools include: Family nights; English as a Second language classes; Parenting classes; parenting support groups. In Chicago's Logan Square, a Community School catalyzes a Parent-Mentor program key to school improvement. <strong>New Book Highlights Logan Square Neighborhood Association Parent-Mentor Program</strong> In Bethlehem, PA the Community School’s After-school programs attracted greater parental involvement. <strong>Broughal Middle School After-school Programs Thriving</strong></td>
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### Messaging in Action: "TOUGH" QUESTIONS

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<tr>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Financial Concerns:</strong> How can schools afford this approach?</td>
<td>In an era of tight public resources Community schools are a great investment. By connecting school and community resources, Community Schools are efficient and effective.</td>
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<td>• In a time of tight budgets, which is more important – establishing community schools or keeping class sizes down?</td>
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<td>• How will state budget crises across the country impact community schools implementation?</td>
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<td>• Given limited financial resources how can public schools take on the financial burden of developing a community school?</td>
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<td>• A lot of low-income schools don’t even have textbooks and basic supplies. Is the community schools model really that feasible, when schools already have so many pressing needs?</td>
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<td><strong>Shouldn’t schools focus on education?</strong></td>
<td>Community schools help students learn.</td>
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<td>• Some have said that community schools diminish the efforts for educational excellence. Shouldn’t we be focused on educational standards, instead of taking on all the community’s problems?</td>
<td>Community Schools provide impactful and enriching learning.</td>
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<td>• How do you respond to principals and teachers who say it is not their job to address poverty and other community issues?</td>
<td>By providing children an array of health and social support and broader, richer learning opportunities, Community Schools improve educational outcomes and student achievement.</td>
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<td>• This sounds like turning schools into social service agencies. Won’t that divert schools from their real job of teaching kids?</td>
<td>Community Schools have been proven to improve student outcomes.</td>
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<td>• This sounds like Community Schools are just an extension of programs for poor kids. Why should middle class families care about this issue?</td>
<td>Teachers feel they are more effective in Community Schools.</td>
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<td>• Why should schools take on the role that families should be taking care of themselves?</td>
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<td><strong>Hypothetical or Irrelevant Political Speculation.</strong></td>
<td>Regardless of political leadership…</td>
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<td>• If President Obama fails to will reelection, and you lose Arne Duncan as your champion, what will be the future of community schools? How can you avoid being a short-lived trend?</td>
<td>Community Schools are efficient and effective.</td>
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<td>• Who do you think is more supportive of community schools, President Obama or presidential candidate Mitt Romney?</td>
<td>Community Schools have been proven to improve student outcomes.</td>
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<td><strong>Implementation Challenges.</strong></td>
<td>Community Schools crowd source human capital by combining proven historical approaches (like school nurses) with new ideas about networking and collaboration.</td>
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<td>• What are some of the biggest challenges for implementing community schools?</td>
<td>Community Schools engage their communities in creating vibrant schools that support families and students.</td>
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<td>• If this makes so much sense, why aren't schools just doing it?</td>
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<td>• How do you ensuring community schools will be implemented effectively?</td>
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<td>• What does it really mean when a school claims to be a community school? Are there standards?</td>
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<td><strong>Concerns about bureaucracy and mandates:</strong> How are you going to expand Community Schools without creating yet another top down mandate from federal, state or local government?</td>
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