

# Strategic Messaging Guide

Coalition for Community Schools  
Because Every Child Deserves Every Chance

## 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  
help students learn**

**Community Schools  
build strong  
communities**



Messages	<h2>Community Schools are Smart Schools.</h2> <p><i>Community Schools are an innovative 21st Century solution to improve school effectiveness and enhance the lives of communities and families</i></p>			
Assertions	<p><i>Community Schools crowd source and leverage human capital</i> by combining proven historical approaches (like school nurses) with new ideas about networking and collaboration.</p>	<p>By connecting school and community resources, <i>Community Schools are efficient and effective.</i></p>	<p>In an era of tight public resources <i>Community schools are a great investment.</i></p>	<p>Community schools offer a scale-able approach beyond Smart Schools to include smarter school districts, and smarter systems of community services, and ultimately, smarter communities.</p>
Supports	<p><b>Programs that demonstrate this "back to the future" idea:</b>        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. <a href="#">Ethel M. Taylor Academy Wins National Honor</a></p> <p>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. <a href="#">Ed Week: School's A Community Effort in Indiana District</a></p> <p>In St. Paul, plans include a database so that service delivery partners "<b>will gain a holistic picture of children as they proceed along the service continuum.</b>" The program also includes building hubs throughout the community where parents can receive services and access information. <a href="#">It Takes a Village: Community-based Solutions to Closing the Achievement Gap (Minnesota)</a></p>	<p><b>Programs that demonstrate efficient &amp; effective service delivery and positive impact:</b></p> <p>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. <a href="#">In the Arms of Wraparound (Today's OEA Cover story on SUN Schools)</a></p> <p>While facing budget cuts, <b>the school maintained extracurriculars</b>, 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. <a href="#">Greater Involvement by Community and Staff Fills Gaps at Phil. School</a></p> <p>The Department of Education has recognized the effectiveness of the Community Schools approach in their guide to new funding strategies. <a href="#">The Art of Leveraging Resources: Community Schools Highlighted by USDOE.</a></p>	<p><b>Secretary of Education Duncan asserts that Community Schools leverage precious public dollars:</b>        "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...<b>it's about partnership, collaborating and understanding what our kids need today to be successful.</b>" Cited on the <a href="#">Afterschool Alliance website</a></p> <p><b>Chicago leveraged millions of dollars:</b> <a href="#">The Million Dollar Value of Chicago Community School Partners</a>        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.</p> <p><b>Community Schools National Forum Study demonstrated that diversified funding in community schools leverages district dollars by a ration of 3 to 1.</b><a href="#">National Forum Capacity Building Guide: Financing</a></p>	<p><b>Case studies show how Community Schools lead to positive systems change</b>  <a href="#">Scaling Up Community Schools Case Studies</a></p>

Messages	<p><b>Community schools help students learn.</b></p> <p><i>Community Schools provide impactful and enriching learning experiences that improve educational outcomes and student achievement.</i></p>		
Assertions	<p>By providing children an array of health and social support and broader, richer learning opportunities, <i>Community Schools lay the foundation for more enriching and impactful learning.</i></p>	<p>Community Schools have been proven to improve student outcomes.</p>	<p>Teachers feel they are more effective in Community Schools.</p>
Supports	<p><b>Addressing chronic absence:</b> <a href="#">Oakland Takes on Chronic Absence Using Community Schools Model</a> Oakland High School has <b>cut its chronic absence rate in half</b> by using data smartly, creating systems to support students, coordinating interventions with staff and community partners, and building relationships.</p> <p><b>Food and nutrition programs:</b> <a href="#">Philadelphia's Urban Nutrition Initiative</a> Through student internships and peer education at local high schools, the Philadelphia Urban Nutrition Initiative <b>teaches nutrition through in-school gardens</b> that benefit the school and the broader community.</p> <p><b>Health screenings:</b> <a href="#">Oakland's McClymonds High is a Full-Service School</a> At McClymond's Hight, a Children's Hospital Oakland clinic <b>free medical care is available to all students</b> and their siblings, no appointment necessary.</p> <p><b>Extended Learning opportunities:</b> <a href="#">Cincinnati Public Schools' Fifth Quarter Initiative</a> More than summer school, each afternoon during Fifth Quarter community partners have stepped up to provide <b>enrichment activities including fine arts, technology, fitness and environmental education</b> — at no cost to the district.</p> <p><b>Service learning:</b> <a href="#">The Powerful Impact of a Quiet Leader (CSC Newsletter)</a> In Seattle, Community Schools connect young people to service learning opportunities in community health, including <b>combating obesity and encouraging participation</b> in civic debates about public smoking.</p> <p><b>Mentorship programs:</b> <a href="#">Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative Key Player in Mentorship Program</a> The Tulsa County Mentoring Coalition, works in partnership with the Community Schools Initiative to increase the number of mentors working with local schools.</p>	<p><b>In three years, Cincinnati Community Schools see a 42% improvement in academic outcomes</b> <a href="#">Cincinnati Community Learning Centers Year in Review</a></p> <p><b>Hartford study shows steady increase in program participation and systems development necessary for improvements in student achievement.</b> <a href="#">An Evaluation of Hartford Community Schools 2009-2011</a></p> <p><b>Community Schools improve results across entire school.</b> <a href="#">Community School System Results</a></p> <p><b>Report shows Maryland Community Schools positively impact Kindergarten-readiness.</b> <a href="#">Report on Student Progress at Judy Centers in Maryland</a></p>	<p><b>Thanks to the additional services provided by Community Schools, Teachers can focus on the classroom.</b></p> <p>Four ways that Community Schools support effective teaching:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ <b>Reduce health-related issues</b> that would otherwise cost students instructional time.</li> <li>▪ Services help students and families stay in the community create classroom stability.</li> <li>▪ <b>Offering family programs</b>, such as English language learner classes, can encourage parents to communicate with teachers support teachers' work in the classroom.</li> <li>▪ The help of community partners and service providers, can <b>free teachers to concentrate on instruction</b> with fewer worries about nonacademic student needs, which reduces their stress levels and burnout tendencies.</li> </ul> <p><a href="#">Related: Lightening the Load: A Look at Four Ways that Community Schools Can Support Effective Teaching</a></p> <p><b>Teachers in Community Schools feel a greater sense of support for their efforts.</b> <a href="#">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)</a></p> <p><b>Teachers and Teachers unions see the value in Community Schools and are taking leadership roles in their development.</b> Across the country, teachers and teacher unions are taking a leading role in the Community Schools movement. <a href="#">The Crucial Role of Teachers and Teacher Unions</a></p> <p>In West Virginia, the teachers union is leading the effort to bring "wrap around services" to an impoverished district. <a href="#">Teacher Union Leads Effort to Turn Around West Va. School System</a></p>

Messages	<p><b>Community Schools build strong communities.</b></p> <p><i>Community Schools are designed to meet the needs of individual communities, strengthening both communities and families.</i></p>		
Assertions	<p>Community Schools engage their communities in creating vibrant schools that support families and students.</p>	<p>Working with shared leadership, Community Schools contribute to the overall health and development of the community.</p>	<p>Recognizing the vital role of parents and families in the education of children, <i>Community Schools strengthen families</i> by providing vital services and programs.</p>
Supports	<p><b>Community engagement process that helped to inform the development of a Community School:</b>          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.</p> <p><a href="#">Tulsa Promise Neighborhood</a>  <b>Community Schools tap into the unique attributes and needs of a community:</b>          In Cincinnati, a failing school in one of the poorest neighborhoods was turned around,  <a href="#">Cincinnati's Oyster Elementary Finds Winning Formula to Fight Poverty</a></p> <p><b>There is no single blue print for a Community School. The National Forum provides guidelines and best practices to help schools meet their community's unique needs.</b>  <i>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.</i></p>	<p><b>Learning Garden responds to and builds community:</b>  <b>In San Francisco, Tenderloin School families asked if a garden could be built into the school.</b>          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.  <a href="#">Bay Area Women and Children Center's and Tenderloin Community School partnership</a></p> <p><b>School-based health clinic serves all</b>  <a href="#">Delaware Community Schools Expand Health Resources</a>          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.</p>	<p>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.  <a href="#">New Book Highlights Logan Square Neighborhood Association Parent-Mentor Program</a></p> <p>In Bethlehem, PA the Community School's After-school programs attracted greater parental involvement.  <a href="#">Broughal Middle School After-school Programs Thriving</a></p>

## Messaging in Action: "TOUGH" QUESTIONS

Questions	Messages & Assertions
<p><b>Financial Concerns: How can schools afford this approach?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• In a time of tight budgets, which is more important – establishing community schools or keeping class sizes down?</li> <li>• How will state budget crises across the country impact community schools implementation?</li> <li>• Given limited financial resources how can public schools take on the financial burden of developing a community school?</li> <li>• 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?</li> </ul>	<p>In an era of tight public resources <i>Community schools are a great investment.</i></p> <p>By connecting school and community resources, <i>Community Schools are efficient and effective.</i></p>
<p><b>Shouldn't schools focus on education?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 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?</li> <li>• How do you respond to principals and teachers who say it is not their job to address poverty and other community issues?</li> <li>• This sounds like turning schools into social service agencies. Won't that divert schools from their real job of teaching kids?</li> <li>• This sounds like Community Schools are just an extension of programs for poor kids. Why should middle class families care about this issue?</li> <li>• Why should schools take on the role that families should be taking care of themselves?</li> </ul>	<p><b>Community schools help students learn.</b></p> <p><i>Community Schools provide impactful and enriching learning</i></p> <p>By providing children an array of health and social support and broader, richer learning opportunities, <i>Community Schools improve educational outcomes and student achievement.</i></p> <p>Community Schools have been proven to improve student outcomes.</p> <p>Teachers feel they are more effective in Community Schools.</p>
<p><b>Hypothetical or Irrelevant Political Speculation.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• If President Obama fails to win 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?</li> <li>• Who do you think is more supportive of community schools, President Obama or presidential candidate Mitt Romney?</li> </ul>	<p>Regardless of political leadership...</p> <p><i>Community Schools are efficient and effective.</i></p> <p>Community Schools have been proven to improve student outcomes.</p>
<p><b>Implementation Challenges.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are some of the biggest challenges for implementing community schools?</li> <li>• If this makes so much sense, why aren't schools just doing it?</li> <li>• How do you ensure community schools will be implemented effectively?</li> <li>• What does it really mean when a school claims to be a community school? Are there standards?</li> </ul>	<p><i>Community Schools crowd source human capital</i> by combining proven historical approaches (like school nurses) with new ideas about networking and collaboration.</p> <p>Community Schools engage their communities in creating vibrant schools that support families and students.</p>
<p><b>Concerns about bureaucracy and mandates:</b></p> <p>How are you going to expand Community Schools without creating yet another top down mandate from federal, state or local government?</p>	<p>Community Schools engage their communities in creating vibrant schools that support families and students.</p> <p>Working with shared leadership, Community Schools contribute to the overall health and development of the community.</p>