Community Schools Initiative, Chicago Public Schools, Chicago, IL

A Large System Spurred by Public and Private Investment

The Chicago Community Schools Initiative (CSI) case study includes a brief overview of the system as well as three individual Chicago community schools.

In 2001, corporate and philanthropic leaders, building on the pioneering work of the Polk Bros. Foundation in three community schools in the 1990s, approached the Chicago Public Schools (CPS) with a proposal to seed more community schools through a public/private venture. CEO Arne Duncan accepted this proposal and agreed to match private dollars with city funds saying, “We have to look at learning as a holistic process. Children need to be healthy and well-nourished; they need homes that are supportive of schooling; they need to be safe both in school and after school. In other words, they need a community.”

CSI started with a goal of developing 100 community schools in five years. Fifty thousand private dollars and $50,000 public dollars were directed to 20 initial schools and their lead partners, with additional funds set aside for systemic technical assistance and evaluation. At each school, these funds provided for a full-time resource coordinator employed by a lead partner and expanded academic enrichment activities.

Under the CSI, a school joins with a lead partner agency that has at least three years of experience in adult and youth programming. The school’s oversight group, which includes school staff, the lead partner, parents and residents, collaborate to develop programming for the community school. Programming typically includes after-school and weekend activities, sports and recreation, arts and cultural activities, tutoring, and other academic enrichment opportunities. Programming for adults comes in the form of English-as-a-second-language classes, career education, and nutrition and parenting classes. In some schools, additional services, such as on-site medical and dental care, are available.

The CSI has expanded to 154 schools as of early 2010. In our interviews with CSI, we learned that CPS invested roughly $18 million in the community school initiative for the 2009-2010 school year, with additional support for individual schools coming from private funders, including the Polk Bros. Foundation, JPMorgan Chase Foundation, and The Chicago Community Trust. Funding from the 21st CCLC program is also incorporated as part of the Chicago community school strategy.

CSI hired an external evaluator from the University of Illinois to study the impact of community schools on closing the achievement gap relative to their traditional school counterparts. The evaluation’s findings lend credence to community school effectiveness, and those who were previously concerned began to embrace the transition.

Oversight and support for community schools comes from the district’s Office of Student Support and Engagement. This office solicits proposal requests from local schools to apply for community schools maintenance grants, as well as grants to support more unique student needs. The Office also provides three annual professional development sessions and technical support for site leadership to enhance their community school operation. Additionally, local schools benefit from the advocacy efforts of the Federation for Community Schools, a state-wide entity that grew out of the Chicago initiative.

The following case studies provide an overview of individual CPS community schools (two elementary and one high school) and demonstrate their power to leverage resources.

Burroughs Elementary School

Burroughs Elementary School relies on a coordinated approach to governance that has bearing on its financial oversight. This approach includes: 1) an Executive Committee, including the principal, Brighton Park Neighborhood Council (BPNC) executive director, and the school’s resource coordinator who participate in weekly planning meetings; 2) an Evaluation Committee driven primarily by parents meets on a monthly basis to evaluate programs and activities; 3) an Oversight Committee, involving parents, business representatives, and community entities, meets monthly to receive status briefings and to complete broad strategic planning. Intermediary functions are shared between the lead agency (administration, advocacy, fund-raising, and infrastructure functions) and CPS (technical assistance, fund-raising, and evaluation).

Burroughs and lead partner BPNC leverage federal 21st CCLC funds (their largest funding source) and
Title I funds to provide academic support and parental education programming. These programs, along with adult education and after-school activities, are subsidized by the CPS After School Counts tutoring program, After School All Stars sports program, and a business contribution from the AAA. College interns volunteer to tutor students. Polk Bros. Foundation and a school-based support grant are applied to parent involvement and leadership programming. Health services are funded through a state grant called Safety Net Violence Prevention. A city grant called Chicago Youth Services Cross Roads provides two part-time mental health counselors. A CPS grant funds a full-time school-based resource coordinator primarily responsible for coordinating the variety of programming at the school.

Henson Elementary School

Henson Elementary School and their school-based health center lead partner, Erie Family Health Center, offer health services to students and families at the school. The partner’s relationship with school leadership supports data sharing and referrals across programs. Intermediary functions are also shared between the Erie Family Health Center (infrastructure, administration, fund-raising, and advocacy) and CPS (fund-raising, technical assistance and evaluation). The Center provides programs and services in life skills, health education, parent education, violence prevention, peer mentoring, and behavioral and primary health care.

The resource coordinator for the school is a full-time, lead agency-sponsored position, funded by 21st CCLC, through CPS. The coordinator is responsible for daily logistical and programming coordination and meets weekly with the school principal and the Erie Family Health Center director to discuss program needs and resource allocations. The school’s Advisory Council meetings are held monthly for status updates and outreach.

Primary funding comes from a federal Medicaid grant and a grant for health services from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. Fund-raising efforts have generated strong founda-
tion support from the Polk Bros. Foundation, the Washington Square Health Foundation, and the Gilead Foundation. The Elizabeth Morse Charitable Trust funds mentors who, along with AmeriCorps volunteers, work with students in health and behavioral health disciplines after school.

**Little Village Lawndale High School**

Little Village Lawndale High School houses four theme-based small schools in one building. The school’s leadership includes four principals, the director of the lead agency Enlace Chicago, resource coordinators, and an oversight committee. Enlace Chicago offers a preventative and proactive approach that seeks to strengthen families in 16 neighborhoods in the city. Through their four program areas: education, violence prevention, cultural enrichment, and economic development, the lead partner serves more than 5,000 youth and adults and reaches a community of nearly 100,000 residents by creating opportunities and resources throughout the neighborhood.

A resource coordinator for each of the schools (four total full-time employees funded by the district and the Polk Bros. Foundation) is responsible for program coordination and attends meetings with the lead agency on a regular basis. Intermediary functions are the shared responsibility of the lead agency at the school site (fund-raising, advocacy, administration, evaluation) and CSI (technical assistance, evaluation, and fund-raising).

CSI funds are primarily used for after-school programming, early childhood education, tutors, sports and recreation. Adult education services are provided with a Bridging the Digital Divide technology grant from the state. In addition to CSI funds, academic enrichment programming is leveraged with college and workforce readiness contributions from the Lumina Foundation and Citibank.

Parents are engaged in conducting writing and evaluation activities on behalf of the initiative, and a community-developed leadership program funded by the Local Initiatives Support Corporation (LISC). Life skills programming for students is provided by Central States Service, Employment, and Redevelopment (SER). Summer service-learning and civic engagement are funded by Summer Youth Leadership, LISC, and a TEACH federal grant for summer career exploration. Family support center programming is sponsored by CITGO and redirected funds from the Alivio Medical Center. Health care services are reimbursed through Medicaid and DePaul University interns volunteer to provide support services on-site.
Children's Aid Society Community Schools, New York City, NY

The Children’s Aid Society (CAS) operates 22 community schools in New York City. CAS functions as an intermediary organization raising funds to support specific programs at the schools. The nonprofit also functions as the lead agency and employs a community schools director and other staff at each site. Two example case studies of CAS community schools (middle and elementary) are provided.

PS/IS 50 in East Harlem Neighborhood

PS/IS 50 is a full-service community school that serves a K-8 population in one of New York City’s poorest neighborhoods. An initial needs assessment showed extremely high rates of asthma and obesity in the school and surrounding neighborhood, so CAS and school leaders decided to place a major focus on health services, including a student wellness center and full-time health educator. An initial grant from the Mulago Foundation helped to create this partnership.

Health services are now funded by Medicaid (medical and dental), state tobacco settlement dollars and private dollars. The after-school and summer enrichment programs receive support from the city’s Out-of-School Time (OST) initiative and the 21st CCLC program that passes funds from the federal government through the State Education Department and down to the school. Another state program, Extended-Day/Violence Prevention, also provides support for after-school activities. Two other partners, City Year and BELL (Building Educated Leaders for Life) bring additional funding and programming during out-of-school time. Parent and family engagement activities are supported through a variety of sources, including 21st CCLC, the city’s OST initiative, and private foundations. Site coordination is conducted by a full-time community school director, administrative assistant, and a partner program director. Cost for site coordination is supported exclusively by the city.

PS 8 in Washington Heights Neighborhood

PS 8 serves grades Pre-K through 5 and the early childhood program is fully integrated into the school’s elementary grades. The CAS manages Early Head Start and Head Start grants as well as other grants that support after school and summer enrichment programs, a student wellness (medical and dental) center, social services, and adult education and parent engagement programs.

The Early Head Start and Head Start programs are fully funded by a federal grant. Multiple funding sources support the student wellness services, including Medicaid, tobacco settlement funds, New York State Public Dental Services and New York City Mental Health Services. The New York City Out-of-School Time initiative supports after-school and summer enrichment programs for K-5 students, and federal Supplemental Education Services dollars support an academic remediation program that is managed by CAS.

The NYC Department of Youth and Community Development underwrites the family literacy initiative, and the NYC Department of Education supports a full-time parent coordinator. The family literacy grant and private foundations provide for a majority of the salary of the full-time community school director, which is supplemented by private foundation funding.
University-Assisted Community Schools
Netter Center for Community Partnerships
University of Pennsylvania

The University of Pennsylvania’s Netter Center for Community Partnerships operates eight community schools in Philadelphia. This university-assisted model works with university, school and community partners to strengthen relationships and improve the quality of life for the entire community. Penn uses university resources including students, faculty, and finances to support and operate the initiative.

Sayre University-Assisted Community School

Sayre High School is one of the eight university-assisted community schools that is coordinated through the University of Pennsylvania’s (Penn) Netter Center for Community Partnerships. The Netter Center serves as the intermediary and lead agency for the schools. As the chart illustrates, Sayre offers a diverse set of enrichment, health, family support and experiential learning opportunities. Penn, Sayre, and school district in-kind resources, such as volunteer hours, building space, use of a vehicle for events, and equipment have helped partners leverage core operational funds from the city, state, and private foundations to support community school programs.

Penn students also benefit from their work at Sayre. Penn students participate in academically-based community service courses, which provide service-learning opportunities that enrich the core high school and university curriculum through hands-on learning and real-world problem-solving. Penn undergraduates play multiple roles at Sayre that are often funded by the U.S. Department of Education’s Work-Study Program.

Health is a key focus of the school. Sayre students enjoy a school-to-college connection with Penn medicine and nursing students and faculty mentors. A coordinator and operational costs for a school-based nutrition program are supported by grants from the USDA. And the Department of Health and Human Services supports a federally qualified health center at the school with direct involvement of Penn’s medical school.
Site coordination for Sayre is provided by a team of professionals working in partnership, including an out-of-school-time coordinator, a health promotion and disease prevention coordinator, a college and career coordinator, and a math and science program coordinator. These individuals are supported through city- and state-funded after school programs, private foundations, and the Netter Center. The Netter Center’s resources for coordination specifically come from a mix of designated and discretionary funds, an endowment from a Penn alumnus, as well as Penn student workers and volunteers.

SUN Initiative Community Schools
Multnomah County (Greater Portland), OR

The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods Initiative (SUN) is a collaboration of the City of Portland, Multnomah County, six local school districts, the State of Oregon and numerous non-profit organizations. Currently, there are 58 SUN Community Schools across Multnomah County. In the late 1990s, the SUN Initiative emerged in part through a grant from the Annie E. Casey Foundation in response to a growing achievement gap, diminished public funds, and national research that illuminated risk factors for children in the time immediately before and after school.

The SUN Initiative pooled city and county resources and attracted new funding to expand student enrichment activities and social services in a growing number of schools. According to their report to the Annie E. Casey Foundation, implementing a full-service community school model represented a new philosophy of using school-based services to address multiple layers of need and it was collaborations with others that have “made the SUN Initiative successful in a time of constant change.”

Leveraged Funding

The country and city contribute core funding to CBOs to support full-time SUN site managers employed by lead agencies and academic support, enrichment, and family engagement activities at 42 of the community schools. Roughly $95,000 is available per site to cover these costs. In the two SUN sites profiled here, one receives funding from the city for site coordination, and the other receives comparable funds from the county. Ten SUN schools receive core funding support from 21st CCLC grants and six receive core site coordination funding and services support from the City of Portland’s Children’s Levy, a local tax to support children’s services.

Most SUN schools are leveraging Title I funds with other funds to supplement core funding, and three of the six SUN school districts set aside funding (either Title I or general funds) at the district level to contribute to the core funding or to enhance services at existing sites. The school, county, and city partnership is due to the SUN Initiative’s efforts to deepen a sense of shared responsibility and joint ownership of the larger SUN Service System. Lane Middle School and John Marshall High School are illustrative of the SUN financing approach.

Lane Middle School

Funding and resources arrive at Lane Middle School as a mix of direct allocation support for services, redirection of existing funds, and in-kind support such as donated supplies and volunteer hours. The school greatly emphasizes after-school and health services. In the reporting of funding allocation, both Lane Middle School and John Marshall High School have grouped academic enrichment, life skills, youth development, and service-learning programs and services as one large category—after-school.