George SUN Community School builds students’ confidence and promotes academic success through strong and lasting partnerships between the school, families, the school district, the county and community agencies.

Historically, George Middle School had been known as one of the lower performing schools in the state. Now, after becoming a community school, the school is increasingly improving on academic indicators. In particular, student test scores are at or above the state average. Multnomah County’s Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) initiative, as well as the school’s lead agency, Metropolitan Family Service (MFS), is instrumental in providing the supports and resources necessary to make this happen.

Middle school is a particularly rough time for many young people, but George is using its community connections to make sure that its students do not get discouraged. Teachers focus on making sure that abstract concepts are understood by emphasizing how these concepts relate to students’ lives. There is a strong environmental focus at the school, including a garden, which is integrated with a technology project. Students gather data and use it in Excel spreadsheets to help them grow plants. The garden project is expanded on in math and science classes.

George also provides daily activities before and after school which include an afterschool meal through a partnership with the Federal SupperClub Program, intensive tutoring, SUN Power Hour Study Hall, keyboarding, and various sports and other fun activities such as drama, art, dance classes, martial arts, drumming, dodge ball, and cooking.

Comprehensive family support services are provided through a partnership with Touchstone, a county-funded program that provides case management for families. Families are connected to social service resources, skill-building workshops, and alcohol and drug treatment referrals. In addition, George SUN Community School has recently partnered with the University of Oregon in establishing a family resource center at the school. Cascadia and LifeWorks Northwest provide free mental health services to students and families. Multnomah County School-Based Health Clinic provides free health care.

Not only does George have the ability to offer all of these services, in large part because of its relationship with SUN, it also has a set of policies and procedures in place to coordinate these services and guide the work of partners. Key coordination components include an operating team, consisting of the school principal, the SUN site manager and the lead agency, a site coordination team that includes all of the entities that work in the school, and a site advisory committee that includes partners, parents, students, and school staff.

Before George was a community school, its students faced obstacles that some found insurmountable. Today, students have been given another option—a different place to go. The school’s climate has changed and evolved into a caring community for students.

“I love our SUN community school. If I could come back next year, I would. SUN helps us do stuff in life and helps us become something. I think it is good for our neighborhood because it keeps kids off the streets.”

Shaletha Smith, Student