

## **HB684 – Community Schools in Illinois: Proven Educational Innovation**

HB 684 would amend the Illinois School Code to establish community schools as a legitimate and standardized innovative strategy for Illinois schools to implement and seek funds, when available, to address student academic success as well as parental and community engagement at the school. With over 200 community schools in Illinois and over 100 schools waiting to make the transition to community schools, it is in Illinois' best interest to establish community schools in its school code should federal funds become available from stimulus dollars.

### **What is a Community School?**

Community schools are located in urban, suburban and rural areas all across Illinois. Community schools transform schools into hubs of their communities by providing expansive out of school time programming, from 7am - 7pm, and programming for parents, students and community residents. The ABCs of community schools are: aligning out of school time for students with in-class learning goals to enhance and expand upon classroom teaching; bringing together the school, families and community so the groups are working in tandem; and coordinating academic and student resources so students' needs, whether academic, emotional or physical, are addressed. Illinois community schools are part of a national movement that includes 41 states.

### **Do Community Schools Work?**

Yes. Research shows that community schools make a positive difference in student achievement, behavior, and attendance, family involvement, and community engagement with public schools. They leverage existing community resources so that for every one dollar invested in a community school, an additional 4 – 7 dollars in other funded programs are brought to the school. Community schools also provide a safe learning haven for youth during the critical time of 3 – 6 pm.

### **“My schools have afterschool activities. Am I a community school?”**

Public schools will have more success if they pay attention not only to students' lives in the classroom, but also to the numerous elements of their development: social, emotional, physical, cognitive, civic and moral. Working alone, schools or families may not be able to provide students with the support needed for academic success, but community schools are an approach to public schools that provides diverse activities and programs for students, families and community members in order to focus on nurturing all aspects of students' well-being. Public schools can do this by breaking down the walls around the public school and engaging school residents and community stakeholders to be part of the education solution. With everyone collaboratively setting common goals for the school's students' and community's needs, the transformation begins.

### **Why Community Schools NOW? What's the urgency?**

Federal stimulus dollars will be targeted to states that are showing innovative educational initiatives, especially those that show partnership between schools and community stakeholders and resources. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan urged Illinois to be innovative – community schools are that innovation. Plus, with a dropout rate at nearly half of Illinois youth, the children of Illinois need this research-based, proven-to- be-effective educational model NOW.

### **What do Community Schools cost?**

There are costs associated with having dedicated staff to serve as the Coordinator or Director of programming. There can also be costs involved in providing the after school programs. Community schools typically cost \$150,000 - \$200,000 per school for daily programming, Saturday programming and five or six weeks of summer school and programs. The average per pupil cost is \$1,000 for standard programming; \$1,500 if medical or mental health needs are high in the school/community.

### **ISBE's Role with Community Schools:**

The Federation in collaboration with ISBE, the Governor's office, and state law and policymakers is attempting to codify community schools and seek federal stimulus dollars to fund them. These funds would be in the ISBE budget and would be administered by ISBE through an RFP process. With a \$10 million community school budget line, ISBE would be able to provide expanded, enrichment programming to at least 10,000 students across Illinois.

**HB 684** passed out of the House unanimously. State Senate sponsors: Senator Kwame Raoul, Sen. A.J. Wilhelmi, Sen. Jeff Schoenberg, Sen. Mattie Hunter, Sen. David Koehler, Sen. Michael Noland, Sen. Pamela Althoff and Sen. Dale Risinger. HB684 passed out of the Senate Education Committee, 9 – 1.

*The Federation for Community Schools is a statewide coalition of more than 850 members that works collaboratively to support high quality community schools in Illinois through ongoing professional development and supportive policies so that any school in Illinois can become a community school. For more information, visit our website at [www.ilcommunitieschools.org](http://www.ilcommunitieschools.org).*