Stevenson provides high quality and integrated out-of-school programming for children and families and works to develop grassroots community leaders with the skills to reduce barriers to positive child, family, and school functioning.

On any given evening, the campus of inner-city Stevenson-YMCA Community School (SYCS) springs to life. The school serves as the hub of the community. Hundreds of children and volunteers come and go. Parents take computer and English classes, or they stroll across the street to the "little brown church" for folklorico lessons. Students brush up on their math, gather for the computer club, and play basketball and soccer.

For seven years, Stevenson has implemented a community school model, which brings together many partners to offer extra support to children and families before, during and after school. The YMCA of greater Long Beach acts as a lead agency in the school, providing support for a community school coordinator who works to integrate partners into the life of the school. Following a true community-driven model, parents and community residents are actively involved in all aspects of the SYCS. All community members, regardless of whether their children attend Stevenson, are invited to participate.

The school has made a purposeful effort to involve teachers in all aspects of the community school. This includes conducting four staff meetings a year that are dedicated to learning more about the community school approach. In addition, parents run two staff meetings a year, helping teachers gain a parents perspective and providing a leadership opportunity to parents.

The school is not only improving outcomes for its students, it’s also leaving a legacy to the community. The school and the YMCA have established a Community Leadership Institute as a way to channel people into leadership roles throughout the community. Stevenson parents are now taking the skills they have honed in this program and bringing them to middle schools as their children matriculate.

The school and the community thrive on a mutually beneficial relationship. When the school needs something, the community responds. But perhaps just as importantly, the community sees the school as a resource. This deep connection between the school and the community is symbolized by a recent event. The community was given a five thousand dollar grant to put up a mural in the neighborhood. The first place the community turned to to help guide this project was the school. They asked the Youth Leadership Institute at the school to help conceptualize the project.

The SYCS is governed by an Advisory Board made up of parents, schoolteachers and administrators, and agency and university staff. The Community School Director, a YMCA employee, leads the Advisory Board which meets monthly. The Board is responsible for program development and evaluation, problem-solving, fiscal oversight and organizing community events. There is also a 12-member Youth Council which provides the SYCS with youth input on the program.

About Stevenson
Grades K-5
The Stevenson-YMCA Community School sits in the heart of Long Beach, California, which houses a large Hispanic population. Three-fourths of the student body is Hispanic and 72% are considered English Language Learners. 100% of the 960 students at Stevenson are eligible for free or reduced price lunch.

Who’s who at Stevenson
Elementary School
Principal: Gonzalo Mora- ga
Community School Coor- dinator: Cheryl Kono
YMCA Afterschool site director: Vickie Johnson
Lead Partner: YMCA of Greater Long Beach
Key partners and funders:
California State University CalWorks
James Irving Foundation (CORAL program)
Stuart Foundation

“Since I have joined YLI, I have changed my life and other people’s lives. By joining this program, my goal has been to be able to help other schools and students become leaders by being respectful, honest, and caring.”
Destiny Espinoza, student