

AfterSchool Today

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BUILDING COACHING RELATIONSHIPS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS HELP AFTERSCHOOL

FLOURISH

BY MARY KINGSTON ROCHE AND ERIK PETERSON

Afterschool practitioners and advocates dream of schools that embrace afterschool as a critical component of students' education, ensure students' basic needs are met, and see families and communities as true partners.

Where do these practices regularly take place? In community schools.

Using schools as hubs, community schools bring educators, families and community partners together to offer a range of opportunities, supports and services to youth and their families and communities. A central component of community schools is expanded learning opportunities—including afterschool programs—that motivate and engage students. Community schools also offer essential health and social supports and services as well as a challenging and motivating curriculum, and engage families and communities as assets in the lives of

their youth.

Every community school responds to unique local needs and includes the voices of students, families and residents. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone—beyond school hours, including evenings and weekends. The Coalition for Community Schools estimates about 5,000 community schools across the country, from New York City to Vancouver, Washington. At a system level, they can be led by school districts, community-based organizations including United Ways, institutions of higher education, Mayors' offices and local government. And they are showing results: Community schools lead to stronger academic achievement and increased student, family and community engagement.

When afterschool programs are a central

component of a community school, the synergy created can transform a community.

Community schools enhance and expand afterschool programs. The Coalition's 2013 *The Growing Convergence of Community Schools and Expanded Learning Opportunities* highlights the prevalence and value of afterschool, with close to 90 percent of community school initiatives describing the expansion and improvement of afterschool as part of their strategy. In addition, teachers and afterschool program staff do joint professional development so afterschool activities enhance the school's curriculum.

The outcomes when both community schools and afterschool work together are impressive.

At Allentown, Pennsylvania's Roosevelt Elementary, a community school with a strong afterschool component, the percentage of students scoring advanced and proficient in reading increased by 19 percent over a five-year period. Parent participation rose and enrollment in afterschool programs increased, with more than 57 percent of the students now participating in before-, after- or summer school activities run by the Boys & Girls Clubs of Allentown and other community partners.

Want to learn more about how to start or support community schools in your school or district? See the **News and Resources** section (page 6) for links to toolkits and resources, an animated video about community schools, and more about the role of afterschool in community schools. Find out where to visit a community school! And learn about opportunities to strengthen afterschool through the new Every Student Succeeds Act, via Coalition and Afterschool Alliance resources. [NAA](#)

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