

New Federal Education Law Boosts Community Schools

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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS PROMINENT IN EVERY STUDENT SUCCEEDS ACT

WASHINGTON, DC – The new Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) that President Obama signed into law today includes the Full Service Community Schools program, marking a big win for community school supporters. The bill also contains provisions that advance the community schools strategy, including the requirement for indicators beyond academics in state and district accountability systems; supportive programs including Promise Neighborhoods and 21st Century Community Learning Centers; and a new set of tools and resources to boost results-focused school-community partnerships for young people's success, including integrated student supports, needs assessments, and professional development for educators to work more effectively with families and communities.

The bill, which replaces No Child Left Behind and will go into effect the 2017-2018 school year, includes Full Service Community Schools in Title IV under a program titled "Community Support for School Success." Funding for Full Service would add to the momentum of the 150 places utilizing the community schools strategy across the country. It would encourage more Mayors like Bill De Blasio in New York City, Ras Baraka in Newark and Jim Kenney in Philadelphia who are embracing community schools as a solution to their city's vexing education challenges, and inspire more Superintendents to join colleagues Teresa Neal in Grand Rapids and Steve Webb in Vancouver, Washington who are already growing community schools.

"The inclusion of the Full-Service Community Schools program in the Every Student Succeeds Act reflects a broader vision for our public schools in ESSA – a vision that recognizes that educators must work in partnership with their communities to help all young people thrive," said Martin Blank, Director of the Coalition for Community Schools and President of The Institute for Educational Leadership.

"The collective advocacy of our over 200 partners in the Coalition that helped secure this program in the new Act reflects the collective effort at the heart of the community school strategy," said Mary Kingston Roche, Director of Public Policy for the Coalition. "We are extremely grateful to Representative Steny Hoyer (D-MD), a longstanding champion of community schools in the House, and to Senators Sherrod Brown (D-OH) and Joe Manchin (D-WV) for leading the charge in the Senate."

Rep. Hoyer highlighted community schools as part of his statement upon the Senate bill passage: "I am proud that this legislation includes a provision to encourage the expansion of the full-service community schools model for the delivery of wrap-around services for low-income families. Promoting full-service community schools has been a priority of mine for many years, and this legislation builds on earlier efforts to promote and expand this model, which brings existing critical community services for children and their parents – such as early childhood learning, medical and dental screenings, and career counseling – into schools."

Our Coalition partners also express support:

Dan Domenech, Executive Director of AASA, the School Superintendents Association: "AASA is proud to support the Every Student Succeeds Act. One of the biggest drivers of our support is the return of state and local control, allowing local education leaders to exercise their expertise in implementing education programs. In a broad ESSA that offers comprehensive reauthorization, we are proud to continue to support the Community Schools model and commend Congress for including the program in the reauthorization. The Full Service Community Schools program encompasses more than just academics—it ensures success beyond the inside of school buildings. Only when children have support for all their needs will schools have a real chance of helping every student master required education concepts and skills."

Stacey D. Stewart, U.S. President of United Way Worldwide: "United Way Worldwide applauds the inclusion of the Full-Service Community Schools program in the Every Student Succeeds Act. We are glad that Congress recognizes both the important role community organizations play in meeting the comprehensive needs of students, and the efficacy of full-service community schools model. We look forward to our continued partnerships with full-service community schools across the country as we work to ensure the success of every student!"

Randi Weingarten, President of the American Federation of Teachers: "We're thrilled that through Rep. Hoyer's leadership, the ESSA bill includes the Full-Service Community Schools program. This is a big win for students, families and educators because the wraparound services that are part and parcel of community schools help level the playing field for disadvantaged students and their families. In addition to providing a strong academic program, community schools provide social, emotional and health services needed to educate the whole child and mitigate the impact of poverty. This is particularly important today since more than half of all public school students are poor."

Jeffrey Levi, PhD, Executive Director of Trust for America's Health: "It's great to see the Full-Service Community Schools legislation included in ESEA reauthorization. The legislation will expand the number of full-service community schools, which perform the vital service of connecting students and their families to community organizations that offer primary, dental and mental healthcare, literacy help and career counseling, among other services. This will result in healthier students—who do better in school— and happier and more productive families."

Bruce Lesley, President of First Focus Campaign for Children: "Providing educational spaces where children's academic, health, and mentoring needs are met benefits the students, their families, and the schools. By including the FSCS in the ESEA reauthorization, we move closer to eliminating a blind-spot in federal policy, recognizing that what happens outside the classroom affects what happens inside the classroom."

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About the Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education K–16, youth development, community planning and development, higher education, family support, health and human services, government, and philanthropy as well as national, state, and local community school networks. The Coalition advocates for community schools as a strategy to leverage local resources and programs, changing the look and feel of the traditional school structure to best meet the needs of children and families in the 21st century.

About the Institute for Educational Leadership

For a half-century, the Institute for Educational Leadership has championed the need for leaders at all levels to shake off their institutional constraints and work across boundaries to address the needs of young people and their families. Bound by no constituency, IEL serves as a catalyst that helps policymakers, administrators, and practitioners at all levels to bridge bureaucratic silos and undo gridlock to improve outcomes for all young people and their families. The work of IEL focuses on three pillars required for young people and their communities to succeed: Involving the broader community with public education to support the learning and development of young people; building more effective pathways into the workforce for all young people and supporting the transition to adulthood; and preparing generations of leaders with the know-how to drive collaborative efforts at all levels.