

About the Center

Mission and History

We envision a world in which all children learn and succeed.

By providing practical, innovative training, consultation, facilitation, materials and advocacy, the National Center for Community Schools helps develop comprehensive community schools and enhance existing school-community partnerships that promote academic achievement, youth development, and family and community well-being. The Center provides technical support to individuals and organizations who wish to learn about, adapt or build on the CAS community school model.

Community schools continually develop a set of four interlocking capacities:

Comprehensiveness – Coordinated partnership resources respond to wide spectrum of developmental needs

Collaboration – All stakeholders share leadership and meaningful engagement

Coherence – Programs and services are effectively coordinated and seamlessly integrated

Commitment – Sustained long-term partnerships share a clear vision and are accountable for results

Programmatic components of a community school typically include:

- ♦ out-of-school time enrichment (before-school, after-school and summer)
- ♦ family engagement, education and leadership
- ♦ early childhood
- ♦ physical, dental and mental health services
- ♦ community and economic development

In 1994, The Children’s Aid Society created the National Center for Community Schools to respond to the increased demand for information and advice about community schools implementation. The Center facilitates learning opportunities that draw on our community schools practice in New York City, as well as lessons learned from around the country. The Center plays a leading role in local and national advocacy to advance the community schools movement and advance this approach in the broader education agenda.

Capacity Building Services and Professional Development

The National Center for Community Schools offers training and guidance in all aspects of designing, implementing and sustaining community schools to meet the unique needs and strengths of individual communities. Services are targeted to individual schools, school boards and district administrators, funders, education reform leaders, community organizations, parent associations, policy makers, universities and research centers.

Study visits to CAS Community Schools – Customized visits offer opportunities to meet with peers, view programs during school days and after school, and gain insight from the experiences of teachers, youth workers, parents, administrators, social workers, health clinic staff and students.

Presentations on Community Schools – NCCS staff are available to present at meetings and professional conferences, including school boards, philanthropic and civic leaders, community events and professional conferences. Our speakers are prepared to present on the vision of a community school, what role this strategy can play in total school reform, how to take the first steps in transforming schools, sustaining programs and creating community school initiatives and supportive systems, as well as all program components.

Professional Development Seminars on Community Schools – NCCS staff offer a series of sequential professional development seminars that prepare partners to plan and implement the community schools strategy and achieve a successful collaboration.

Planning facilitation – In many cases, NCCS staff will provide long-term support for a district, municipality, or individual site to develop its CS vision. This may include assisting in raising the funds for the entire initiative, including that necessary for sustained capacity-building activities.

Other Professional Development – NCCS offers an extensive menu of training courses and modules on out-of-school time, parent engagement and other components of community schools.

Publications and Information – NCCS provides a wide array of materials on community schools including the *Building a Community School* workbook, a Parents Guide, three videos, planning tools, fact sheets and other handouts. NCCS also serves as a clearinghouse of information on community schools nationwide.

Electronic Consultations – Through phone conferencing, NCCS staff can answer questions about community schools, provide basic advice on first steps in shaping a community school strategy and refer callers to information and networking resources. In-depth consultative services are available on a contractual basis.

Individualized On-Site Consultations – Each school and community is unique. NCCS does not encourage a rigid replication of any one model. Instead, personalized consultations about your school, organization and community allow for a customized approach – one that considers the specific assets and needs of the community and builds on local expertise.

Topics on Which We Have Expertise:

- ◆ Forging effective partnerships between schools and community resources
- ◆ Out-of-school time program quality, including selecting age-appropriate curricular resources
- ◆ Building and promoting staff quality
- ◆ Program development
- ◆ Sustainability
- ◆ Child and adolescent development
- ◆ Positive youth development
- ◆ Needs assessment and responsive planning
- ◆ Strategies for engaging parents and families in children’s education and healthy development
- ◆ Connecting research and practice

Highlights Since 1994:

- ◆ Hosted over 10,000 national and international visitors, representing government, education, business, philanthropy, the non-profit sector, the media and the research community
- ◆ Responded to over 7,500 technical assistance requests for information, consultation and training
- ◆ Presented at over 500 national and international workshops and conferences
- ◆ Facilitated development of over 15,000 adaptations of our model in the US and internationally
- ◆ Helped found the national Coalition for Community Schools, which brings together local, state and national organizations representing those who create and sustain community schools
- ◆ Joined forces with the Ad Council and the Coalition to initiate a public service advertising campaign, which generated 13,000 requests for information about community schools
- ◆ Hosted nine bi-annual Practicum conferences for community school practitioners from across the country and beyond
- ◆ Co-authored *Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice* (Oxford University Press, 2005) with researcher Joy Dryfoos and editor Carol Barkin
- ◆ Drafted Full-Service Community Schools legislation for the State of New York