

What are Community Schools?

Community Schools, Defined

A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, services, supports and opportunities leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Schools become centers of the community, open to everyone, all day, every day, evenings and weekends.

Community schools represent **a strategy, not a program**. Partners and stakeholders come together to agree on a set of results for children that they will achieve together. They develop a coordination system to share leadership and connect children and families with opportunities, services, and resources. They share accountability for results. They transform schools and communities.

What do they have in common?

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

In a community school, you will find a wide range of supports and opportunities, including:

- ♦ Academic and cultural enrichment programming
- ♦ Family supports and shared leadership
- ♦ Early childhood programs
- ♦ Physical, dental and mental health services
- ♦ Social services
- ♦ Community and economic development

Every School a Community School

The Obama Administration has made Community Schools a centerpiece of its education reform. Public policy at all levels will begin to shift towards a more comprehensive utilization of schools as centers of community development, and as a vehicle for civic engagement in the education process. Instructional and management excellence can be effective only when the needs of young people and their families are met, by schools, families and community partners working together.