

NYC COMMUNITY SCHOOLS POLICY

The NYC Department of Education is committed to bringing the assets of NYC communities and city agencies to bear in the creation and support of community schools that build collaborations between schools and communities and address the barriers to learning that impede academic achievement. When coupled with a high-quality core instructional program, community schools are a vehicle for school transformation that can help close the pernicious opportunity gaps in our schools and reverse the growing inequality in our society.

A community school is a public school that serves as a neighborhood hub by opening its doors throughout the day and year to offer top-quality academics and enrichment, together with comprehensive health and social services, to ensure that children are physically, emotionally, and socially prepared to learn. Community schools must include three main elements:

1. Rigorous, engaging, and culturally relevant curriculum and instruction that prepares students for college and careers, enough time for enrichment in arts and STEM, strong support and training for educators, and commitment to diversity of language and ability
2. Positive, supportive and safe environment for all students and families that includes social, emotional and health services, youth development and positive discipline practices
3. Transformative parent engagement, which engages families as decision-makers in design, implementation and evaluation of the community school, builds strong family-school partnerships, and develops leaders who affect change in their school and community

There are distinct stages of development for community schools, and schools will vary in their implementation of these three elements as they progress along the developmental trajectory.

Although the design of each community school must be tailored to its specific circumstances, every community school must include the following:

1. School leadership that is committed to the community school model; to sharing time, space, and decision-making with community partners; and to keeping the building open after school, weekends and vacations for use by students, families and the community;
2. A Community School Team that includes parents, school staff, youth and partners as full voting members and directs planning and implementation of the community school;
3. A full-time Community School Coordinator who partners with the principal and serves on the SLT, and whose role it is to develop, coordinate, integrate and align programs and partners that serve students, families, and the community;
4. A lead partner organization and other partners that are deeply invested in improving student outcomes and integrated into decision-making, coordination and implementation;
5. A planning period that includes intensive family and community engagement as well as an assessment to determine the needs and assets of students, families and the community;
6. Ongoing professional development for school staff, parents and partners on positive and supportive school climate, effective partnerships and transformative parent and community engagement;
7. Dedicated space in the school for community partners, support services and parents;
8. Systems to collect, analyze and respond to real-time data on student and school indicators such as attendance, achievement and program participation, as well as workflows for scheduling, programming and other essential functions that support student success;
9. Regular evaluation, based on an outcomes framework, that measures academic progress, health and wellbeing, youth development, and family and community partnerships;
10. Secure, sustainable funding to cover the cost of the Community School Coordinator and programs that meet the needs of the school as identified through the planning process.