

**Coalition for Educational Justice Recognized for Support of Community Schools**

*CEJ Honored for Advocacy Efforts Supporting Community Schools*

**ALBUQUERQUE, NM—April 6, 2016—** The Coalition for Community Schools will present the Community School Family and Community Advocate Award to the Center for Educational Justice (CEJ) at the Community Schools National Forum, which will take place April 6-8 in Albuquerque, NM. The Coalition will also honor two superintendents, two district initiative leaders, a national partner, two educators, and Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD) with a lifetime achievement award.

“The Coalition for Educational Justice’s efforts are a prime example of what can happen when parents and community organizations collaborate for students,” said Martin J. Blank, president of the Institute for Educational Leadership and director of the Coalition for Community Schools. “Because of their tireless advocacy, New York City is building a citywide community schools strategy that engages all who have a stake in education.”

Using public schools as hubs, community schools bring together many partners to offer a range of supports and opportunities to children, youth, families and communities. School and district leaders collaborate with organizations to bring a multitude of academic, health, and social services into schools and accessible to the community. A parent-led collaborative of community-based organizations and unions, CEJ led the push in 2013 for New York City mayoral candidates to adopt community schools into their education agendas. Building upon that success, they have worked with Mayor Bill de Blasio to build a citywide community schools vision, and there are now more than 130 new community schools in New York City. CEJ has been successful in mobilizing parents and local leaders to transform education and redefine community engagement in schools across the city.

The Community School Family and Community Advocate Award is presented to local advocates who have mobilized to create or expand community schools.

CEJ has been instrumental in the creation of a sustainable community school strategy in New York City. By bringing the critical voice of families and community residents into the conversation, CEJ has helped community schools efforts to have a greater impact on the lives of young people and their families and communities. They continue to strengthen the capacity for authentic family and community engagement in community schools and keep the focus on better learning and outcomes for children. CEJ drove the passage of the community schools policy at the New York City Department of Education, a landmark policy for New York City and other large cities.

The awardees will be recognized at the 2016 Community Schools National Forum, a gathering of more than 1,550 community school advocates, educators, and partners in Albuquerque, NM. The Forum is co-sponsored by the [Coalition for Community Schools](http://www.communityschools.org) at the [Institute for Educational Leadership](http://www.iel.org) (IEL) together with the [Albuquerque/Bernalillo Community Schools Partnership](http://www.bernco.gov/community-services/about-albuquerque-community-schools.aspx).

The theme of this year’s Forum, “Rising Together: Learning Across School, Family, and Community,” reflects the belief of the Coalition that in community schools all children can thrive, regardless of their race, ethnicity, or economic status. In fact, as leaders “rise together,” community schools pay particular attention to building on the assets of children and youth in families facing the greatest inequities. That is why equity and opportunity for all has been a central tenet of the Coalition’s work.

**About the Coalition for Community Schools**

The [Coalition for Community Schools](http://www.communityschools.org/), housed at the [Institute for Educational Leadership](http://iel.org/) (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.