ABOUT THIS REPORT: MAKING THE CASE FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

> "A community school is not just another program being imposed on a school. It embodies a way of thinking and acting that recognizes the historic central role of schools in our communities — and the power of working together for a common good. Educating our children, yes, but also strengthening our families and communities so that, in turn, they can help make our schools even stronger and our children even more successful."
>
> — Ira Harkavy and Martin J. Blank
> "A Vision of Learning That Goes Beyond Testing"
> *Education Week*, April 17, 2002

Universal education is a valued tradition in America, and with good reason — a democracy rises and falls on the education of its children. Universal, however, does not necessarily mean equal or even adequate. In recent decades, educators, policymakers and others have come to understand that the real question is not how to provide all children with schooling, but how to create the conditions that enable every child to succeed.

Today's federal mandate, set forth in the No Child Left Behind Act, gives new urgency to this question — just as shrinking budgets and increasing demands for accountability challenge schools to do more with less. Across our nation, schools and communities have been examining their practices and resources to discover what they can do differently so that every student learns at high standards.

In these pages, the Coalition for Community Schools, an alliance of more than 160 national, state and local organizations, makes the case that community schools offer a practical and effective strategy for educating all children to their full potential. *Making the Difference* outlines the advantages of community schools and the conditions for learning that these advantages create. It reviews the research on which these conditions

are based and illustrates the extent to which community schools make a difference to students, schools, families and communities.

The crux of our evidence is presented in Chapter 3. There we report on evaluations of 20 community school initiatives across the United States that demonstrate notable improvements in four areas:

❖ **Student learning:** Community school students show significant and widely evident gains in academic achievement and in essential areas of nonacademic development.

❖ **Family engagement:** Families of community school students show increased stability, communication with teachers and school involvement. Parents demonstrate a greater sense of responsibility for their children's learning success.

❖ **School effectiveness:** Community schools enjoy stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment and greater community support.

❖ **Community vitality:** Community schools promote better use of school buildings, and their

neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents.

Community schools are accomplishing these improvements across the educational landscape — in districts large and small; affluent and disadvantaged; urban, suburban and rural. What makes them effective for so many student populations, often those most at risk, is an important part of the community school story.

In this report, you will learn about the advantages that distinguish community schools from traditional schools and enable community schools to do what even the most exemplary traditional schools cannot: Create the conditions necessary for every child to learn at high levels.

An Enduring Vision

For more than 100 years, community schools have promoted a simple, fundamentally American value: School, community and family are inextricably joined and must work closely together for the benefit of every child. Here is the Coalition's vision of a community school:

> **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 and are open to everyone — all day, every day, evenings and weekends.**
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> **Using public schools as hubs, community schools knit together inventive, enduring relationships among educators, families, volunteers and community partners. Health and social service agencies, family support groups, youth development organizations, institutions of higher education, community organizations, businesses, and civic and faith-based groups all play a part. By sharing expertise and resources, schools and communities act in concert to transform traditional schools into permanent partnerships for excellence. Schools value the resources and involvement of community partners, and communities understand that strong schools are at the heart of strong neighborhoods. In an increasingly complex and demanding educational climate, schools are not left to work alone.**
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> **Students engage in learning and service activities at a community school and have access to an array of personal and social supports. Community schools promote youth development activities and community-based learning and offer preventive health and social services before, during and after school.**
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> **Parents and community residents support their children's learning while developing their own knowledge and skills. Literacy classes, adult and parent education, employment training, family support, and leadership development all are part of the community school vision.**
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> **Families, youth and residents join with educators and community partners to articulate the community's goals for its students, and to help design, implement and evaluate activities. Participation of these stakeholders as decision makers helps ensure that community schools meet local needs and show measurable progress.**

Because community schools typically arise as unique responses to the specific needs of their communities, no two are exactly alike. At the same time, each community school reflects a common set of principles that characterizes most national models and local implementations. These principles emphasize fostering strong partnerships, sharing accountability for results, setting high expectations for all, building on the community's strengths,

Community Schools: A Century of Innovation

In the late 19th century, Jane Addams' settlement house movement brought recreational, health and educational services to working-class, largely immigrant neighborhoods in Chicago and similar urban-industrial centers. By the early 1900s, John Dewey's concept of the "school as a social center" encouraged advocates to bring these opportunities into public schools.

Fostered by the Charles Stewart Mott Foundation and its work in Flint, MI, a formal movement to promote community education gained national visibility in the 1930s. Its goal was to make schools the social, educational and recreational anchors of their communities and to involve adults as well as young people in lifelong learning.

In the 1970s, Congress provided important seed money for the movement with the passage of the Community Schools Act (PL 93-381) and the Community Schools and Comprehensive Community Education Act. Although this funding was folded into a block grant during the early years of the Reagan Administration, its passage signaled important federal support for community schools.

Since the late 1980s, various local, state and foundation-funded efforts have produced new models that further developed the key features of community schools and greatly increased their numbers. Approaches designed to mobilize the assets of communities and address barriers to learning resulting from poverty, changing demographics and other contemporary facts of life emerged alongside more established community education programs. New community school efforts brought innovations such as family support centers, early childhood and after-school programs, health and mental health services, partnerships with business and civic groups, and initiatives to use school facilities as community centers. Local community schools based on models such as Beacons Schools, Caring Communities, Children's Aid Society, Communities In Schools, Healthy Start, Schools of the 21st Century and the West Philadelphia Improvement Corps, among others, flourished.

In 1998, the community school movement received a major boost from the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program. Based on a community education strategy, the new federal initiative promoted the development of local after-school programs as a way to build community schools. Its substantial funding — $1 billion in fiscal year 2002 — brought increased visibility to the community schools movement and renewed the federal government's support for a strengthened community role in public education.

The 2002 passage of the No Child Left Behind Act makes a groundbreaking federal commitment to *all* children's educational success. The legislation incorporates many elements that historically have been essential components of community schools, although they have not been emphasized as much as the accountability and choice provisions of the law. Through the community school movement, such desirable elements as parent involvement, after-school programs, violence prevention, service-learning, and coordination and integration of existing public and private services will help America leave no child behind.

embracing diversity and avoiding cookie-cutter solutions (Coalition for Community Schools, 1999).

In this report, we examine how the community school vision — and the advantages it produces — results in an approach to education that is demonstrably better: A better way to learn and a better way to meet the challenges faced by today's public schools. As educators and local leaders examine options and make strategic decisions for their districts, we urge them to use this vision and the supporting evidence assembled here to achieve improved outcomes for students, their families and their communities.

Using This Report

Research makes it clear that community schools work. In districts across America, community schools are improving student learning, strengthening families and schools, and building communities so that they all function together to contribute to student success.

Community school partners see the impact of their work every day. Yet, if the community school vision is to take permanent root in American public education, other educators, parents, community partners and policy-makers must have tangible evidence that community schools really do make a difference. The demand for improved testing outcomes and accountability in the No Child Left Behind Act reinforces the need for research-based results.

Two previous reports, developed by the Coalition for Community Schools with its partners, already have contributed to the research available on community schools: *Evaluation of Community Schools: Findings to Date* (Dryfoos, 2000) and *Learning Together: The Developing Field of School-Community Initiatives* (Melaville, 1998).

Making The Difference now adds significantly to this knowledge base by gathering in one place the research on which community schools are based and current evaluation data that show their effects.

Chapter 1 discusses the unique advantages that set community schools apart from traditional schools and make them a better choice for students. Community schools have the capacity to 1) garner additional resources and lessen the demands on school staff; 2) provide learning opportunities that develop both academic

and nonacademic competencies; and 3) create social capital by building networks and relationships to support students, families and communities. Chapter 1 also presents snapshots of how community schools are making the difference locally.

Chapter 2 establishes five essential conditions for learning that are possible because of community schools' unique advantages. It presents the major research findings from various fields on which each condition is based. These conditions are clearly linked to attaining better learning and related outcomes for children and youth, as well as to strengthening families and communities. This chapter describes the general approach community schools use to fulfill each condition and includes a specific example from an individual school.

Chapter 3, the centerpiece of this report, presents a review of 20 current evaluations of community school initiatives. Data from these evaluations show the positive impact community schools have on students, schools, families and communities.

Chapter 4 moves from research to practice. It outlines four key elements that drive local efforts to create and sustain community schools: A motivating vision, connected learning experiences, community partnerships, and strategic organization and financing. This chapter demonstrates the alignment among these four elements and the qualities that make a community school better. Vignettes of community schools show these elements in practice.

Chapter 5 offers an action agenda for the multiple stakeholders who must work together to promote community schools locally. This agenda builds on the elements, identified in Chapter 4, that drive local community school efforts.

The vignettes and data interspersed throughout this report come from 15 community schools identified by Coalition partners as committed to the community school vision. Vignettes and data are identified by this icon:

To further illustrate the community school advantage, profiles of these 15 schools, including demographic and outcome data, appear in Appendix A. Profiled schools represent a cross-section of community school models at various stages of development and show a variety of styles and approaches within the community school movement. Most of these schools have high percentages of students who qualify for free and reduced-price meals; many have significant numbers of students learning English as a second language. They include elementary, middle and high schools in rural, urban and suburban communities.

Who Should Read This Report

Because community schools are, by definition, partner-ships, *Making the Difference* is directed to a large audience. Indeed, for our country to succeed in educating all our children, a broad community of interest must be engaged in this important work of American democracy. Intended readers include:

❖ superintendents, principals, teachers and school staff;

❖ education policymakers, researchers and funders at the district, state and national levels;

❖ policymakers and potential community school partners in numerous fields beyond education, including local government, health and human services, youth development, family support, com-munity development, and higher education, among others; and

❖ members of the community, including parents, neighborhood residents, community- and faith-based organizations, advocates, and grant-making institutions, whose vision and energy help sustain the best community school efforts.

Looking Forward

Leadership from every stakeholder is necessary for a successful community schools initiative. But money also matters (Melaville, 1998). Yes, more can be done with existing resources. But the severe funding constraints that are emerging at all governmental levels cannot be

ignored. Leaders from different sectors must work together to support policies and financing for the full range of education and related services, supports and opportunities that all children need to succeed, and that schools, families and communities need to thrive.

As the findings reported in the following pages make clear, there is ample evidence to assert the connection between community schools and improved student learning. The Coalition acknowledges that we are just beginning to discover *how* actions and relationships in community schools affect learning outcomes. Based on what we now know, the news is good. For many young people, schools, families and communities, community schools are making the difference.

Typical Activities in a Community School

Community schools offer many activities, services and opportunities for students and adults. This list samples from the full range of possibilities. Local community schools are adding new ideas every day. Some of these activities also may be offered in traditional schools. The difference in community schools is that partners intentionally select each activity as part of a coherent vision, focused on fulfilling the conditions for learning and achieving specific results.

Adult Education

Arts Education

Before- and After-School Programs

Career Development

Case Management

Child Care

Citizenship Education

Community-Based Learning

Community Organizing

Counseling

Crisis Intervention

Cultural Activities

Dental Services

Early Childhood Education

English as a Second Language

Environmental Education

Family Literacy

Family Nights

Family Support Centers

Health Care Referral

Health Promotion

Home Visits

Housing Information

Job Training Programs

Leadership Training Programs

Mental Health Services

Mentoring

Multidisciplinary Curriculum

Nutrition Counseling

Parent Education

Parent Leadership

Peer Mediation and Conflict Resolution

Pregnancy Prevention

Prevention Services

Primary Health Care

Recreation

School-to-Work Opportunities

Service Learning

Student Leadership Development

Substance Abuse Prevention

Student Support Services

Tutoring/Literacy

Violence Prevention

Volunteer Opportunities

Youth Development

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL ADVANTAGE

"This community school movement can be the salvation of schooling in America."

— Edward Zigler, Yale professor
father of Head Start
designer of Schools of the 21st Century

Walk into a fully developed community school and education buzzwords like "high expectations," "standards" and "accountability" come alive. Excellence is evident in teaching and learning that builds on students' strengths, talents and interests. But good things are happening in other well-run public schools, too. What makes a community school not only different, but better?

Simply stated, community schools have the capacity to do more of what's needed to ensure young people's success. Unlike traditional public schools, community schools link school and community resources as an integral part of their design and operation. As a result, community schools have three major advantages that schools acting alone do not. Community schools can:

❖ **Garner additional resources and reduce the demands on school staff.**

❖ **Provide learning opportunities that develop both academic and nonacademic competencies.**

❖ **Build social capital — the networks and relationships that support learning and create opportunity for young people while strengthening their communities.**

Independently, each of these advantages offers distinct benefits to students, families, schools and communities. Collectively, they enable a community school to provide a powerful and supportive learning environment with an impact far greater than the sum of its parts — offering students of all ages the opportunity to reach their full potential, as individuals and as contributing members of their communities.

Garnering Additional Resources and Reducing the Demands on School Staff

Schools can not ignore the needs of the whole child — social, emotional and physical — as they provide academic opportunities that address the full range of learning needs and styles. For most public schools, this challenge is beyond their existing resources. Some may see this as outside the core mission of schools.

Community schools, however, with their strategic use of linkages and partnerships, can reach outside their walls to leverage additional services, staff and programs to meet the essential needs of students and enhance the range and quality of their learning. Access to additional resources and the active involvement of community partners support and enhance school efforts to address the *facts of life* that affect both teaching and learning, such as changing demographics, too much unstructured time for children, transience, violence and unaddressed basic needs (see page 10).

With a shared vision and strategy, community partnerships lessen, rather than increase, the demands made on school staff. Partners share the responsibility for setting high standards and achieving accountability. In many community schools, a full-time community school coordinator, often employed by a community agency, mobilizes community assets and resources. Working on the school leadership team, this individual reduces the

burden on the principal by helping cultivate and manage community relationships. This allows principals to focus on improving student learning. Teachers in community schools teach. They are not expected to be social workers, mental health counselors and police officers. Partner organizations, working with noninstructional school staff, aid in this work. They help teachers recognize student problems and connect students and their families with needed services and opportunities.

Community schools are intentional about how they bring together resources. Community school partnerships are not *ad hoc,* and more is not always better. In the most effective community schools, every activity is selected and designed for a specific reason. Partners understand that their contributions must help fulfill the conditions for learning and connect to the school's agenda.

Providing Learning Opportunities That Develop Both Academic and Nonacademic Competencies

Community schools build on the understanding that *both* academic and nonacademic competencies are important and related to long-range learning outcomes (Pittman and Cahill, 1992). What young people know and can do, how they think of themselves, and how they approach the world are intimately connected to their ability to succeed — not just in school, but later in life as citizens, workers and family members.

Students who are physically, socially and emotionally competent tend to succeed academically. Autonomy, awareness of others, responsibility and rational optimism all inform academic achievement. In traditional schools, students who lack these essential, nonacademic skills are,

Public Support for Community Schools

A scientific poll of Ohio citizens by the KnowledgeWorks Foundation illustrates public support for many aspects of the Coalition for Community School's vision.

Services and Opportunities in Schools

❖ 91% favor comprehensive after-school programs.

❖ 84% favor community member use of school facilities after school hours.

❖ 62% favor locating community social services for children on school grounds.

❖ 65% favor locating community programs for adults on school grounds.

School Facilities Planning and Use

❖ 70% of Ohioans believe that the general public should be invited to participate in the design and planning of their community's new school facilities.

❖ 65% believe city and school district dollars should be combined to build recreation and general public use facilities.

Citizen Involvement in Education

❖ 72% of Ohioans believe local public schools will not continue to improve unless citizens get involved.

❖ 71% believe public school officials are interested in the community's hopes and dreams for its schools.

Source: KnowledgeWorks Foundation, 2003.

for the most part, left to acquire them outside school. In community schools, however, abundant opportunities for learning and exploration in school, after school and in the community help students mature in *all* areas.

The National Research Council (NRC) supports this approach. In a 2002 report, the NRC made it clear that intellectual, physical, psychoemotional and social development are equally important. Successful maturation in each category depends on the acquisition of multiple assets. For example, school success is only one of the assets that comprise intellectual development. Various nonacademic life skills, including the ability to navigate in more than one culture and to make good decisions, also are essential to intellectual development.

To develop physically, socially, emotionally and intellectually, young people need adult example and guidance, safe opportunities for experimentation, reflection, practice, and honest feedback from others. Community schools are uniquely suited to help provide these supports for all students, not only during the school day but after school, in the evenings and on weekends as well.

Building Social Capital

In community schools, partners who share their assets and expertise with the school are important sources of social capital. Just as financial capital — that is, money — enables people to purchase goods and services, social capital connects them to people and information that can help them solve problems and meet their goals. Typically, such networks are created among successful individuals and maintained by clear behavioral expectations and trust among members.

For young people, social capital increases exposure to role models and life options. It enhances their sense of connectedness to others, their sense of security and their belief in the future. For people of all ages, social capital makes it easier to share expertise, succeed individually and contribute to a healthy community.

For many young people — especially those from less-affluent communities and lower-income families — social capital, like financial capital, is not readily available. Community schools consciously work to change this. They build social capital, for example, through mentor-

ing relationships with caring adults. School-to-work learning experiences significantly increase young people's knowledge of career choices and help them develop the skills needed to pursue them. From poetry slams to career days to "shadow government" exercises, community schools enhance students' cultural literacy and social competence.

Adult family members and community residents also increase their access to social capital through community schools. Community schools provide leadership training programs and offer ongoing opportunities to hold decision-making roles, to speak out in school and community forums, and to work with others on school and community projects.

Experiences like these create confidence and hone skills. Participants develop awareness of community institutions, build relationships and enhance their own standing in their communities. Opportunities to build essential occupational or life skills, such as English fluency, computer literacy or financial management, can open doors and improve families' lives for years to come.

While social capital is a scarce commodity in too many communities, it can be cultivated and replenished in even the lowest-income areas. The more relationships a community has to draw upon to share information, assist neighbors and solve problems, the more its social capital grows (Putnam, 1993, 1995). By engaging students and families in the community and its issues, community schools provide opportunities for young people and residents to give back to their schools and neighborhoods and add to their community's stockpile of social capital.

Leading to an Effective Learning Environment

Thanks to their unique advantages, community schools are able to create an effective learning environment — one in which the essential conditions for learning are fostered. In Chapter 2, we discuss these conditions. We show how community schools promote these conditions and present the research base that supports them.

Ten million children are at risk of school failure due to social, emotional and health issues (Dryfoos, 1994). Here are some of the realities that challenge today's schools and educators:

Cultural Disconnects
Nearly 20% of America's school-age children now speak a language other than English at home, and 15% of those homes are outside states where immigrants traditionally have set-tled. About 65% of America's population growth in the next 20 years is expected to be Hispanic and Asian (U.S. Census, 2000). Currently, 87% of America's teachers are white (American Federation of Teachers, 1999).

Too Much Unstructured Time
Eight million children spend up to 20–25 hours per week without adult supervision, alone or with friends (National Institute on Out-of-School Time, 2003). Half of all teachers cite isolation during after-school hours as the primary reason for children's academic struggles (National Education Commission on Time and Learning, 1994).

Using data from the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent Health, researchers concluded that time spent "hanging out" with friends is a more accurate predictor of teenage risk behavior and school failure than income, race or family structure (Blum, Beuhring and Rinehart, 2000).

Poverty
In 2001, almost 12 million children lived in poverty. From 2000 to 2001, the number of children in extreme poverty grew from 4.8 million to 5.1 million, the first increase in eight years (Children's Defense Fund, 2002). National data show a 30-point variance in test scores for every $10,000 change in household income (Schulte and Keating, 2001).

Unaddressed Health Needs
In 2001, nearly 12.1% of all children under 18, fully 9.2 million, had no health insurance (Hoffman and Wang, 2003). Uninsured children are seven times more likely to go with-out needed medical care than children who have health insurance. With chronic condi-tions such as asthma, diabetes and tooth decay on the rise, poor and uninsured children suffer from the lack of preventive care that often leads to a loss of school time.

The 1999 National Survey of America's Families found that more than 30% of low-income children did not have dental visits in the last year. Tooth decay affects nearly 50% of first graders and about 80% of 17-year-olds, and an estimated 51 million school hours are lost to dental-related illnesses each year (Hurst, 2003; U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, 2000).

Transience

High student transience is a major threat to academic achievement and the school environment (Biernat and Jax, 2000). Students who change schools frequently fall behind in their studies and are more likely to be retained in grade (Fowler-Finn, 2001). High student mobility correlates with lower student achievement and lower test scores even in schools with strong educational programs (Mao, Whitsett and Mellor, 1998). In schools with high rates of transience, even students who are not considered mobile do not perform as well as they would have in schools with a more stable enrollment (Kerbow, 1996).

Unsafe School Environments

In 2001, 30% of students in grades six through 10 were bullied (Nansel, et al., 2001). Victims of bullying may suffer from loss of self-esteem and may develop a fear of going to school (Ericson, 2001). In 1995, 17% of African American students said they feared attack or harm at school, in contrast to just 9% of all students. Disruptive and destructive student behavior affects the entire school community as "critical factors in student academic achievement" (Barton, Coley and Wenglinsky, 1998).

In 1995, teachers were the victims of 1,708,000 nonfatal crimes at school (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). Constant disruptions can dishearten teachers and lead to disillusionment with the profession (Appleby, 1990; Schneider, 1998; Gottfredson, et al., 2000). Unsafe school environments not only contribute to the departure of quality teachers, they also diminish the supply of people wanting to enter the field (Barton, 2000).

Overburdened and Underresourced Schools

When school staff is overwhelmed by economic, physical and social challenges in the student population, it can lead to lowered expectations from both teachers and learners (MetLife, 2001). Only 44% of teachers in largely low-income schools thought their schools had challenging curriculums and only 55% gave their fellow teachers an "A" in subject area knowledge. In more affluent schools, 61% of teachers considered their school curriculum challenging, while 65% of these teachers ranked their fellow teachers as well-versed in subject matter (MetLife, 2001).

Community schools are improving student learning and strengthening families and communities in a variety of measurable ways. Here are some improvements from the community schools profiled in this report. (To learn more about these schools, please see Appendix A).

Improved kindergarten readiness and greater reading proficiency in Green Bay, WI:
Since Head Start began at **Howe Elementary School,** children's achievement has shown noteworthy improvement. Eighty percent to 90% of new kindergartners demonstrated school readiness in 2001 — up from less than 40% in 1997. Among third graders, 61% now perform at proficient or advanced levels on state reading tests, as compared to 40% in 1997. Scores among fourth graders have improved from 35% to 58%.

Reduced student mobility and above city average reading scores in Southwest Chicago:
Strong family support at **Marquette Elementary School** has helped cut the student mobility rate nearly in half, from 41% to 22% between 1995 and 2000. Reading scores also are improving dramatically — at rates *exceeding* the citywide average — even though the poverty rate among students has risen from 68% to 96% over the last decade.

Fewer dropouts and higher college attendance in East Hartford, CT:
The dropout rate at **East Hartford High School** has decreased from 22% to less than 2% annually over the last six years. Eighty percent of students go on to at least a two-year college — a 20% increase over the last seven years.

Improved nutrition for families and more advanced reading proficiency in Ankeny, IA:
Partners added a benefits office of the WIC federal nutrition program for low-income mothers and children to a community service center offering a variety of health, education and social services available to students and families from **Northeast Elementary School.** During the first year, the number of low-income mothers using these services increased ten-fold. A large recreational and academic after-school program has helped boost the percentage of students scoring at advanced levels on standardized reading tests from 22% in 1999 to 33.8% in 2000.

More instructional time and decreased office referrals in Lincoln, NE:
Teachers at **Elliott Elementary School** have gained an additional 15 to 45 minutes of instructional time per day because of positive classroom management techniques that YMCA partner staff have helped them learn. Referrals of disruptive students to the principal's office declined from five to one per day during the 2001 school year.

More parent time with children and smaller achievement gaps in South San Francisco:
Seventy-one percent of parents at the **Families on Track** (FOT) community school at **Parkway Heights Middle School** report spending more time with their children since starting at the school. Lower-achieving sixth graders enrolled in FOT significantly reduced their achievement gap after one year.

Fewer suspensions and more above-average state test scores in Carson, CA:
At **Carson High School,** suspensions were cut in half, from a rate of 10% in 1998 to 4.7% in 2000. The percentage of 11th graders scoring at or above the 50th percentile in standardized reading tests increased from 19% in 1999 to 25% in 2001.

Increased parent leadership and major improvement in state test scores in Boston: Many parents at **James Otis Elementary School** who are adult literacy students also take leadership roles within the school as volunteers or paid staff. In 2000, the school led all other Boston schools in improvement on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Systems test.

High graduation rates and academic excellence in St. Paul, VA: Ninety-four percent of students at **St. Paul High School** graduate. Nearly 90% meet state reading and writing requirements in core areas, and more than 90% pass state exams in biology and geometry.

Higher immunization rates and achievement gains in Indianapolis: At **Francis Scott Key Elementary School #103,** 100% of kindergartners and fifth graders received their immunization shots and are ready to start school on time in 2001. Almost three-quarters (73.2%) of third graders passed state assessments tests in 2001, up from 29% three years earlier.

Reduced pregnancy and increased academic proficiency in Tuckerton, NJ: Pregnancy rates at **Pinelands Regional Middle and High Schools** decreased among young teens from about 20 each year in 1991 to approximately three each year in 2001. Since 1993, the percentage of students passing the state high school proficiency test has climbed from 74% to 90%.

Closing the achievement gap in Kings Mountain, NC: The gap in proficiency between African American and white students is 30% in North Carolina, but just 10% at **East Elementary School.** Since East Elementary became a community school in 1992, the percentage of all students testing at grade level has approximately doubled, rising from between 45% and 50% to 92%.

Effective help for troubled students in Aurora, CO: North Middle School's Student Support Team has successfully helped 60% to 70% of students in crisis, facing potential disciplinary action or academic failures as measured by eliminating further disciplinary action, by providing services to help students cope or finding a more appropriate placement.

Reading gains, higher attendance rates and low suspensions in Minneapolis: Students participating in the Beacons program showed reading gains of 1.5 (on a scale of –2 to 7) vs. –.5 for comparison students on citywide assessments. Seventy-two percent of students participating in the Beacons program have a 95% or higher attendance rate at the **Webster Open Magnet School,** compared to 55.5% for non–Beacons students. Beacons students have a suspension rate of .15 days per students compared to .30 days per non–Beacons students.

Noteworthy increase in reading and math scores in Portland, OR: Student scores on state benchmarks increased in the two years that the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods initiative has been at **Woodmere Elementary School.** In third-grade math, the number of students at or exceeding benchmark increased from 77% to 89%. In third-grade reading, the number exceeding benchmark increased from 50% to 79%. In fifth-grade reading, students at or exceeding benchmark rose from 53% to 70%, and in fifth-grade math, from 58% to 76%.

THE CONDITIONS FOR LEARNING

"We tend to put considerations of family, community and economy off–limits in education reform policy discussions. However, we do so at our peril. The seriousness of our purpose requires that we learn to rub our bellies and pat our heads at the same time."

— Paul E. Barton, Educational Testing Service
Facing the Hard Facts of Education Reform

For children, learning is as natural as breathing or sleeping. Their young minds readily embrace and investigate phenomena they encounter and they easily gather, consider and store information from a multitude of sources. Children learn in different ways, and many factors, including physical and learning disabilities, can help or hinder the process. Creating an environment in which all children can learn at high levels is a challenge for every school in America — a challenge that community schools are designed to meet.

In this chapter, we present an overview of the five conditions for learning that the Coalition believes are essential for every child to succeed. Creating these conditions for learning is a continuous process. Depending on the needs of their own student populations, most community schools will devote more attention to some conditions than to others. Without these conditions in place, however, many children will not succeed and fewer children will realize their full potential.

The Conditions for Learning

Condition #1: The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.

Condition #2: Students are motivated and engaged in learning — both in school and in community settings, during and after school.

Condition #3: The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.

Condition #4: There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff.

Condition #5: Community engagement, together with school efforts, promote a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and that connects students to a broader learning community.

Several recent reports from well–respected researchers and organizations have been issued on effective learning environments. Page 16 presents a brief summary of their findings. While each of these studies has approached the subject in different ways and used different terms to describe its findings, their conclusions are remarkably similar and reinforce our five conditions for learning.

In the remainder of this chapter, we briefly describe the community school approach related to each condition and cite the research from numerous disciplines on which these conditions are based. The chapter shows the clear connection between what we know about the essential conditions for learning and what community schools are doing to foster them. Vignettes provide examples from local schools.

Recent Reports on Effective Learning Environments

❖ A task force of the National Research Council and the Institute of Medicine, in its report *Community Programs to Promote Youth Development,* identifies eight features of positive developmental settings: physical and physiological safety; appropriate structure; supportive relationships; opportunities to belong; positive social norms; support for efficacy and mattering; opportunities for skill building; and integration of family, school and community efforts (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002).

❖ The Learning First Alliance, an organization of 12 leading national education associations, suggests in their report *Safe and Supportive Learning Environments* that what matters most is young people's need for physical and psychological safety; challenging and engaging curriculum; a sense of belonging and connection to others; and reassurance that they are capable, worthy people (Learning First Alliance, 2001).

❖ In their *Inputs For Learning Environments* chart, the Forum for Youth Investment, a leading national youth development advocacy organization, synthesizes six approaches conceptualized by different organizations to identify the following elements that promote learning: a challenging and engaging curriculum and quality instruction; a safe location in which to learn; well-met basic needs; multiple, caring relationships among adults and youth; high expectations for achievement; and abundant opportunities for young people's responsible participation and contribution (Forum for Youth Investment, 2001).

❖ Stanford University researcher Milbrey McLaughlin concludes in her report *Community Count*s that the most effective learning environments for young people are youth-centered, knowledge-centered and assessment-centered. Youth-centered environments respond to the diverse talents, skills and interests of young people and reach out into the community to involve them. Knowledge-centered environments deepen skills and competence; provide quality content and instruction; connect every activity to a clear learning curriculum; and include many kinds of teachers — both youth leaders and adults. Assessment-centered environments build in cycles of planning, practice and performance, with opportunities for feedback and recognition (McLaughlin, 1995/2000).

Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools

CONDITION #1: The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.

Community schools start with academics. Maintaining a clear focus on academic excellence, a commitment to professional development and quality teaching, small class size, and adequate material resources are critical to the community school vision.

In community schools, a successful learning environment includes high standards and expectations for students and teachers; leadership that fosters innovation; and the time, training and resources that make excellence possible.

The Research Base for Condition #1

Key Findings

◆ **Competent and prepared teachers strongly affect student achievement.**

◆ **A rich curriculum with quality content and effective instruction challenges children to meet high standards and has a direct impact on improved student achievement.**

◆ **High-performing schools are guided by strong leadership and clear vision and create an atmosphere of trust among staff and parents**.

◆ **Small schools and class sizes contribute significantly to improved academic achievement and long-term educational outcomes, especially for minority, inner-city and low-income children.**

Competent and prepared teachers strongly affect student achievement.

◆ Teacher preparation and certification are "by far the strongest correlates of student achievement in reading and mathematics, before and after controlling for student poverty and language status" (Darling-Hammond, 1999).

◆ As a result of varying teacher effectiveness, fifth-grade students who had performed equally as second graders were separated by 50 percentile points on standardized exams only three years later (Sanders and Rivers, 1996).

◆ Teachers' expertise — measured by qualifications and experience — in 900 Texas school districts accounts for about 40 percent of the variance in students' reading and mathematics achievement from first through 11th grade — more than any other single factor. Recruiting, training and retaining highly qualified teachers nets greater increases in student achievement than does any other use of school funds (Ferguson, 1991).

◆ The amount of time teachers spend in content-focused professional development experiences has a strong effect on student learning. Time spent in special-topic or issue workshops without a strong content focus does not change teaching practices (Cohen and Hill, 1998).

◆ States that significantly invested in professional development during the 1990s have seen improved student achievement. Minnesota, North Dakota and Iowa, which have the highest achievement test score averages in the nation, "have all had a long history of professional teacher policies, and are among the 12 states that have state professional standards boards that enacted high standards for entering teaching." States that do not prioritize professional development strategies for teachers have not seen such improvements (McDay, 1997).

A rich curriculum with quality content and effective instruction challenges children to meet high standards and has a direct impact on improved student achievement.

◆ Students whose lessons have higher-quality content and whose teachers teach material above grade level perform better than students given lower-quality content and less-challenging instruction (National Center for Education Statistics, 1996).

Early Childhood Education and Community Schools

Making the Difference focuses on the work of community schools as K–12 institutions. Community schools recognize, however, that learning begins at birth and that positive early childhood experiences are closely connected to school success and success in life. Therefore, many community schools incorporate early childhood development programs.

Longitudinal research demonstrates the connections among high-quality, comprehensive early childhood developmental programs; improved learning; and long-term social outcomes. Community schools seek to create similarly comprehensive learning environments throughout a child's education.

❖ Chicago's Child-Parent Centers provided children ages 3 through 9 with sustained educational programming, health and nutrition services, and family support and parent involvement activities. Results from a 15-year longitudinal study of these children found enhanced involvement by parents in their children's education, lower rates of grade retention and special education placement, and lower rates of early school dropout and delinquent behavior (Reynolds, Temple, Robertson and Mann, 2001, 2002).

❖ The Abecedarian high-quality educational child care program provided low-income African American children with language development, health and social services, and parental supports for children from infancy through age 5. Children showed positive gains in language development and reading and math scores. By age 21, longitudinal study findings showed that participants in the Abecedarian program had completed more years of education, were more likely to attend a four-year college and had their first child later than nonparticipants (Campbell, Pungello, Miller-Johnson, Burchinal and Ramey, forthcoming). Mothers of participating children, especially teen mothers, achieved higher educational and employment status than did mothers of nonparticipants (Ramey, et al., 2000).

❖ The 1993 Cost, Quality and Outcomes Study of high-quality child care programs for children age 3 through second grade found that regardless of family background, children in higher-quality child care programs demonstrated greater mathematical ability, greater thinking and attention skills, and fewer behavioral problems than did children in low-quality settings (Peisner-Feinberg, et al., 1999).

❖ The High Scope preschool program emphasized active learning, personal and intellectual development, low staff-to-student ratios, home visits, and high parent involvement and support. After 20 years, African Americans who had participated in the program as high-risk 3- and 4-year-olds showed lower rates of crime, delinquency, teenage pregnancy and welfare enrollment. They also attained higher rates of positive behavior, academic achievement, employment, income and family stability than the control group (Schweinhart, Barnes and Weikart, 1993).

- Students in high-performing schools are expected to do more, have greater access to demanding courses and are taught in more engaging ways than students in comparison schools (Southern Regional Education Board, 2001).

- Classroom practices such as small-group instruction and hands-on learning have a more direct effect on student learning than do teacher education levels, years of experience and professional development (Wenglinsky, 2000).

- Achievement by at-risk students could be hindered by school factors such as narrow curriculum and rigid instructional strategies (Means and Knapp, 1991).

High-performing schools are guided by strong leadership and clear vision and create an atmosphere of trust among staff and parents.

- The most productive schools have principals who are efficient managers. A study of school reform in Chicago found that these leaders have a "vision in outline" of the kind of school they want and the ability to invite parents and teachers to help fill in the details. These principals understand how and why students learn, expect high standards from teachers, and provide them with adequate resources to do their job (Sebring and Bryk, 2000).

- High-achieving districts create a supportive workplace for staff and provide for regular staff development to help teachers be more effective. They also support shared leadership and decision making among staff and regularly express appreciation for their employees. School board leadership also affects leadership styles of principals and teachers in positive ways (Iowa School Boards Association, 2000).

- School districts demonstrating continuous improvement show common traits. These include the presence of an instructional dialogue in which teachers are continuously engaged in planning, implementing and reviewing curriculum and instruction; top-down support in which superintendents designate staff responsible for facilitating improved instruction and student learning; and multiple sources of instructional leadership (Pajak and Glickman, 1989).

- Schools with high amounts of trust and positive relationships between school staff and parents are much more likely to see higher student achievement than are schools with poor relationships. Researchers analyzed 100 schools that saw large gains in standardized math and reading tests over five years and 100 schools that did not make much improvement. One out of two schools with high trust levels made significant improvements, while only one out of seven schools with low trust levels made such gains. Additionally, the low-trust schools that did see improvements were those that built and strengthened trust over the five-year period; schools that remained without a trusting community had no chance of making academic gains (Bryk and Schneider, 2002).

Small schools and small class sizes significantly contribute to improved academic achievement and long-term educational outcomes, especially for minority, inner-city and low-income children.

- Fourth and eighth graders in small classes (fewer than 20 students) perform better than students in larger classes — even taking into account student demographics, overall school resource levels and cost of living. Inner-city students improved most; inner-city fourth graders in small classes progressed 75% faster than their peers in larger classes (Wenglinsky, 1997).

- Students in small classes in kindergarten through third grade have better high school graduation rates, attain higher grade point averages and are more inclined to pursue higher education (Pate-Bain, et al., 1999). Of 7,000 students randomly placed into small and large classes in their early school years, those from the small classes significantly outperformed those from the large classes every year through eighth grade in math, reading and writing. Students from the small classes maintained their advantage even after returning to regular-size classes. Larger gains were evident among minority students. Also, students who had

attended small classes demonstrated more assertive classroom participation than their peers (Finn, Fulton, Zaharias and Nye, 1989/1992).

❖ Small public schools in Chicago have experienced greater improvements in student performance and test scores, less violence, better conditions for teaching and learning, and higher degrees of satisfaction from parents and community members than have larger schools in the same area (Wasley, et al., 2000).

❖ A large study in Georgia, Montana, Texas and Ohio by the Rural School and Community Trust found strong evidence that small schools reduce the negative effects of poverty on student achievement by up to 50% and help narrow the achievement gap between poor and more affluent students. In general, the researchers found that student performance in schools with low-income children drops when school size increases (Howley and Bickel, 2000).

❖ Students attending smaller schools are safer, have better attendance and behavior, are more satisfied and connected with school, perform at higher levels, and are more likely to graduate (Nathan and Febey, 2001; Lawrence, et al., 2002).

CONDITION #2: Students are motivated and engaged in learning — both in school and in community settings, during and after school.

In community schools, the community is a resource for learning. Not every child learns best through words or numbers, though these are the channels for understanding emphasized in most classrooms today (Gardner, 1991). The best learning takes place when children have a voice, are able to ask questions, are actively involved and are encouraged to solve meaningful problems from their own life experience.

Young people can use the history, assets and challenges of their own neighborhoods as learning resources to forge connections between school and other aspects of their lives. This helps them become active participants in society. In community schools, in-school and out-of-school learning experiences are planned so that the knowledge, skills and competencies that young people need to succeed are reinforced in both settings.

The Research Base for Condition #2
Key Findings

❖ **Brain functioning from infancy throughout the school years is most efficient when learning is active and concrete.**

Community School Vignette: Learning to Read — Family Style

Boston's **James Otis Elementary School** uses Success For All, a literacy-based, whole-school reform model, to strengthen its curriculum, increase individual attention in extended reading periods, sharpen assessment and enhance professional development for teachers.

The school's partnership with Boston Excels, a citywide collaborative designed to promote family support, links the Success for All literacy approach to family involvement. According to Excel's Matt La Puma, "we knew from the research that as kids' families became more involved in their children's education, the kids did better." Classes are designed to help adults learn English in this low-income, largely Hispanic and Brazilian neighborhood by using the same material their children use in school. As a result, parents and children share in and reinforce each other's learning.

In 2000, Otis students outperformed the rest of the city's schools on the Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment Systems test.

❖ **Students learn best when they are personally interested, when they are actively involved and when they consider the content important.**

❖ **Effective learning occurs when schools, after-school programs and other organizations use the resources and challenges of the community as a living textbook for learning.**

❖ **Enrichment activities that enhance rather than replicate classroom work help students acquire skills and competencies that contribute to classroom success.**

Brain functioning from infancy throughout the school years is most efficient when learning is active and concrete.

❖ Concrete experience promotes the formation of the strongest neural networks and makes brain cells more powerful and efficient. Hands-on manipulative learning creates more powerful information pathways than either representational or abstract learning (Wolfe, 2001).

❖ Active learning in multiple social contexts contributes to an increase in the thickness and weight of the cerebral cortex — factors that enhance the brain's cognitive capacity. When parents and community members work with the school to introduce students to learning in the outside world, social contexts and active learning increase. "Focusing only on children's time in school misses opportunities for guided learning in other settings" (National Research Council, 2000).

❖ The brain develops simultaneously on various levels and integrates its experience over time. Environments that encourage learners to discuss their thinking out loud, to compare ideas and do collaborative work contribute to increased learning (Wolfe and Brandt, 1998).

Students learn best when they are personally interested, when they are actively involved and when they consider the content important.

❖ Students are more likely to take initiative in learning — a key factor in improving school performance — when they attach relevance to what they are learning. When the content and reason for learning is compelling, students are motivated to pay attention to the material over a sustained period of time (Deci and Ryan, 1991; Krynock and Robb, 1999; Larson, 2000).

❖ When young people participate in programs that embrace youth development principles, they create important relationships with supportive, caring adults. They also learn new ways of acquiring and using knowledge through exposure to challenging and engaging experiences and benefit from opportunities for meaningful involvement. Students who have these experiences are more likely to become economically self-sufficient, healthy and productive family members and citizens than those who do not (Connell, Gambone and Smith, 2000).

❖ Students who participate in hands-on active learning experiences outperform their peers by 40% of a grade level in math and 70% of a grade level in science. Students whose teachers emphasize higher-order thinking skills in math also outperform their peers by about 40% of a grade level (Wenglinsky, 2000).

❖ Motivation and learning increase when young people spend time in safe settings that offer structured enrichment activities and acknowledge the student's need for control, choice, competence and belonging (Blum, Beuhring and Rinehart, 2000; Deci and Ryan, 1991; Larson, 2000).

❖ When students engage in contextual learning, they are more likely to be "intrinsically motivated, use self-directed methods aimed at acquiring in-depth understanding and have superior long-term recall than students involved in more traditional, teacher-led activities" (Pierce and Jones, 1998).

❖ Students who are highly involved in the arts do better than those who are not. Low-income eighth

graders highly involved in arts activities were more likely to score in the top two quartiles on standardized tests and less likely to be bored in school or drop out by 10th grade (Catterall, et al, 1998). A review of 62 research studies shows important relationships among the arts and reading, math, motivation, social behavior and school environment. Findings underscore the connection between practicing the arts and students' academic and social development (Arts Educational Partnership, 2002; Heath and Roach, 1999).

❖ Using technology in learning incorporates three primary learning theories: construction of knowledge, problem solving and hands-on learning (Herschbach, 1998). Students at risk for failure were given challenging, interesting, cooperative group work to do in a special technology classroom. When they were empowered to control their own work pace and behavior, they remained engaged, received better grades and accepted more responsibility for their work. Their success engendered feelings of pride and accomplishment that the students said they did not feel elsewhere (Day, 2002).

Effective learning occurs when schools, after-school programs and other organizations use the resources and challenges of the community as a living textbook for learning.

❖ Students can use their home communities as learning resources to help reduce the disconnect many feel between school and the rest of their lives. A survey of nearly 2,000 seventh to 12th graders at eight schools revealed that feeling more connected to school also lessens risks of unsafe behavior and poor health (Bonny, Britto, Klostermann, Hornung and Slap, 2000).

❖ Community-based learning leads to academic, behavioral and attitudinal gains. Forty schools that connected the school curriculum to the surrounding community saw improvements in reading, writing, math, science and social studies; discipline and classroom management; engagement and enthusiasm for learning; and pride and ownership in accomplishments (Lieberman and Hoody, 1998). Students using the Environment as an Integrated Context for Learning model scored higher than traditionally schooled students on 72% of

Community School Vignette: The Environmental Classroom

At **St. Paul High School** in rural St. Paul, VA, a course in Appalachian ecology was created around the reclamation of a wetlands area. The project was designed to develop skills in scientific observation and research, creative thinking, written argument, and public speaking.

Students research water quality, atmosphere and soil quality to learn how to restore the area. They have cleared out the nonwetland plants and trash and introduced aquatic species, built bridges and walkways for a picnic area, and constructed a learning center for future research. They write grant proposals, hold fundraisers, track financial plans, make presentations to local and state officials, and create partnerships with local colleges.

They also make lasting friendships and forge meaningful connections with their teachers and other adults in the broader community. "Everyone finds something in the class that they truly love. This class works for all kids because [they're] given the opportunity to do what they want and do it well. They're treated as if they have worth and what they say has worth," says science teacher Terry Vencil. She notes that her class covers all of the state's required teaching standards "without doing it through rote learning." At St. Paul, nearly 90% of students meet state reading and writing requirements in core areas and more than 90% pass state exams in biology and geometry.

California academic assessments measuring skills in language arts, math, science and social studies (State Education and Environment Roundtable, 2000).

◆ Participation in school-to-work programs increases selection of more rigorous mathematics and science courses, lowers high school dropout rates, and increases college-attendance rates (Committee on Economic Development, 1998). A review of existing studies shows that school-to-work programs "motivate students to achieve at higher academic levels, provide guided educational experiences outside the classroom to reinforce academic learning and create opportunities for enhancing learning through expanded instructional strategies" (American Youth Policy Forum and Center for Workforce Development, 2000).

◆ Service learning builds citizenship through involvement in civic action, increases students' sense of responsibility and workplace skills, and reduces negative behavior. A summary of studies on service learning found that these experiences are associated with academic achievement gains among students in elementary, middle and high school. They foster greater engagement in schoolwork, increase problem-solving skills and contribute to increased student attendance (Billig, 1999).

Enrichment activities that enhance rather than replicate classroom work help students acquire skills and competencies that contribute to classroom success.

◆ The Wallace-Reader's Digest Extended-Service Schools Initiative studied after-school programs in 20 communities that had adopted one of four community school models. The study found that participation in these programs was "associated with positive effects on school attitudes and behaviors" (e.g., paying attention in class, pride in the school, better attendance, increased confidence, making new friends, improved peer relations and trying harder in school), though it was too early to

determine any impact on grades and test scores. The program also was "associated with behavior that could help youth stay out of trouble" (Grossman, et al., 2002).

◆ California's After-School Learning and Safe Neighborhoods Partnerships Program operates in more than 963 schools serving approximately 97,000 students. An evaluation of the program during the 2000–01 school year found large improvements in achievement among the lowest-performing students in reading (4.2% of participants moved out of the lowest quartile on the SAT 9 compared to only 1.9% of all students statewide) and in math (2.5% of participants moved out of the lowest quartile compared to only 1.9% statewide). The evaluation noted a direct relationship between gains in math and levels of participation in the program — students who participated for 7.5 months or more improved their scores by 2.5 times those of non-participating students. The evaluation also recorded improvements in school attendance, particularly among highly truant students; improved behavior, including reduced suspensions among middle school students; improved social skills and behaviors; and improved feelings of safety (University of California-Irvine, California Healthy Start and Afterschool Partnerships Office, 2002).

◆ Quality enrichment activities help students master content taught during the school day by using more hands-on methods of engaging students, exploring additional interests and developing relationships with adults (Miller, 1995).

◆ A 10-year evaluation of LA's BEST, a large, school-linked enrichment program, reported notable gains for 20,000 elementary school participants. The participants improved their rate of school attendance; their English proficiency; their achievement on standardized tests in math, reading and language arts; their grade point averages; and their attitude toward school (Huang, Gribbons, Kim, Lee and Baker, 2000).

◆ Programs designed to solve particular problems or prevent specific behaviors tend to have narrow impacts. A more comprehensive youth development approach shows gains in academic, social and risk-taking areas, including work habits and emotional adjustment, as well as grades (Roth, Brooks-Gunn, Murray and Foster, 1998).

◆ High-quality enrichment experiences affect school performance. African American 12th graders who spend approximately 20 hours per week before or after school in "high-yield" learning activities do better than young people who do not participate (Clark 1990; 1999). Boys and Girls Clubs of America have developed Project Learn, a learning-focused after-school program for young people in public housing. After 18 months, participating students improved their grades from a C+ average to a B average. In comparison groups, average grades dropped (Schinke, Cole and Roulin, 2000).

◆ At-risk children who were mentored in a Big Brothers Big Sisters program for 18 months were 52% less likely to skip school, 37% less likely to skip a class, 46% less likely to begin using illegal drugs, 27% less likely to begin using alcohol, 37% less likely to lie to their parents and 32% less likely to hit someone. Minority participants were 70% less likely to begin using drug than other minority children who did not have mentors (Tierney, Grossman and Resch, 1995).

CONDITION #3: The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.

Community partners work with the school to provide access to affordable health, mental health and social services for students and families. The best curriculum and instruction cannot benefit children who often miss school or who are sick or upset when they do attend. When children receive regular health care, eat well, and know they can find help with emotional and family concerns, they attend school more and are able to pay more attention to what they are learning.

The Research Base for Condition #3

Key Findings

◆ **Comprehensive school-based health care helps improve attendance, behavior and grades.**

◆ **In addition to promoting students' self-confidence, mental health services contribute to better school performance and an improved school climate.**

◆ **Proper nutrition and physical exercise have a significant impact on student academic outcomes and participation in school as well as on psychosocial functioning.**

Community School Vignette: Immunizing against Failure

Three years ago at **Francis Scott Key Elementary School #103** in Indianapolis, more than one-third of kindergartners showed up for school without adequate immunizations. Their families lacked insurance, access to health clinics, or the time and information needed to secure this important preventive service. Because children are not admitted to school until they receive their shots, many lost valuable school time.

In the 2001–02 school year, a partnership among the Indianapolis Public School District, United Way's Bridges to Success program and the local health clinic made it possible for children to receive their immunizations at the school. One hundred percent of fifth graders and kindergartners fulfilled state requirements by receiving their shots before the school year began — and no school days were missed.

The **Pinelands Regional Middle and High Schools** in Tuckerton, NJ, are located in a rural, coastal area of the state. The New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program, which is funded by the New Jersey State Department of Health and Human Services to foster partnerships between schools and community agencies, has operated at Pinelands for 14 years.

Through these partnerships, the program offers primary and preventative health care, mental health and social services, employment assistance, family planning education, substance abuse counseling, pregnant teen and teen parent support services, transportation, a 24-hour teen crisis hotline, and recreational programs and activities to all students in the district. The "Pinelands Model" has been recognized as effective by Rutgers University's School of Social Work and has been replicated in others areas of the state. Since 1993, the percentage of students passing the state high school proficiency test has climbed from 74% to 90%. Teen pregnancy rates have dropped among young teens from about 20 each year to about three each year.

Comprehensive school–based health care helps improve attendance, behavior and grades.

❖ Comprehensive health and social services offered through the California Healthy Start Program have had an impact on improving student behavior, student academic performance and school climate. The lowest–performing students improved their reading scores by 25% and math scores by 50%. Illicit drug use was reduced from 24% of students to 14%. Students improved their self–esteem and increased their perception of support from parents, classmates, teachers and friends. Finally, families' unmet needs for basic goods and services were reduced by 50% (California Department of Education, Healthy Start Office, 1999).

❖ Students who use school–based health clinic services use fewer drugs, have better school attendance and lower dropout rates, fail fewer courses, and decrease disciplinary referrals by 95% (Pearson, Jennings and Norcross, 1999; Kisker and Brown, 1996).

❖ Students who are registered to use their school–based health clinic are more likely to graduate or be promoted than those who are not registered. African American male students are more than three times as likely to stay in school if they register for the clinic (McCord, Klein, Joy and Fothergill, 1993).

❖ Grades improve significantly when basic vision and hearing problems are corrected. First and second graders suffering from vision problems were randomly assigned to control and treatment groups. Students receiving services had a 50% greater improvement rate than the control group in reading, an almost 100% greater improvement rate in math, and close to a 200% greater improvement rate in reading comprehension (Harris, 2002; Lave, et al., 1998).

In addition to promoting students' self–confidence, mental health services contribute to better school performance and an improved school climate.

❖ Students participating in mental health interventions have better attendance, fewer behavioral incidents, improved personal skills, increased student achievement, and a higher sense of school and home connectedness than nonparticipating students (Center for Mental Health in Schools, 1999, 2000).

❖ Students who receive school–based mental health services show a significant decline in depression and an improvement in self–concept (Weist, Paskewitz, Warner, et al., 1996).

Proper nutrition and physical exercise have a significant impact on student academic outcomes and participation in school as well as on psychosocial functioning.

◆ Schools that offer intense physical activity programs see positive effects on academic achievement, including increased concentration; improved mathematics, reading and writing test scores; and reduced disruptive behavior, even when time for physical education reduces the time for academics (Symons, Cinelli, Janes and Groff, 1997; Centers for Disease Control, 2000; The Society of State Directors of Health, Physical Education and Recreation and the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials, 2002).

◆ Students who increased their participation in the Universally Free School Breakfast Program increased their math grades and decreased their absenteeism and tardiness significantly more than children whose participation remained the same or decreased. Child and teacher ratings of psychosocial problems also decreased more for children who participated in the program more often (Murphy, et al., 1998; Meyers, Sampson, Weitzman, Rogers and Kayne, 1989).

CONDITION #4: There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff.

Community schools build on family strengths. A family's attitudes and behavior about education profoundly influence children's learning. In community schools, families are actively engaged in making decisions affecting their children's education and in expanding their repertoire as teachers, advocates and partners. When school staff and children see family members working as knowledgeable, able and active members of the school community, respect and collaboration increase and efforts to promote learning multiply.

The Research Base for Condition #4

Key Findings

◆ **Active parent and family engagement strongly predicts school success.**

◆ **Efforts to build respectful, cooperative relationships among parents, families, teachers and school administrators help family members feel more capable of contributing to their child's education and connected to their child's school.**

Community School Vignette: Building Parent Involvement

When Communities In Schools (CIS) opened the Family Resource Center at **East Elementary School** in rural Kings Mountain, NC, in 1992, there were just five parent volunteers, no after-school activities and very little parent involvement in academics. CIS brought Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts programs to the school and raised funds through local churches and businesses to provide uniforms, dues and badges.

Initially, the school administration and teachers volunteered their time to launch the effort. Parents got involved because of their children's interest and took an active role in planning programs and activities. Today, both programs are completely run by parents who have completed Den Leader training and 75 to 80 young people participate. Parents now are more comfortable at the school, and attendance at parent-teacher conferences has risen to over 96% from very low participation levels in 1992 before CIS began its partnership. In addition, says Principal Jerry Hoyle, "the leadership training these parents have acquired has given them the skills necessary to grow a very active parent-teacher organization — and to lead others through the process."

- **When families are supported in their parenting role, their involvement in their children's learning increases and student performance is strengthened.**

- **Consistent parental involvement at home and at school — at every grade level and throughout the year — is important for students' academic success and future aspirations.**

Active parent and family engagement strongly predicts school success.

- A recent synthesis of 51 studies on parent involvement found that "student achievement increased directly with the extent to which parents were engaged in the [parental involvement training] program" (Henderson and Mapp, 2002).

- Parent involvement — including factors such as parenting style, parent participation in learning activities and parental expectations — is a more accurate predictor of student achievement than family income or socioeconomic status (Henderson and Berla, 1994; U.S. Department of Education, 1994, 2001).

- Student test scores increased 40% more in schools with high levels of outreach to parents (including in-person meetings, sending materials home, communicating often and in times of difficulty for the child), than in schools with low levels of outreach (Westat and Policy Study Associates, 2001).

- The quality of parent-teacher interactions can predict improvement both in children's behavior and in academic achievement. When parents actively participate in their child's school and interact with their child's teacher, they gain a greater understanding of the expectations that schools have for students and learn how they can enhance their own child's learning at home, according to a study of 1,200 New England urban students (Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow and Fendrich, 1999).

- The quality of the partnership among school, family and community significantly boosts attendance and also contributes to a small, but significant, improvement in third graders' reading and writing standardized test scores (Epstein, Clark, Salinas and Sanders, 1997).

- Teachers tend to have higher expectations of those students whose parents collaborate with their schools and children have higher test scores and grades when their parents are more involved (Larueau, 1987).

- Students who spend at least nine hours a week guided by adults in "high impact" learning activities generally score at or above the 50th percentile on standardized tests. Students who spend only three hours a week under adult supervision in powerful learning activities only score at or above the 25th percentile (Clark, 2002).

Efforts to build respectful, cooperative relationships among parents, families, teachers and school administrators help family members feel more capable of contributing to their child's education and connected to their child's school.

- Parents' sense of comfort and connectedness to their child's school is strengthened when the school communicates with them often and when it provides frequent, meaningful opportunities for parents to be involved. Nine middle schools in their second year of implementing family involvement programs showed that, on the whole, a school's sense of community is strengthened when principals are good leaders with strong decision-making skills and when teachers communicate effectively with parents about their students' progress (Belenardo, 2001).

- Home-school relationships build trust and mutual respect among parents and school staff and help parents view themselves as knowledgeable, skillful, and able to contribute to their child and school (Mapp, 1999; Sanders, 2000).

- Students are more likely to bond with their teachers and to learn from them when they see frequent, positive interaction between their family members and school staff (Comer, 1988).

- When parents are encouraged to help their children, they make good use of available social supports and place high priority on activities with their children (Cochran and Henderson, 1986).

- Successful partnerships invite parents and community partners to take an active role in decision making at the school level; encourage honest, two-way communication about difficult issues; and create relationships that share power and responsibility (Lewis and Henderson, 1998; Mapp, 1999; Sanders and Harvey, 2000).

When families are supported in their parenting role, their involvement in their children's learning increases and student performance is strengthened.

- Engaging parents in a way that focuses on their assets in comprehensive and integrated school programs leads to stronger relationships between families and schools (Lopez, 2001; Scribner, Young and Pedroza, 1999; Wang, Oates and Weishew 1995).

- Students at a CoZi school have shown greater increases in math and reading scores than students in non-CoZi schools with similar demographics in the same district (the CoZi school reform model provides comprehensive social services to support students and families and involves the families in decision making) (Desimone, Finn-Stevenson and Henrich, 2000).

- The more involved parents are in their children's education, the more likely it is that they will continue their own education, thus becoming an even more effective teaching and learning resource and role model for their children (Henderson and Berla, 1994).

- Schoolwide programs that work with parents to develop young people's behavioral, social and academic capacity help increase academic and social skills and reduce behavior referrals and suspensions (Comer and Haynes, 1992).

- When low-income parents are supported in child-rearing strategies, taught to interact with their children in learning activities at home and encouraged to look to each other as resources, their children perform as well in preschool as middle-class children (Cochran and Henderson, 1986).

Consistent parental involvement at home and at school — at every grade level and throughout the year — is important for students' sustained academic success and future aspirations.

- Students whose parents stay closely involved in their educational progress throughout elementary and high school are more likely to stay in school and to enter and finish college (Eagle, 1989; Epstein, 1992).

- Researchers examining four facets of parental involvement — home discussion, home supervision, school communication and school participation — found that although parent involvement across all dimensions contributes to student academic achievement, home discussion is the most strongly related (Ho Sui-Chu and Willms, 1996; Muller, 1993).

- Families are best able to improve their children's life chances when they create a home environment that encourages learning, express high but realistic expectations for their children's achievement and future careers, and are involved in their children's school and community (Henderson and Berla, 1994).

- Disadvantaged students lose significant ground in the summer, making it essential that parents help plan summer learning activities and discussions related to

school (Entwisle and Alexander, 1992, 1994; Heyns, 1978, 1987; Karweit and Riccuiti, 1997).

❖ As students get older, parent involvement shifts from school to home. When parents talk about school, encourage studying and learning, guide their children's academic decisions, support their aspirations, and help them plan for college, their children are more likely to earn higher grades and test scores, enroll in higher-level classes, and earn more course credits, regardless of family income and education (Catsambis, 1998; Catsambis and Garland, 1997; Fan and Chen, 1999; Ho Sui–Chu and Willms, 1996).

❖ Students learn more and perform better when they receive consistent messages about the value and importance of education and support from par–ents, teachers and churches (Epstein, 1987; Gutman and Midgley, 2000; Sanders and Herting, 2000; Izzo, Weissberg, Kasprow and Fendrich, 1999).

CONDITION #5: Community engagement, together with school efforts, promote a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and connects students to a broader learning community.

Community school partners create safe settings, in school and out of school, that value young people and convey a sense of belonging. In community schools, the school climate is strengthened by active public engage–ment. Daily involvement of local partners and residents, in association with concerned teachers, broadens the helpful relationships and positive role models on which students can draw. The presence of these caring adults encourages students' connection to the community and increases the community's support for school concerns.

The Research Base for Condition #5
Key Findings

❖ **Young people who feel safe, accepted and con–nected to their schools are more likely to stay in school, develop social skills and do well academically.**

Community School Vignette: Creating a Sense of Community

The **Webster Open Magnet School,** with its diverse population of Hmong, African American, Latino and white families, is the site of one of six Beacons centers in Minneapolis. Leadership development is a key Beacons focus. Students participate in three leadership retreats annually and are expected to act as leaders in their schools. Several of the Beacons after-school and evening programs focus on relationship building and character development.

After seeing rising tensions between Hmong and Latino students at Webster, teachers and Beacons staff created an after-school class and camp program for students involved in negative incidents. Instead of resort-ing to suspensions, program leaders required students who found it hard to respect each other to attend six weeks of leadership, teamwork and cultural-competency classes and to participate in a shared camping trip in order to stay in school.

By the end of the program, the incidents had ended. Greater mutual understanding made the school a safer place for every student and helped build a sense of community.

❖ **Young people, teachers and other adults benefit from caring relationships, opportunities for participation and an atmosphere of high expectations.**

❖ **Community organizing and community engagement build support for school reform, improve school climate and set the stage for academic achievement.**

❖ **The condition of school buildings has a significant impact on both school climate and student achievement.**

Young people who feel safe, accepted and connected to their schools are more likely to stay in school, develop social skills and do well academically.

❖ Students who feel connected to school and to the people at their school report higher levels of emotional well-being. The bond they feel with the school serves as a protective shield against unhealthy behaviors and decisions such as using alcohol and illegal drugs, engaging in violent or abnormal behavior, becoming pregnant, and experiencing emotional distress (Blum and Rinehart, 1998; McNeely, Nonnemaker and Blum, 2002).

❖ Well-implemented efforts to engage the school community in conflict resolution, peer mediation, and direct teaching of social skills and self-management strategies have had positive effects on students' social skills and behavior (Derzon and Wilson, 1999; Dwyer and Osher, 2000).

❖ The most successful efforts to keep at-risk students in school provide young people with a community of support that helps them feel connected to school and puts a value on learning. They also take advantage of student interests and strengths and work to lessen the barriers that keep young people from participating. Teachers at such schools see educating at-risk students as a personal responsibility (Whelage, Rutter, Smith, Lesko and Fernandez, 1989).

Young people, teachers and other adults benefit from caring relationships, opportunities for participation and an atmosphere of high expectations.

❖ A caring, supportive relationship is one of the most powerful factors available to protect young people from a variety of negative influences. Meaningful interaction between adults and youth builds mutual respect and provides young people with mentors and positive role models (Benard, 1996).

❖ A supportive teacher-student relationship is critical to school success (Brophy and Good, 1986). School programs with positive teacher-student relationships — particularly ones that help the student feel connected to a learning community — have successfully reduced the dropout rate (Fine, 1986; Whelage and Rutter, 1986).

❖ Several longitudinal and ethnographic studies reveal that youth of all ages want a teacher who cares about them (Benard, 1995). One study observed that "the number of student references to wanting caring teachers is so great that we believe it speaks to the quiet desperation and loneliness of many adolescents in today's society" (Phelan, Davidson and Cao, 1992).

❖ Teachers also benefit from feeling connected to a positive school community. Teaching effectiveness and teacher satisfaction are related to the extent to which teachers view their work environment as a community — one that encourages collaboration, teacher involvement in school decision making and shared goals (Bryk and Driscoll, 1988; Lee, Dedrick and Smith, 1991; McLaughlin, 1993). Teachers who see themselves as full and active members of the school community attempt to "create similar learning contexts for their students" (Becker and Riel, 1999).

Community organizing and community engagement build support for school reform, improve school climate and set the stage for academic achievement.

- When school reform is aligned with a strong community-building mindset, the school and its teaching processes change dramatically, increasing the chances that reform will succeed. A study of the impact of community organizing and engagement efforts of five groups shows that enhancing leadership development, power and social capital in communities increases civic participation. Civic participation "leverages power through partnership and relationships within and across communities, as well as with school district, civic and elected officials," and creates greater public accountability. This enables community capacity to act as a resource to promote school improvement (Cross City Campaign, 2002).

- A study of 66 community groups in eight cities that are organizing to improve schools concluded that they have been successful in altering the political environment to enable change and, in some cases, helping to improve student academic performance. These groups help schools focus on important issues, identify and build public support and political capital, and establish a stronger sense of accountability between schools and communities. In addition, they have worked to upgrade school facilities, improve school leadership and staffing, bring in additional resources and programs to improve teaching and curriculum, secure new funding for after-school and family-support programs, and question unfair discipline policies (Mediratta, Fruchter, et al., 2001).

- Community engagement in 32 communities led to more positive attitudes, expectations and participation among parents, teachers and students, leading to higher-quality learning experiences. The increased involvement focused on improving physical conditions at the school and bringing in more resources. Data suggest that these efforts contribute to improved test scores (Hatch, 1998).

- Principals and community members signed declarations to transform 118 Texas Alliance elementary and middle schools into locally responsive and accountable neighborhood centers. The result:

These schools saw a 42% increase in the number of children passing all sections of the Texas Assessment of Academic Skills (TAAS) from 1999 to 2000, making the TAAS pass rate for Alliance School students double the state rate for math, reading and writing. Between 1993 and 1998, attendance rates in Alliance Schools climbed each year and now are above average for the state (Interfaith Education Fund, 2001).

The condition of school buildings has a significant impact on both a positive school climate and improved student achievement.

- Poor public school facilities adversely affect student achievement and teacher productivity and retention, according to a survey of Washington, DC, and Chicago teachers. In both cities, 3% fewer students in poorly rated facilities perform at or above basic on reading than their peers in better facilities. Math scores differ by 4% in Chicago facilities. In Washington, DC, more than 50% of teachers are dissatisfied with their facilities, while in Chicago more than 30% are dissatisfied. Of the teachers who rated their facilities poorly, more than 40% said that these poor conditions have led them to consider leaving their school and almost 30% of these teachers are thinking about leaving the profession entirely (Schneider, 2002).

- In a Virginia study of large urban high schools, student achievement was as much as 11 percentage points lower in substandard buildings than in above-standard buildings (Hines, 1996).

- In rural North Dakota high schools, there is a positive correlation between school condition (as measured by principals' survey responses) and student achievement and behavior (Earthman, et al., 1995).

- A study of working conditions in urban schools concludes that "physical conditions have direct positive and negative effects on teacher morale, sense of personal safety, feelings of effectiveness in the classroom, and on the general learning environment" (Corcoran, Walker and White, 1988).

THE IMPACT OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: A REVIEW OF CURRENT EVALUATION FINDINGS

"School problems are not just schools' problems … the challenges our schools face every day are actually challenges facing our families, our communities and our country."

— Joy Dryfoos and Sue Maguire
Inside Full Service Schools

Multiple studies, examined in Chapter 2, tell us that children are better able to learn at high levels when the five conditions for learning are in place. Because community schools are intentionally structured to fulfill these conditions for every student, more children who attend community schools are likely to succeed intellectually, physically, emotionally and socially.

A growing body of research shows that community schools have positive effects on students, families, schools and communities. These data suggest that when community school efforts to fulfill all the conditions for learning are integrated into a comprehensive strategy, the benefits for student learning are multiplied.

Broad Findings

❖ **Student learning: Community school students show significant and widely evident gains in academic achievement and in essential areas of nonacademic development.**

❖ **Family engagement: Families of community school students show increased stability, communication with teachers and school involvement. Parents demonstrate a greater sense of responsibility for their children's learning success.**

❖ **School effectiveness: Community schools enjoy stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment and greater community support.**

❖ **Community vitality: Community schools promote better use of school buildings, and their neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents.**

In this chapter, we present results from evaluations of 20 community school initiatives throughout the United States, including national models, state-funded approaches and local initiatives. These initiatives are at various stages in the process of fulfilling the five conditions for learning.

These evaluations represent the most substantive research known to the Coalition that is currently available on community school implementation. The table that begins on page 35 briefly describes each initiative. Further details of the evaluations are presented in Appendix B.

We organize the results of these evaluations by their impacts on young people, schools, families and communities. For each area of impact, we present an overview

of results from relevant studies. We also cite specific findings that show the improvements community schools have made in each area. Demonstrable changes include both long-term learning outcomes and near-term indicators of progress.

All of the evaluations focused on initiatives involving multiple schools. Not all the initiatives explicitly term themselves "community schools" and the models represent different approaches. They are similar, however, in that their purposes, strategies and activities promote most, if not all, of the conditions for learning characteristic of community schools.

When reviewing these evaluation summaries, readers should note that if an initiative does not report specific findings in a given area, it does not necessarily mean that none were achieved. It is as probable that the missing area was not a primary objective of that evaluation. Evaluations are time-consuming and costly, so they typically are designed to provide information about processes, elements or outcomes the initiative or funder most needs to know about at a given developmental point.

Each of the evaluations reviewed here asked different questions and varied in the extent to which it addressed the initiative's impact on young people, families, schools or communities.

What validity should be given to the findings reported here? Even though causality — the most stringent research standard — cannot easily be established outside a controlled laboratory setting, the strength and direction of these current findings warrant confidence. We agree with Children's Aid Society evaluators that a connection can be assumed when 1) findings are consistent with the best available research and 2) there is anecdotal corroboration among participants and observers about the effects and impacts (Cancelli, Brickman, Sanchez and Rivera, 1999). As we outlined in Chapter 2, the conditions for learning emerge directly from research findings in various fields. Vignettes of individual sites profiled throughout this report clearly illustrate that there also is abundant anecdotal corroboration about the effects and impacts of a community school approach.

Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools

ABOUT THE EVALUATED SCHOOL INITIATIVES

National Models

Initiative and Evaluators	Description of Initiative
Children's Aid Society Center for Human Environments, CUNY Graduate Center; Fordham University Graduate Schools of Education and Social Services	In 1989, the Children's Aid Society (CAS) partnered with the New York City Public School District and other community partners to create a comprehensive way to address the multiple challenges of students in District 6. CAS schools incorporate a strong core instructional program; enrichment activities designed to expand student learning opportunities and support their cognitive, social, emotional, moral and physical development; and a full range of physical and mental health services designed to remove barriers to learning and improve the well-being of children and families. With strong collaboration among community partners, CAS aims for high levels of parent and community involvement. Today there are five CAS schools in New York City, and the model has been adapted to approximately 100 sites nationally and internationally.
Communities In Schools The initiative tracked data from its local sites	Communities In Schools (CIS) helps kids succeed in school and prepare for life. CIS believes that all children deserve five basics: a one-on-relationship with a caring adult, a safe place to learn and grow, a healthy start and a healthy future, a marketable skill to use upon graduation, and a chance to give back to peers and community. Core services include case management to bring resources and services to students at the schools. There are 179 CIS programs in 32 states, serving approximately 2,500 schools and other education sites.
New York City Beacons Academy for Educational Development	Beacons centers are community centers located in public school buildings, offering students and their families recreational, social service, educational enrichment and vocational activities before and after school, in the evenings, and on the weekends. Supports and services include providing safe places, leadership skills development, supervised engaging activities promoting positive behaviors and practices, adult education, parent involvement, family support, family and community service activities, and health services.
School of the 21st Century Yale Bush Center for Social Policy	The School of the 21st Century (21C) is a school-based child care and family support model that promotes the optimal growth and development of children beginning at birth. The 21C model transforms the school into a year-round, multiservice center providing services from early morning to early evening. Since 1988, more than 1,300 schools in 20 states have implemented the program. Schools are linked to community resources to build an environment that values children. Components include all-day, year-round child care for preschoolers; before- and after-school and vacation care for school-age children; parent support programs; information and referral services; network building and training for child care providers; and health education and services.

State-Funded/Statewide Approaches

Initiative and Evaluators	Description of Initiative
California Healthy Start SRI International; California Department of Education	Established by the California legislature in 1991, Healthy Start offers school districts and their collaborative partners seed money to fund long-term change initiatives to improve the well-being and academic performance of young people, families and communities. Services at or near the school site promote health, educational and social development of children. Core clients are children and families most in need of services. Types of services provided include academic (tutorial, truancy counseling, adult basic education, youth development, ESL, extended day care and early childhood education); health (immunizations, screening and referrals); and mental health (psychological evaluations, counseling, outpatient substance abuse treatment programs). As of the 1999 evaluation, there were 469 operational grantees with 1,122 associated schools. Healthy Start programs are located in 49 of the 58 counties in California, in both rural and urban areas.
Illinois Project Success Center for Prevention Research and Development, Institute of Government and Public Affairs, University of Illinois	Project Success (PS) is an Illinois initiative designed to help children succeed in school by providing health and social services supports for children and their families. Six fundamental outcomes include improvements in parent involvement, collaboration, school-based school-linked services, school attendance, decreased truancy and academic achievement. The initiative began in six sites (each site targets eight schools) in 1992, and by 2001 was funded in 89 counties. In 2002, the state elected not to continue its funding, but many schools continue to do the work of the Project Success Initiative.
Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program Rutgers University and R.E.A.C.H. of Louisville, Inc; Southern Regional Education Board	Family Resource and Youth Services Centers are designed to help families and children solve nonacademic problems that interfere with student learning. Core services at elementary and middle schools include full-time preschool/child care for 2- and 3-year-olds; after-school and summer child care for 4- to 12-year-olds; home visits and new parent support; parent literacy and education programs; support and training for child care providers; and direct provision or referral to health services. Youth Services Centers offer referrals to health and social services; employment counseling, training and placement for older youth; counseling for drug and alcohol abuse; family crisis management; and mental health.
New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program Academy for Educational Development	The New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program (NJSBYSP) is a state-funded initiative providing a range of services for adolescents at or near their schools, with at least one project located in every county of New Jersey. Core services available to every student with parental permission include individual and family counseling; primary and preventive health services; drug and alcohol abuse counseling; employment counseling, training and placement; and recreation. Sites managed by other lead agencies offer pregnancy prevention, teen parent support, violence prevention, academic support and positive youth development.

Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools

Initiative and Evaluators	Description of Initiative
Texas Alliance Schools Internally tracked regional student and school data in Texas	Since 1991, the Alliance Schools Initiative has focused on bringing parents together with teachers and community leaders to try to solve problems in schools, learn about school reform practices, and work together to address the needs of children and their families. The initiative focuses on restructuring the relationship among stakeholders in school communities, including parents, teachers, school administrators, students, community and business leaders, and public officials. The initiative teaches the art of communication — exchanging ideas, debate and compromise — in order to change the culture of schools and neighborhoods. The strategy increases parental engagement, teacher morale and student success at Alliance school campuses. During the 1999–2000 school year, there were 129 Alliance Schools serving 89,994 students in 20 Texas school districts. Texas Industrial Areas Foundation organizations lobbied the Texas Legislature since 1993 to provide $14 million in 1999 to the Investment Capital Fund, which directly funds schools committed to reform though local control and accountability.
Washington Readiness to Learn RMC Research Corporation	Readiness to Learn's (RTL) mission is to create a committed, continuing partnership among schools, families and communities that provides opportunities for all youth to achieve at their highest learning potential; live in a safe, healthy, civil environment; and grow into productive community members. The initiative's primary goal is for children and youth to be successful in school. The RTL initiative emerged from grassroots efforts of community forums, town meetings, local community advocates and state leaders. Twenty-four local consortia across Washington state received RTL grant funds to implement comprehensive, responsive service plans that were responsive to the needs of children, youth and their families. The planning for these services was a collaborative effort by many partners to deliver these services.
Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project Evaluation Services Center, University of Cincinnati	One hundred twenty-five school-age care centers in 17 urban Ohio school districts have implemented quality school age child care programs. Core components included in each program are innovative educational activities that support and expand upon the school day curriculum; daily time for homework help and tutoring with a special emphasis on academic enrichment in reading, math, computer use and other areas; choices of experiences each day; access to educational/enrichment materials and supplies; a nutritious snack/meal every day; low child-to-adult ratios; and quality staff.

School District/Local Initiatives

Initiative and Evaluators	Description of Initiative
Achievement Plus Internally tracked data in St. Paul, MN	Achievement Plus schools employ a standards-based curriculum based on the America's Choice model. Teachers undergo in-depth training and professional development. Core activities include before- and after-school extended learning programs, family resource centers, family programming, attendance programs, and health and social services. Extended learning opportunities for students are linked to teaching and learning. The school is a hub for the community to provide services and supports to students and families, reducing barriers to learning and achievement. Three Achievement Plus schools have opened in St. Paul, MN.
Boston Excels Internally tracked data in Boston	The Boston Excels model is an initiative of the Home for Little Wanderers. Boston Excels addresses the comprehensive needs of young people, families and their schools by partnering with them to provide effective social services, a prevention team of clinicians and social workers, and opportunities that engage and empower parents and the community. Currently there are five Boston Excels schools in the Boston area.
Bridges to Success Internal citywide data in Indianapolis	Bridges to Success (BTS), an initiative of the United Way of Central Indiana, works to strengthen connections and share resources among school, parents and community institutions. By creating partnerships, BTS aims to increase access to health and human services and youth development opportunities; reduce risk factors that impact student achievement; and increase the number of students who attend school and graduate. BTS engages families, youth, neighborhoods, agencies and schools in developing systems in their own communities to bring these supports into the schools. A coordinator manages the multiple resources and leads a community council that works with school staff to develop effective programs. Currently there are 41 BTS schools in the Indianapolis Public Schools (IPS).
Center for School Change Initiative Rainbow Research	Twenty rural school/community collaborative projects that bring community resources into schools, connect students and schools to their communities, build community pride in students and communities, make school facilities more accessible for community use, and pool resources to create facilities and programs that benefit both schools and community.
Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program Division of Evaluation and Accountability, Dallas Independent School District	The centers provide physical and mental health care to students and their families at nine locations, each serving multiple schools, throughout the Dallas School District. Core services include mental health care, counseling, case management, family-home involvement programs, youth development activities, and family education and family planning workshops.
Hamilton County Families and Children First Council Institute for Policy Research, University of Cincinnati	The Children First Plan is a comprehensive school-based preventative program now located in 12 schools. After a planning process that included more than 100 members of the social service community and 50 community focus groups, the plan was implemented in schools in 1997. It initially was a three-year pilot project, but has been extended and expanded for an additional three years, currently in year six. It aims to provide full-service schools that promote academic achievement, ensure good physical and mental health, and encourage positive youth development and family involvement. Each school houses a coordinator to develop integrated programs and to manage the various agency resources. This program uses pooled funding from 12 agencies and contracts with more than 35 agencies for services and resources. Its priorities are to reduce high school dropout rates, reduce the number of abused and neglected children, reduce suspension and truancies in preschool through sixth grade, and increase students' feelings of school connectedness.

Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools

Initiative and Evaluators	Description of Initiative
LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program Center for the Study of Evaluation, University of California at Los Angeles	LA's BEST is a comprehensive after-school intervention program that provides activities to meet specific educational, social and motivational goals. The program has expanded to 69 sites and is available from the end of the school day until 6:00 pm, Monday through Friday, at no cost to parents. Sites are selected based on educational needs: low achievement, low economic status of the community, and high gang or crime rates in the neighborhood. Goals of the program for students in kindergarten through fifth grade are to provide a safe environment after school, educational enrichment activities to support and augment the regular-day program, recreational activities, and interpersonal skills and self-esteem development. Homework assistance, field trips and performing arts also are emphasized. Students are expected to enroll and participate on a regular basis.
Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative Chapin Hall Center for Children, University of Chicago	The Full Service School Initiative aimed to improve the physical and psychological well-being of children in three elementary or middle schools in order to make a positive impact on their school-related behavior and academic achievement. The objectives were to improve access to recreation, education, social service and health programs by developing an integrated and coordinated service delivery mechanism at each school; to involve school faculty and staff, students, parents, and community and nonprofit representatives in a joint decision-making process regarding programs and services in or near the school and in monitoring their success so that each takes ownership of the process; to improve the relationship between parents and school staff; and to create a mutually supportive environment where classroom and social support services work together to enhance student achievement. The initiative required schools to work with a lead partner agency.
Schools Uniting Neighborhoods SUN Evaluation Workgroup consisting of several internal researchers and PhDs from Western Oregon University	The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) initiative works through partnerships with local schools, districts and community organizations to improve the lives of children, their families and their communities. Founded by the City of Portland and Multnomah County in 1999, in partnership with the State of Oregon and Multnomah County Public School Districts, the initiative began with eight schools and has grown to 15. SUN schools extend the school day from 7:00 am to 9:00 pm and serve as community centers. They link with libraries, parks, community centers, churches, neighborhood health clinics and businesses for services and resources. They offer an array of services and activities, primarily before- and after-school academic and enrichment programs that are linked with the school day; family involvement and strengthening programs; health and social services for students, families and community; community events; and adult education opportunities.

The Impact of Community Schools on Young People

All 20 community school evaluations focused on improving outcomes for young people. Nearly all chose to measure academic achievement specifically. That so many evaluators chose to do this for relatively young community school initiatives reflects the importance of student academic performance, as well as the pressure educators feel to produce results, particularly as measured by test scores.

Seventy-five percent of the evaluated initiatives achieved improvement in individual academic achievement — results that speak to the power of creating environments and opportunities in the school and community that satisfy all the conditions for learning. These findings underscore our belief that academic achievement is intertwined with physical, social and emotional well-being; the development of personal competencies in many areas of life; and the engagement of a strong family and community.

In addition to academic achievement as measured by grades and testing, more than half of these evaluations looked for — and found — evidence of a wide variety of positive developmental indicators. These include beneficial shifts in the actions, attitudes, interests, motivations and relationships of young people participating in community school activities. Greater exploration of these changes and how they are promoted in community school settings might go a long way toward understanding and achieving the full impact of community school initiatives on academic achievement.

Findings from the 20 studies show the following specific impacts on young people attending community schools:

- ❖ **Improved grades in school courses and/or scores in proficiency testing**
  (Achievement Plus; Boston Excels; Bridges to Success; California Healthy Start; Children's Aid Society; Communities In Schools; Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program; LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program; Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative; Project Success; Readiness to Learn; Schools of the 21st Century; Schools

Uniting Neighborhoods; Texas Alliance Schools; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

- ❖ **Improved attendance**
  (Boston Excels; Bridges to Success; Children's Aid Society; Communities In Schools; Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Readiness to Learn; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

- ❖ **Reduced behavioral or discipline problems and/or suspensions/expulsions**
  (Bridges to Success; Communities In Schools; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Readiness to Learn; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

- ❖ **Increased access to physical and mental health services and preventive care**
  (California Healthy Start; Communities In Schools; Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program)

- ❖ **Greater classroom cooperation, completion of homework and assignments, adherence to school rules, and positive attitude**
  (Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program; New York City Beacons; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

- ❖ **Greater contact with supportive adults**
  (Communities In Schools; LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program; Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative)

- ❖ **Improvements in personal or family situation, abuse, or neglect**
  (Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program)

- ❖ **Increased promotions and on-time graduations**
  (Communities In Schools; LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program)

- **Increased sense of personal control over academic success**
  (Children's Aid Society; LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program)

- **Decrease in self-destructive behaviors, including irresponsible sexual activity and drug use**
  (California Healthy Start; New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program)

- **Reduced dropout rate**
  (Communities In Schools; Hamilton County Families and Children First)

- **Increased sense of attachment and responsibility to the community**
  (Center for School Change Initiative)

- **Increased sense of school connectedness**
  (Hamilton County Families and Children First)

- **Strengthened social and public-speaking skills**
  (Center for School Change Initiative)

- **Increased capacity for self-direction**
  (Center for School Change Initiative)

- **Positive effects on educational aspirations and credit accumulation**
  (New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program)

It should be noted that looking for outcomes of any kind before a program has been in existence for three to five years often is premature (Sanders, 1992). Long before all sites are fully established, most community school initiatives experience considerable pressure to show measurable improvements, especially in academic results. Community awareness of program goals and accomplishments can keep expectations reasonable, as experience in Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program shows.

Early studies of the Kentucky centers suggested that "involvement in well-organized family resource and youth service programs may have a role in altering the risk for poor school performance in groups of youth who, according to a variety of social indicators, may be at risk for negative outcomes" (Kalafat, Illback and Sanders, 1999). However, evaluations over several years found no direct connection between centers' activities and school performance. Evaluators made it clear that this was due to a problem with the data rather than the program — the hard data needed to show such a connection did not exist. This limitation has in no way eroded public support. The mission of the initiative to address specific problems in the lives of individual students is exceptionally clear, and the degree of community and legislative support for the services and support it provides is extremely high. As a result "there has been little or no pressure for a more conclusive evaluation effort" (SREB, 2001).

The Impact of Community Schools on Families

Families who participate in community schools benefit from access to a range of services and supports and greater engagement in their children's education. As research reported in Chapter 2 makes clear, family-related factors, including parent educational attainment, stress levels, and communication with teachers and school staff are closely related to student performance.

Eleven of the 20 studies measured and reported specific impacts on families:

- **Improved communication with schools and teachers**
  (Boston Excels; Hamilton County Families and Children First; New York City Beacons; Schools Uniting Neighborhoods)

- **Improved stability and/or other outcomes related to basic housing, food, transportation and employment needs**
  (California Healthy Start; Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative; Readiness to Learn)

- **Increased ability to work more hours, miss work less or to move from part-time to full-time work**
  (Schools of the 21st Century; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

- **Increased confidence for parents in their role as their child's teacher**
  (Boston Excels; Project Success)

- **Greater attendance at school meetings**
  (Hamilton County Families and Children First; New York City Beacons)

- **Increased knowledge of child development**
  (California Healthy Start)

- **Strong sense of responsibility for children's schooling**
  (Children's Aid Society)

- **Decreased family violence**
  (California Healthy Start)

- **Increased civic participation**
  (Boston Excels)

- **Improvement in adult literacy**
  (Boston Excels)

Although only 11 of the studies we reviewed focused on measuring family outcomes, virtually all of the 20 community school initiatives work closely with families. Parent participation and engagement is seen as highly instrumental in children's success.

The Texas Alliance Schools initiative exemplifies this view. Although the Alliance Schools' internally developed outcomes report focused primarily on student achievement, other articles have provided anecdotal information that described how parent involvement directly led to positive results (Hatch, 1998). At one school, parents and teachers joined forces to extend the school year by two weeks, allowing many children to strengthen their English language skills enough to take the state proficiency test in English. At another school, parents encouraged the development of an after-school cultural arts program to help academically struggling youngsters build subject area skills. Everyone who began the program passed all sections of the state test the next year.

The Impact of Community Schools on Schools

Previous work by the Coalition (Melaville, 1998) suggests that although community schools are focused on strengthening school functioning, most beginning efforts do not specifically target school curriculum or instruction. However, as initiatives mature and as trust grows among partners, their influence in all aspects of school functioning increases. This influence often begins with increased parent participation, leads to more positive school climate, and eventually results in changes to school policies and practice.

Fourteen of the evaluations presented in Chapter 3 examined the whole-school environment. The evaluations cited here show significant improvements in parent engagement as well as increased staff support for child and family supports. In addition to evidence of enhanced physical and emotional climate, some evaluations point to the capacity of community school interventions to affect the behavior and attitudes of teachers as well as learners.

Specific evaluation findings on the impact of community school activities on school functioning show:

- **Principal and staff affirmation of on-site services as an important resource**
  (Dallas Youth and Family Centers Program; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Project Success; Readiness to Learn; Schools Uniting Neighborhoods)

- **Increased parent participation in children's learning**
  (Boston Excels; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Project Success; Texas Alliance Schools)

- **Growth in nonpartisan support for public education and increased resources through increased community partnerships**
  (Hamilton County Families and Children First; Readiness to Learn; Texas Alliance Schools; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

- ❖ **Teacher recognition of parent participation as an asset**
  (Children's Aid Society; Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program; Project Success)

- ❖ I**ncreased classroom emphasis on creative, project-based learning connected to the community and innovations in teaching and curriculum**
  (Achievement Plus; Center for School Change Initiative)

- ❖ **School environments are more cheerful and orderly; there is increased perception of safety**
  (Children's Aid Society; Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative)

- ❖ **Services well-integrated into the daily operation of schools**
  (Hamilton County Families and Children First; New Jersey School Based Youth Services Program;)

- ❖ **Teachers spend more time on class preparing and working with students**
  (Children's Aid Society)

- ❖ **Improvements in teacher attendance**
  (Children's Aid Society)

These findings lend credence to the view that community school innovations have the capacity to influence overall school functioning, including teaching and instruction. The evaluation of the Center for School Change Initiative, for example, reported that partnership activities at participating schools modeled innovations like multiage classrooms and project-based learning and helped catalyze innovations in teaching strategies and curriculum development. To some extent, new approaches were picked up at other district schools. Evaluation findings also suggest that innovations help retain the best teachers.

Change in teacher attitudes and behavior is an important, but unexplored, area in most of the evaluations reviewed here. Teachers' perceptions and attitudes about student behavior and initiative activities were surveyed frequently, but few focused on how teachers were affected. Since the elements of successful teaching and learning are closely interrelated, these innovations that promote learning also can be expected to affect what teachers actually do. Children's Aid Society evaluators looked for evidence of this kind of behavioral change. They found that teachers in community schools spent more time on class preparation and working with students than did teachers in comparison schools. Teachers at community schools also had better attendance rates (Cancelli, et al., 1999).

The Impact of Community Schools on Communities

The flow of resources in community schools runs from community to school — and back again into the community. Benefits to families, such as increased physical, economic and emotional stability, clearly contribute to the stability of their communities. So do more and better relationships among community agencies, businesses and civic organizations, accompanied by a greater awareness of the services they offer. These connections help create the social networks that define and strengthen a community for all its residents.

Increased positive behavior and more constructive after-school choices among students also affect the quality of local life. For example, the extension of school activities into the community through service learning, community problem solving or community service brings new energy into surrounding neighborhoods.

Eleven studies listed findings specifically related to community impact:

- ❖ **Increased community knowledge and improved perception of initiative**
  (Children's Aid Society; Communities In Schools; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Kentucky Family Resource and Youth Services Program; Project Success; Readiness to Learn; Schools Uniting Neighborhoods)

♦ **Increased community use of school buildings, more family awareness of community agencies, and greater community access to facilities previously unknown or unaffordable**
(Center for School Change Initiative; Hamilton County Families and Children First; Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative; Project Success; Readiness to Learn; Schools Uniting Neighborhoods; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

♦ **Improved security and safety in surrounding area**
(New York City Beacons; Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project)

♦ **Strengthened community pride and identity, engagement of citizens and students in school and community service**
(Center for School Change Initiative; New York City Beacons)

While only 11 evaluations directly examined community impact, their findings suggest that community schools play a powerful role in community building. Initiatives point to an increase in community identity and pride and greater connections among young people and residents in community-focused projects.

Benefits that result from such changes are hard to quantify. How do you measure, for example, how important it is to a young person to feel part of something valuable? What is the combined contribution of cohorts of individual young people who have learned to care about their neighbors? Where is the tipping point, when a thousand small changes add up to measurable differences in outcomes for a community and the families that live there? We may not yet have the tools to measure these changes, but there is more than enough information to suggest that such changes are significant and far reaching.

Lessons for Implementation

The evaluations reviewed in this chapter confirm that community schools are making a difference to young people, families, schools and communities. Evaluation research is important because it lets practitioners know what they are accomplishing. It also can point the way to stronger, more effective implementation by highlighting the elements that contribute most to program success.

Three lessons emerge from this review of community school evaluations. Briefly summarized, they suggest that in successful community school initiatives:

♦ Quality counts

♦ Attendance matters

♦ Everyone benefits — the neediest most of all

Lesson #1: Quality Counts
The quality of community school initiatives has a significant impact on outcomes.

Several evaluations emphasized the importance of quality to an initiative's overall success. Suggested indicators of quality included the number and kind of activities, how long the program had been in operation, and the degree of student participation.

The evaluation design for the New York City Beacons model, for example, looked intensively at several sites, making sure that at least one site offered a superior set of activities. Evaluators found that the quality of youth development activities offered to young people makes a distinct difference in their outcomes. In higher-quality Beacons centers, for example, young people were more likely to report feeling better about themselves and to believe that all races and ethnicities were equally valued at their Beacons center. These students also reported fewer negative behaviors.

Similarly, the protocol for Project Success was based on the assumption that measurable improvements in attendance and achievement will occur only in well-established initiatives — those that have had an opportunity to mature and become accepted within the school and community. Evaluation findings supported this assumption: Parent involvement was rated highest at

schools that had been involved in Project Success for the longest time. Parents who participated in schools with the most experience with Project Success also reported the highest number of benefits to themselves and their children. In schools involved with Project Success for at least three years, Project Success students had much higher standardized test scores in reading in both third and sixth grades. While attendance rates were not affected by the length of school involvement in Project Success, this was because attendance at both study sites and comparison schools was already high, in the low to mid 90th percentile.

Findings for the LA's BEST After School Enrichment Program were linked to student participation rates — another indicator of quality. Results showed that "higher levels of participation … led to better subsequent school attendance, which in turn related to higher academic achievement on standardized tests of mathematics, reading and language arts." UCLA researchers concluded that an intense commitment and day-in day-out involvement on the part of young people and families are necessary to achieve significant outcomes.

Lesson #2: Attendance Matters

Higher attendance in community schools contributes to improved achievement. Children in community schools want to come to school, and so they learn more. Positive attendance outcomes were reported in several evaluations. There is a logical conceptual path between increased attendance and higher achievement; indeed, research confirms that students who attend school more often also perform better academically (Johnston, 2000). The factors that lead to increased attendance and that mediate the distance between the two outcomes are not entirely clear. Evaluations presented here suggest that strong personal motivation is essential and appears to be encouraged by both need and interest.

In the Urban School Initiative School Age Child Care Project, attendance and achievement both increased. Eighth-grade participants who were not in the program during the previous year reduced their average number of school absences from 18 days in seventh grade to five days in eighth grade. Program attendance was consistently above 90%. Evaluators of this program also found

exceptional performance among participants in state proficiency exams. Scores of fourth- and sixth-grade participants exceeded statewide averages in every subject area, including reading, writing, math and science. Fourth graders exceeded their peers by 13 points in reading. Evaluators noted a variety of factors that no doubt contributed to positive attendance and achievement outcomes — for example, offering students a choice of activities every day. Evaluators attached particular importance to the meal or snack provided at every site. According to observers, "providing food for hungry bodies" acted as a "magnet that … helped to boost attendance."

Evaluation of LA's BEST referred to another sort of intrinsic motivation. Attendance increases, evaluators theorized, because its programs are more "relevant and attractive" than the alternatives. Simply put, it appears that students came to school because they did not want to miss out on the activities LA's BEST offered. Academic performance increased because of the joint effects of more time in school and the enrichment resulting from participation in LA's BEST activities.

Lesson #3: Everyone Benefits — the Neediest Most of All

Students in the greatest need — those most likely to be in low-performing schools — benefit the most from the community schools environment. Community schools that reach out to low-income and underachieving students can begin to narrow the performance gap among student groups and across schools. Evaluation data from the Texas Alliance Schools and California's Healthy Start both report that the most significant improvements in academic performance were seen among participants from the lowest-income families. In the 84 Alliance Schools, pass rates on the state's proficiency exam improved at a greater rate among economically disadvantaged students than in the total Alliance School student population. Disadvantaged Alliance School students improved at double the statewide rate for all students.

In California, academic results for low-income Healthy Start students most in need of services increased

significantly. Math scores in the lowest-performing elementary schools increased by 50% while reading scores climbed 25%.

Findings from the Readiness to Learn initiative suggest that the impact of community schools is greatest in the specific areas where students need assistance most. Researchers found that students at all grade levels referred to the program for academic reasons showed greater gains in academic performance than students who were referred for other reasons. Similarly, elementary students referred for behavioral problems experienced a greater decrease in their office referrals, detentions or suspensions than did students who had been referred for other reasons. All students improved, but not as much as students with greater need. In other words, targeting services and supports to students in need is an effective strategy to improve results.

Conclusion

There is much more we need to understand about how relationships among various approaches actually play out in community school initiatives. Identifying individual outcomes, while important, provides only clues about how positive results are achieved.

All too often, funders expect sophisticated outcome evaluations, but overlook the resources and capacity needed to conduct them. Few programs have the capacity to track individual outcomes.

Leading researchers consistently urge funding support for evaluations that focus on program quality rather than on individual outcomes. In a recent comprehensive review of community programs that promote youth development, the NRC and the Institute of Medicine argue that:

> Indicators of the developmental quality of the program necessarily provide the key information for judging whether it is likely to have positive effects on youth development. If the program's model is valid and data on the developmental quality of its activities indicate that it provides a setting and a set of activities that facilitate positive youth development, one may reasonably conclude that the program contributes to positive youth development (National Research Council and Institute of Medicine, 2002, p. 251).

Clearly, more resources need to be invested in community school research both to refine evaluation methodologies and to enable a better understanding of the factors at play in high-quality community schools. Only when we better understand these intricacies will we be able to target efforts to expand and sustain their effects.

Throughout this report, vignettes of community schools suggest some of the connections between quality and outcomes. They show what the research findings reported in Chapters 2 and 3 look like in action and illustrate the real difference that a living, breathing community school can make on everyone who walks through its doors.

Notes on Methods and Technical Limitations

Findings reported here come from formal studies conducted by third-party researchers using process and outcome designs and from community school initiatives using internal reports of program and school data. A few incorporate a longitudinal design. All the evaluations looked, though in different ways, at the impact of a specific community school initiative on children, families, schools or communities. A number of the evaluations also examined operational issues, such as participation and use rates. Surveys, interviews, focus groups, and program and school data were widely used to gather information.

Formal evaluations of some models measured impact by comparing findings from selected community school study sites to similar noncommunity schools. This methodology was used for evaluations of Bridges to Success, Children's Aid Society, Hamilton County Families and Children First, New York City Beacons, Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative, Project Success, Schools of the 21st Century, and Schools Uniting Neighborhoods. Other evaluations compared participants to nonparticipants on various dimensions or looked at how individual measures changed before and after participation in the initiative. For example, the Texas Alliance Initiative used internal audits to assess changes in academic achievement by comparing testing performance in Alliance Schools with statewide averages.

Communities In Schools addressed the predictable variation among local sites by establishing general outcome measures, such as academic improvement, and asking localities to track participating students on those measures, regardless of differences in the types of assessments used.

Various evaluations noted limitations in implementing their design or drawing conclusions from their findings. For example, the difference between comparison and study sites in the Children's Aid Society evaluation evaporated when a comparison school became a community school. The number of potential comparison sites available to the New York City Beacons evaluation shrank considerably when 40 additional schools received funding to develop their own Beacons centers. When signed parent consent forms were required of every survey participant at comparison schools, evaluators had to limit the use of comparison schools to one substudy, given limited time and resources.

Initiatives also recognized the difficulty of drawing conclusions based on sites that differed significantly in the duration, quality and kind of activities they provided. Assuming that positive outcomes could be expected only in well-established sites, Project Success evaluators put significant effort into identifying "high-implementing" sites. These were identified in principal surveys as operating at a school for at least two years and demonstrating high levels of school implementation. Beacons center designers developed a stratified random sample to make sure at least one "exemplary" site was included in their intensive study sample. The process enabled evaluators to look at the difference between greater- and lesser-quality sites. It did not, however, produce a sample comprising sites equally strong in each of the initiatives' four major areas of activity: youth development, education, parent involvement and community building (Warren, Brown and Freudenberg, 1999). This limitation made it difficult to look at the significance of differences in program quality across all four areas.

Several evaluations took pains to note that no *causal* links could be inferred from findings between initiative activities and observed improvement, particularly the Polk Bros. Full Service School Initiative. The LA's BEST

evaluation observed that "present data do not allow us to separate out the impact of LA's BEST from that of a regular school, or to determine which of the … activities are most effective," but they also said that "it looks as if LA's BEST is a program that, when followed as a regular part of students' broad educational experience, results in statistically important differences in student outcomes" (Huang, et al., 2000). This problem of causality arises, suggests Children's Aid Society evaluators, from a model that is not fully defined in terms of the specific student outcomes expected "as the direct result of either participation in specific activities or services or as a result of immersion in a new type of education institution."

Researchers themselves note that results, particularly for academic achievement gains, though clearly evident, are still early. California's Healthy Start evaluation, for example, uses a longitudinal design; first-year results are intended to establish a baseline from which to measure subsequent change. Other researchers assumed that subsequent evaluations will be needed to tease out the interactions among program elements and outcomes and that the relationships, both positive and negative, will be more evident as initiatives mature.

There is much more that needs to be learned about *how* community schools make the difference to children, families, schools and communities. That they *do* make the difference is affirmed by the best available evaluation research — and confirmed daily by the experience and conviction of participants and observers.

FROM RESEARCH TO PRACTICE

"It is simply impossible to have an island of educational excellence in a sea of community indifference."

— Ernest Boyer
former president of the Carnegie Foundation
for the Advancement of Teaching, 1995

Visitors to a community school quickly realize that it is a place designed to make learning happen. Students and teachers come to their classrooms motivated and engaged. Thanks to the array of services and supports available, young people are ready to learn and have the opportunity to develop to their fullest capacity. Parents and community partners are actively engaged in the school and help it function at its best. With a variety of adult classes and services available, family members and community residents are learning too.

Supported by clear evidence that community schools can and do make a difference in student achievement and other important measures, a growing number of communities and school systems are working together to realize this vision in their schools for their own students, their families and the entire community. But successful community schools are built on more than good intentions or even good models. They also have an effective infrastructure of leadership, organization and support that extends beyond what is seen in most traditional schools.

This chapter outlines four key elements that undergird successful local efforts to create and sustain community schools:

❖ **A motivating vision that describes how community schools can promote learning.**

❖ **Connected learning experiences in which in-class curriculum and instruction and out-of-class learning activities are coordinated to build complementary and reinforcing skills and abilities.**

❖ **Community partnerships that exponentially increase the resources, support and expertise available to community schools.**

❖ **Strategic organization and financing approaches that encourage effective working relationships between a school and its community partners, a results-oriented focus, and financial support for community school activities.**

Together and individually, these elements enable community schools to turn the vision into reality — using their inherent advantages to create the conditions for learning that enable all students to achieve at their full potential. Vignettes throughout this chapter illustrate how each element plays out in a community school.

A Motivating Vision

For a community school, a successful motivating vision is sharply defined, and includes a clearly articulated purpose and statement of desired results. Vision-guided community schools make decisions based on specific educational and ethical principles and clear assessment information. A clearly stated mission provides the school with the institutional integrity it needs to motivate members and reconcile diverse interests (Hill, Foster and Gendler, 1990).

A well-defined vision, with a mission and a plan for coordinated activities, can mean the difference between success and failure, especially in schools with multiple partners and reform efforts. It helps partners stay focused on learning, guides their day-to-day relationships and decision making, and encourages accountability. A shared vision also sends a signal to all stakeholders that student

learning is a top priority; helps mobilize the assets of school, family and community toward that goal; and captures the hearts and minds of those working toward it. Strong school and community leadership are vital to crafting such a vision and bringing it to life.

Chapter 1 described the Coalition's vision of community schools — a vision that is reflected in the work of communities and schools across the country. It is up to every school district, every school and every community, acting in concert, to develop the themes and issues that will inspire partners, encourage dialogue and focus action on this vision.

Vision Vignette: Relationships and Reading

At **Howe Elementary School** in Green Bay, WI, Principal Ed Dorff spells out the school's central vision: "Relationships and reading are the two most important things we do here. When kids come from families where education is not a priority … the most important thing we can do to increase achievement is to help them develop relationships with their own family, with their school, and between their school and family."

Eighty-six percent of Howe students come from low-income families and many live in seven nearby homeless centers. Every year, nearly 30% of students move sometime during the school year. In order to build relationships and encourage stability, Howe now offers both Head Start classes and full-day, high-quality child care for working families; this means that home-school relationships start early. A host of research-based academic-, literacy- and family-support opportunities all are focused on improving student performance.

Transience is still high at the school and test scores still fluctuate, but the overall academic trend is moving upward. Sixty-one percent of third graders now perform at proficient or advanced levels on state reading tests, compared to 40% in 1997. Reading scores among fourth graders have improved from 35% to 58%.

Vision Vignette: Learning as a Full-Time Activity

Marquette Elementary School in Southwest Chicago has 2,100 students in kindergarten through eighth grade. By allowing community-based organizations to use school facilities, the school encourages the neighborhood to see it as a community resource and see learning as a full-time activity. This vision was greatly expanded in 1996, when the school, in partnership with Metropolitan Family Services (MFS), received a Polk Bros. Foundation Full Service School grant to help address student and family needs and provide extended opportunities for learning.

Marquette's partnership with MFS has increased the school's understanding of students' needs and helped break down barriers between teachers and students. Parents feel more comfortable knowing that the school is open and that their children are safe and actively involved.

According to Full Service School Director Lori Rios, "the full-service component of Marquette has helped teachers to look at the student as a whole, not only supporting academic needs, but also recognizing how recreation and other interests are important. It all comes full circle. And we've seen an attitude change in the students who now look at the school in a different light."

While the poverty rate among students has gone from 68% to 96% over the last decade, reading scores at Marquette actually increased at rates that exceeded the citywide average.

Connected Learning Experiences

Successful community schools link the community school vision to the classroom and other real world settings by providing curriculum, instruction and related activities that broaden and connect young people's learning experiences in and out of school.

These connected learning experiences include the following characteristics:

❖ clearly stated learning standards;

❖ communication and joint planning among school and community partners;

❖ alignment of learning opportunities with standards;

❖ a focus on research related to the conditions for learning; and

❖ professional development and technical assistance.

When learning experiences are connected, opportunities to practice specific skills and master content are incorporated in complementary learning settings, before and after school — in the community as well as in the classroom. What children are expected to learn remains constant, but how and where they acquire essential knowledge and skills can vary widely. Such an "embedded curriculum" offers a scope of activities consciously designed to build a range of both academic and life skills (McLaughlin, 2000).

Creating this kind of coherence begins with clearly articulated learning standards. There also must be continuing communication among school and community partners in order to find the best ways to connect activities with curriculum goals.

Research presented in Chapter 2 makes clear that learning occurs best when knowledge and skills are practiced and used to solve real-life problems. Community schools make certain that such learning opportunities are aligned with education standards and contribute to students achieving at high levels.

In designing connected learning experiences, partners are consistently guided by the research findings on which the five conditions for learning are based. Ongoing professional development and technical assistance help ensure that research-based strategies are implemented effectively. Communication and joint planning sessions among educators, youth development workers and community adults who serve as teachers outside the classroom help develop a repertoire of complementary instructional approaches.

Connected Learning Vignette: A "Living Textbook" for Science

North Middle School in Aurora, CO, benefits in many ways from a partnership with the City of Aurora's Office of Youth Development and the Service-Learning Division of the Community College of Aurora. At the school, after-school programming is integrated into the whole-school curriculum, and science offers an important connecting strategy.

The Summer Science Academy, operated in partnership with the nearby University of Colorado's Health Science Center and hospital, offers students opportunities to explore anatomy, health/wellness, astronomy and geology. Other activities, such as swimming, art, computers and fitness, are integrated into the educational themes of the week. For example, students in the computer class are introduced to anatomy by working on the Visible Human Project, a computerized human dissection program. Interactive and hands-on classes at Denver's Nature and Science Museum, fossil digs at the local state park, and scavenger hunts designed to teach about nutrition and wellness all deepen young people's understanding of key scientific concepts.

North Middle School students who participate in after-school or summer programs like the Science Academy have higher attendance and are less likely to fail in their school work than students who do not participate.

Connected Learning Vignette: Real-World Skills and Day-to-Day Needs

At **East Hartford High School** in East Hartford, CT, students come from more than 70 countries and speak 40 languages. Mobility is high and 60% of students come from low-income families.

"Students need to see a connection to the real world," says former principal Steve Edwards. East Hartford has built a curriculum around connected learning experiences by working with multiple community partners. Young people gain real-life training and skills through a variety of community-based and entrepreneurial learning activities. For example, selected students operate a branch office of a local bank located at the school, managing accounts for their peers and teachers.

Partners also have developed programs targeted to the needs of the student population. These programs include a student assistance center that offers comprehensive social and behavioral services, a primary care health center, a wellness center that promotes integrated physical well-being, and after-school programming.

Combined effects of these strategies are heartening. Over the last six years, the dropout rate has decreased from 22% to less than 2% annually. Eighty percent of the graduates go on to at least a two-year college — a 20% increase over the last seven years.

Community Partnerships

Community schools illustrate what can happen when the forces of community triumph over indifference. Through strategic partnerships, the capacity of the community and its schools expands. As results improve for students, families and the community, these relationships deepen.

Effective community partnerships include:

❖ a multisector alliance at the community level;

❖ an effective planning and decision-making mechanism at the school site;

❖ focusing the school and partners on shared results; and

❖ continuous learning among partners.

Under the pressure of new high-stakes achievement tests, schools sometimes are reluctant to enter into collaboration unless the effort is directly related to academic achievement (Cornerstone Consulting Group, 2001). Results and vignettes in this study clearly show, however, that when schools intentionally integrate their assets with those of parents; community-based organizations; public and private agencies; and business, civic and faith-based communities to create all the conditions for learning, they significantly expand the resources they need to reach all children. According to the U.S. Department of Education, "Developing strong partnerships among school, families, businesses, and community and religious groups is the best way to make our education system thrive" (U.S. Department of Education, 1999).

Partnerships are essential to developing a sufficient range of programs, services and resources that will achieve desired results. Engaged partners, strategically organized at the school site, in the community and in the school district, drive the work of community schools and help ensure responsiveness and accountability. Their leadership creates access to a range of community assets. It also provides new expertise and perspective and can introduce approaches that improve program effectiveness and efficiency.

Partnership Vignette: Developing a Broad Base

A Beacons Center operates at the **Webster Open Magnet School** under the Minneapolis YMCA's leadership. The YMCA-Webster partnership offers after-school academic enrichment and youth development opportunities; leadership development experiences; and peer tutoring to Hmong, African American and Latino families at the school. Minneapolis Public Schools granted permission to extend the Beacons summer-school day to enable every student one hour of Beacons activities, e.g., team building, youth leadership, community service, peer mentoring, cultural activities or recreation.

The YMCA also engages numerous other partners under its umbrella. Beacons Site Coordinator Matt Kjorstad says, "We use the strengths of each partner to give our youth and community the best resources possible." For example:

❖ The Best Friends program helps fourth- through eighth-grade girls meet new friends and build a community. Participants also learn about themselves and their changing bodies, and learn skills they need to succeed as women in the inner city.

❖ *La Opportunidad* offers two Latino cultural programs and is a key part of the Beacons' success with its Latino students as well as with their families.

❖ A partnership with the Macro Group, a nearby computer company, grew from Beacons' involvement in a business leaders meeting convened by the mayor and police chief. Here, the CEO of Macro offered financial assistance, a pen pal program and a "master gardener" for a community gardening program.

The Beacons advisory components strengthen their work. A youth advisory includes students involved with Beacons for at least three years who learn about all programs, help make changes, and give tours to potential funders and visitors. They hold an adult/youth joint meeting quarterly.

The staff advisory, which includes the principal, teachers, administrators and Beacons staff, meets

semi-annually at the citywide Beacons planning meeting to set new goals and strategies for the Webster Beacons. The parent advisory works hard to involve many parents as volunteers and in open houses, regular parent nights and talent shows. These advisories make the Beacons not the YMCA's program nor the Webster School's program, but the community's program.

Partnership Vignette:
Setting Community Priorities

For more than 20 years, **Northeast Elementary School** in Ankeny, IA, has been one of 10 district schools that follow a Community Education model. The approach calls for collaboration with community-serving organizations, religious groups, the school district, the city and public agencies to provide a wealth of learning experiences for the entire community.

To ensure that Community Education schools respond to actual local needs, community leaders hold a citizens planning conference every three years. Citizens agree on the top three priorities for action and decide on the resources needed to address them, the partnerships that need to be created and the results that will spell success.

Ankeny's centrally located Community Resource Center is one result of this communitywide planning. At the center, partners provide after-school ESL tutoring, a clothing center and food pantry, an alternative education program, a senior center, a computer center, counseling agencies, and a Children's Hospital health clinic. Bringing Women, Infants and Children (WIC), a federal feeding program for mothers and children, into the center increased the number of low-income mothers using the center's services from 26 to 260 the first year.

Partnership Vignette:
Time for Learning

Elliott Elementary School in Lincoln, NE, is a high-poverty school with a fast-growing immigrant population. An alliance with the Lincoln YMCA has made the school a welcoming place for children and adults.

Serving nearly 100 students a day, the YMCA brings in recreation, character development programs, academic support and positive supervision for children before and after school as well as during holiday breaks.

YMCA staff also participate in school leadership team and regular staff training sessions. At the teachers' request, YMCA staff provided them with extra literacy tutoring and training on positive techniques for classroom management. In turn, school staff trained reading tutors, including YMCA personnel and college students, on the school's reading methods.

Collaboration has created consistent expectations and "a feeling of continuous learning between day classes and after-school programs, rather than fragmented programming," says Principal DeAnn Currin. "We're all here to serve the children. Together we have made more time for learning." Teachers report an increase of 15 to 45 minutes of instructional time per day because of the more positive classroom management techniques the YMCA staff has helped them learn.

Citywide partnerships also are being developed. As part of city efforts to expand the community learning center initiative, of which Elliott is a part, leaders have established a community leadership council to guide the development and long-term financing of learning centers in Lincoln's neediest schools. The publisher of the local newspaper, who also serves as chair of the Lincoln Public Schools Foundation, spearheads this effort in partnership with the mayor, the school superintendent, county leaders, and local business and foundation executives.

Partnership Vignette:
Communitywide Leadership

The **Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) Initiative** in Multnomah County, OR, partners with 19 elementary, middle and high schools to extend the school day and develop schools as full-service neighborhood "community centers." The initiative grew from existing efforts in the City of Portland and Multnomah County, including a city parks and recreation after-school program and a county school-based social and health services program.

Interest in the project increased after a statewide Council of Chief State School Officers initiative brought representatives from the Children's Aid Society to Oregon. The representatives shared with elected officials the success story of their Washington Heights community

school model, which helped to spur Portland's interest in the link between social services and academic achievement.

As momentum built, two efforts emerged in 1998 that shared common ground. A multijurisdictional after-school cabinet, supported by a city commissioner and an assistant school superintendent, developed principles to improve academic achievement through community-based, family-centered strategies linked to the school day. The other effort, an *ad hoc* planning committee of the county community building initiative, focused on integrating social services at the neighborhood level with increased community involvement. These efforts connected through the sponsor group, a policy board for the *ad hoc* committee that included key county commissioners and the city commissioner involved with the after-school cabinet.

The *ad hoc* planning committee functioned as "a broad design group" to transform schools into community hubs. Membership grew to 35 people, representing social service and youth development agencies, school districts, businesses, and the local government. In April 1999, the sponsor group adopted the principles developed by both the after-school cabinet and the *ad hoc* committee, and the SUN initiative (named by the county youth advisory board) was born. SUN continues to benefit from high-level community support, while a multijurisdictional management team of senior staff from partner organizations oversees operations.

Strategic Organization and Financing

Successful community schools have the organizational arrangements and financing to manage the work of schools and their partners effectively and to achieve their shared goals. Effective organization and financing strategies include:

- ❖ flexible funding;

- ❖ a community schools coordinator;

- ❖ schools and all community partners who are willing to share resources;

- ❖ a source of technical assistance; and

- ❖ adequate and accessible facilities.

Community schools need sustainable sources of funding that support their broad organizational and operational needs, ensure program continuity, and attract new partners. Funding should be sufficiently flexible so that partners can respond quickly to urgent priorities and use dollars creatively to leverage additional income. Valuable support also may come in the form of technical assistance to help partners work through a range of planning and implementation issues.

Providing for a community school coordinator should be a high priority for most community schools. A permanent staff coordinator contributes significantly to the effectiveness and sustainability of the program. Working as part of the school leadership team, the coordinator facilitates collaboration, community oversight and day-to-day management of community school activities. The coordinator also can greatly improve the range, quality and coherence of community school activities while increasing the time the principal and other school staff can devote to instruction and learning. The coordinator can be financed through school funds, other public or private dollars, or a combination of these options. Alternatively, a partner might relocate an existing staff person to the school to serve as the coordinator.

Effective community schools also pursue creative strategies to house services in adequate and accessible facilities. Increasingly, this means advocating for state and local policies that permit construction of mixed-use buildings to serve as community centers as well as schools, and preserving older school with strong community roots.

Organization Vignette:
Technical Assistance

When the Polk Bros. Foundation organized its Full Services School Initiative (FSSI) in Chicago, it engaged the North Central Regional Educational Laboratory (NCREL) to provide ongoing technical assistance. NCREL offered assistance at each individual school and coordinated a learning network of people from each of the three FSSI participating schools, including **Marquette Elementary School**.

Among other valuable services, the technical assistance provider reminded oversight committee members that it was important to involve all the major stakeholder

groups (parents, students, teachers, administrators and staff of community-based organizations) in key decisions. This helped the committee to ensure stakeholders' buy-in, benefit from their experience and wisdom, and avoid making costly mistakes.

Commenting on the value of the technical assistance, Suzanne Doornos Kerbow of the Polk Bros. Foundation says that it "helped us work through the differences between the schools and the lead community-based organizations, develop quality services, and establish a learning network that was critical to the entire enterprise."

Organization Vignette:
On-Site Coordination

Terrie Lewis, the Communities In Schools site coordinator at **East Elementary School** in Kings Mountain, NC, leads community outreach efforts to expand the school's partnerships and resources. She also provides direct assistance to the teachers by facilitating trusting relationships with families and helping teachers implement new literacy programs. On a daily basis, she organizes the work of partners and a host of volunteers who provide tutoring and homework help to students, serve as aides in the classroom, and help needy students obtain school supplies and other essential items.

In the words of Principal Jerry Hoyle, the presence of a full-time coordinator on campus who coordinates parent volunteers, mentors and lunch buddies, manages business and church partnerships, and performs similar organizational duties "has allowed teachers to get back to teaching."

Financing Vignette:
Extra Supports

Six years ago, the leadership at **Carson High School** in Carson, CA, decided that test scores were not going to improve without extra supports to address health and social service issues.

To begin the process of putting needed supports in place, the school obtained an initial Healthy Start grant from the California State Department of Education. Los Angeles Unified School District's LEA Medi-Cal Reimbursement Program helped sustain the program, while a state-funded Immediate Intervention for Under-Performing Schools grant provided for a learning

support coordinator to work in unison with the Healthy Start program.

Community-based coalitions also support programming at the school. Carson 2000Plus, a local resource coordinating council, brings resources to bear in several areas, including after-school activities, health services, parent involvement, conflict resolution and school-to-career transition. Suspensions and dropout rates have improved substantially over the last several years, while the percentage of 11th graders scoring at or above the 50th percentile in standardized reading tests increased from 19% in 1999 to 25% in 2001.

Financing Vignette:
Resources for a Small School

Families on Track (FOT) is an academy of sixth-, seventh- and eighth-grade students housed within **Parkway Heights Middle School** in South San Francisco, CA. It is designed to provide smaller learning environments and comprehensive child and family support services.

During FOT's planning stages, strong support from the president of the county board of supervisors promoted an unprecedented collaboration between the county, the city of South San Francisco and the South San Francisco School District. Using funds from their respective Community Development Block grants, the city and county pooled their resources to fund the purchase of a new 1,500-square-foot portable building on Parkway's campus to house all of FOT's social services. Another building to provide more space currently is being planned.

FOT operates as a separate nonprofit organization with its own board of directors. The steering committee, whose members include representatives from the city, county, school district and community-based organizations, guides the program. The board of directors provides community leadership and obtains funding while the FOT executive director and the Parkway Heights principal provide day-to-day academic management. Although incoming sixth-grade FOT students have lower overall GPAs than non-FOT students, by seventh grade this gap is significantly reduced.

Conclusion

As educators and community partners pursue their visions of successful community schools, they are moving well beyond business as usual. Schools, families and community partners are agreeing on common results, jointly seeking funding, transforming their attitudes and expectations, and working creatively and respectfully with each other to create a different kind of institution.

As we have seen, community schools nationwide are accomplishing more and doing it better by taking a comprehensive approach to strengthening children, youth, families and communities. Openness to innovation and access to additional resources and expertise are reflected in reinvigorated instruction and enthusiastic learning. These changes in practice and attitude have begun to transform every school in this report, and many others across the country.

AN ACTION AGENDA

"Leaders unwilling to seek mutually workable arrangements with systems external to their own are not serving the long-term institutional interests of their constituents."

— John Gardner
On Leadership

As the research, evaluations and vignettes in this report clearly show, community schools are making the difference for many students, families, schools and communities. And with the support of community leaders, educators, policymakers, practitioners, students, parents, community residents and other institutions, this vision and approach to learning can make the difference for many more.

Organizing community schools requires the shared leadership, resources and effort of many different stakeholders. This action agenda speaks to everyone seeking better learning outcomes, as well as specifically to entities whose policies and practices must change in order to build an effective and lasting community schools strategy. The agenda is built around the four elements that help forge successful community schools: **a motivating vision, connected learning experiences, community partnerships, and strategic organization and financing.**

With these elements in place, community schools will have the tools they need to do what they do best: Create better learning opportunities for all students while strengthening families and communities.

A Motivating Vision

❖ **Engage the community.** Creating and sustaining community schools is a community enterprise. A community school strategy can begin with schools reaching out, communities reaching in or joint efforts. Regardless of how it begins, a wide array of stakeholders must be involved at both the building and district levels. Voices of young people, parents, families and community residents are

especially important. Together, these stakeholders develop a broad vision of what their community schools should look like and the multiple measures of progress they expect to achieve. The conditions for learning discussed in Chapter 2 provide a valuable tool for thinking through what young people need to succeed in both school and life, and how their families and communities can be actively engaged in supporting student learning.

❖ **Use data to define desired results and drive decision making.** School staff, parents, community leaders, and partner agencies and organizations should review available data to determine which conditions for learning are in place, the changes that need to be made and the expectations that may reasonably be set. In addition to academic performance, consider such factors as attendance; student behavior; social, emotional and physical well-being; family well-being and family involvement; and access to developmental opportunities outside the school day. Do not overlook the many "facts of life" (e.g., student mobility, violence, housing) that influence teaching and learning. Carefully review the accountability systems being developed by local school districts as well as the requirements of the No Child Left Behind Act in this process. Analyze the data, set realistic priorities and develop a plan of action to achieve them.

❖ **Keep schools open before and after the regular school day and on weekends all year long.** Keeping schools open is not only an

essential element of a community school, it also provides taxpayers with an effective way to see the value of their investment in schools and students. Put simply, school buildings belong to the community.

While issues related to use of facilities, utility costs, insurance and custodial services will probably need to be addressed, schools and communities usually can work through these concerns. Joint efforts by school boards, the local government, superintendents and principals, teachers, and community agencies are an effective approach.

❖ **Build and rehabilitate school buildings as community schools.** The present boom in school rehabilitation and construction offers a unique opportunity to create community schools. Communities should think of planned buildings not just as schools, but as centers of community life. Older schools with historical value, which already may be centers of the community, should be rehabilitated. School districts; the local government; and community groups with the expertise to engage students, parents and residents should work together to envision multiple purposes for these buildings, the services and opportunities they want to make available, and the kinds of space needed.

❖ **Build small schools.** The research on the benefits of small schools is clear. Still, schools with thousands of children exist at the elementary school level and are common among high schools. Once considered cost effective, these oversized schools have failed to demonstrate any real savings and offer few economies of scale to the children attending them. New schools should be designed for small student populations shown by research to be optimum for learning. Existing schools can be reconfigured to provide more effective learning communities

In addition, school boards and superintendents should consider creating small schools in existing

community facilities where the community can support student learning — at colleges and universities, museums, business sites, or hospitals. All of these approaches can mobilize the community in support of student learning and engage the public in public education.

Connected Learning Experiences

❖ **Incorporate the community into the curriculum as an explicit resource for learning and improved student achievement.** Research demonstrates the effectiveness of curricular approaches that use the community as a resource for learning and that enable young people to become resources for their communities. Experience demonstrates that such approaches can be readily aligned to state standards.

Many stakeholders can contribute to this effort. For example,

❖ School systems can integrate community-based experiences in their curricula through school-to-work programs, service learning, place-based education, environmental education and other similar strategies.

❖ Local governments can work with educators to expand educational programs that address issues of concern to the city or county. For example, health and environmental issues such as water supply, sanitation, pest control or lead-based paint can provide the content for numerous engaging learning experiences.

❖ Institutions of higher education, in pursuit of their mission to build a more democratic society and educate students, can mobilize their faculties and students to design and implement joint curricula with K–12 students and teachers.

Such activities provide effective ways to address community problems and help students at all grade levels serve as resources for their communities. Community organizations, as well as civic, arts and cultural groups, have a significant capacity to

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partner with K–12 community schools and help create exciting learning experiences.

❖ **Provide teachers and principals with professional development to enhance their ability to use the community as a learning resource.** Implementing new practices in any organization requires a substantial investment in professional development. This is especially important when using the community as a resource for learning, because educators typically have had little professional preparation in this area.

Institutions of higher education can help fill this gap by seeing that prospective teachers, counselors and others have opportunities to develop the knowledge and skills to work with families and the community, tap community assets to support student learning, and understand how the school can be a resource to families and the community. *Standards for What Principals Should Know and Be Able to Do* (National Association of Elementary School Principals, 2001) and the *Interstate State School Leadership Consortium: Standards for School Leaders* (Council of Chief State School Officers, 1996) include specific references to developing knowledge and skills in these areas, but they continue to receive short shrift.

Superintendents and school administrators can devote more local professional development efforts to helping principals and teachers understand the assets of community and how to use the community as a resource for learning.

❖ **Integrate in-school and after-school learning experiences.** After-school programs increase the time young people spend in safe and supportive settings, enhancing their academic skills and developing nonacademic competencies to help them succeed in school and in life. Balancing these interests and connecting both academic and nonacademic skill building to in-school learning is the key to an effective after-school program.

State education standards provide a framework for examining what children learn in school and after school. Independent groups that are deeply committed to youth development have created tools to assist local clubs in implementing activities that help students achieve at high standards a*nd* develop life skills. Others can do the same.

❖ **Draw on youth development resources and share expertise.** It is important that both in-school and after-school programs integrate the best of what we know about youth development with efforts to promote academic achievement and provide additional learning support. Dialogue among stakeholders in education, youth development and other kinds of community-based learning is essential so they understand each other's strategies and methods, focus their expertise on agreed-upon standards and competencies, and learn from one another's knowledge and experience.

School districts should include a focus on youth development when preparing personnel to work with students in school and in after-school programs. Inviting staff of youth development organizations to participate in this training will strengthen the experience for both groups. Applying the principles of youth development in schools helps to create more child- and family-friendly, culturally competent learning environments.

By the same token, youth development organizations should invite teachers and principals to participate with youth development staff in professional development opportunities focused on after-school programs. Together, they can align youth development principles and practices with standards for learning set by the school district.

Community Partnerships

❖ **Create broad-based, local coalitions to advance, develop and sustain community schools.** At the local level, a comprehensive system of community schools that links elementary, middle and high schools requires leadership

from a broad-based coalition of stakeholders. The purpose of such coalitions is to develop and promote a community school vision, mobilize resources, ensure accountability for results, keep the community informed, nurture partnerships and relationships, and build the capacity to sustain the effort.

Many collaboratives already involved in individual community schools, or working community-wide on other issues related to children and families, have the potential to move a comprehensive, communitywide strategy forward. In other instances, a new entity will be necessary.

❖ **Create site-based planning and decision-making teams.** At the building level, planning and decision-making teams that include families and residents, school staff, and community partners provide leadership for individual community schools. The purpose of such teams is to review data, assess existing programs, identify gaps in services, mobilize community resources, monitor progress toward results, and serve as a resource for parent and community engagement in the school. There is no one right way to develop these teams. In some instances, building on existing groups will work best; in others, new mechanisms will be necessary.

❖ **Engage students, parents, families and residents.** Every partner in a community school must fully support the strong involvement of students, parents, families and community residents in decisions affecting the work of the community school and in the oversight of its results. They also should help to develop parents' abilities to serve as strong advocates for their children's education, as role models for learning at home, and as leaders and participants in the programs and affairs of the community school. Leadership opportunities for young people should be incorporated in both in-school and out-of-school settings.

❖ **Focus all partners on creating the conditions for learning.** Many schools have partners. Not all of these partnerships, however, have a motivating vision and strategy to achieve the results they are seeking together. The five conditions for learning provide a useful framework for schools and their partners to think through how they can individually and collectively contribute to improved student learning and other school, family and community outcomes. If a potential partner is not able to demonstrate how their work will contribute to creating the conditions for learning, their participation — however well meant — may distract from the community school agenda.

❖ **Build sustainable partnerships.** Too often, relationships between schools and community partners are short-lived, existing only for the duration of a specific joint venture or grant. In community schools, however, partners understand they must stay the course to achieve better results. Schools, in turn, create welcoming environments that make their partners want to stay. With long-term, committed partnerships in place, it becomes easier to tap into a range of funding opportunities and to develop an attitude that says, "We're in this together."

❖ **Develop knowledge and understanding among partners and across disciplines.** Educators and their community partners should share resources to organize professional development opportunities for the staff of the community school. These experiences help partners learn about and understand one another's unique philosophies, expertise, policies and financial constraints. Partners can learn more about the school's neighborhood and constituencies through home visits, site visits to community-based organizations and tours of the area.

❖ **Create interprofessional learning opportunities in higher education.** Colleges and universities should increase both preservice and in-service

opportunities for interprofessional development across the fields of education, public health, mental health, social services, early childhood, youth development and related fields. These experiences enable people who address various areas of child and family well-being to learn about each other's disciplines as part of their ongoing professional education. Higher education institutions must sustain and deepen the promising efforts that have already been made in this direction.

Strategic Organization and Financing

❖ **Create community school coordinator positions.** A community school coordinator mobilizes and integrates school and community resources, improves the impact of these resources on student learning, and frees up the time of principals and teachers. Appointing the coordinator to the school leadership team demonstrates the importance of the role and increases its effectiveness.

A coordinator can be an employee of a community-based organization, a public agency or a school district. Regardless of who hires and supervises the position, it can be paid for by multiple agencies and funding sources. For example:

❖ **School systems** can create a coordinator's position within their personnel policies and identify the various funding streams (e.g., Title I, Middle School Safe and Drug Free Coordinators Program, 21st Century Community Learning Centers) that can be used for this purpose. Principals with discretion over funds at the school site also can also decide to use dollars for this purpose.

❖ **Community-based organizations** can finance this position through various grant programs from public or private sources.

❖ **City or county** partners may use their funds to help hire a coordinator or reposition staff to perform community school coordinator duties.

❖ **The United Way and local philanthropies** can help underwrite these positions.

❖ **Identify the lead partner for a community school with great care.** Educators, of course, are major partners in a community school, but they need not always assume the lead role.

There is a growing trend toward having a capable partner organization — for example, a child- and family-services agency, a youth development organization, a local government agency, a college or university, or a family support center — serve as the linchpin for a given community school. Working closely with the school, this lead organization is primarily responsible for mobilizing and integrating the resources of the community and the work of partners. This arrangement provides the school with an anchor in the community and enables principals and teachers to focus on teaching and learning.

In some communities, however, the school itself will be better equipped to provide the necessary leadership and coordination to create a community school. It is important to be clear about the mission of the community school and to review the assets of the schools and potential community partners before selecting an organizational approach.

❖ **Organize school district funding streams to support a community schools strategy**. School systems have access to various public and private sources that provide supports and opportunities for students and their families outside of the core instructional programs. These dollars can help subsidize after-school activities and coordinated physical and mental health services — school nurses, student assistance programs, social workers and psychological services — as well as adult education, parenting education, family involvement, violence prevention and other services. Schools also receive funds for service learning, school-to-work programs, character education and other special programs with a primarily curricular focus.

Unfortunately, when these sources are funneled through the school system's central office, they often are maintained as individual, categorical funding streams. There may be little effort at the district level to identify or coordinate complementary funds. Community school partners must work assertively to make sure that appropriate funding streams are brought together at the school site to achieve the results that the community and schools are seeking.

School districts should rethink how these programs and services are organized at both the central office and school site levels. Bundling funding opportunities that support a community school strategy can go far toward creating the conditions for learning and attaining community schools' learning goals.

✦ **Organize other public funding streams to support community schools.** Local, state and federal governments also distribute funds that can be used to help create and sustain community schools. Cities have been very active in the after-school arena, for example. Many have health and human services departments. Counties in many states have even more direct responsibility for the planning, delivery or funding of a wide array of human services. States and the federal government finance at various levels nearly every program that might be imagined at a community school.

Local, state and federal governments can modify their funding policies to better support a community schools approach by:

✦ Defining common planning requirements across agencies for all programs operating at or in connection with schools.

✦ Creating joint strategies for using funds more flexibly across programs to achieve results related to student learning.

✦ Requiring that potential grantees demonstrate how proposed services will help create the

conditions for learning and how their services will integrate with other related activities at or near the school.

For more information on how states can support community schools, please see *A Handbook for State Policymakers/Community Schools: Supporting Student Learning, Strengthening Schools, families and communities* at www. communityschools.org/handbook.pdf.

✦ **Organize private funding streams to support community schools.** The United Way, community foundations and other philanthropies support a variety of innovative services. In many instances, these organizations provide significant leadership in developing community schools. The business sector, too, provides funds, volunteers and technical support. Both for-profit and nonprofit funders have considerable ability to encourage school systems, along with local and state governments, to develop a community schools approach.

✦ **Develop joint financing strategies for school facilities.** School budgets alone may not be able to cover all the costs of creating comprehensive community school facilities. Local governments, however, can build libraries, recreation centers, health facilities, housing and other facilities as integral parts of a community school. Youth development organizations such as the Boys and Girls Clubs, YMCAs and YWCAs, and other community and human services organizations also rehabilitate and construct facilities. They have shown they are willing and able to share the costs.

Joint financing of facilities by school districts, the local government and community agencies also make it possible to keep small schools open and build new small schools. If the local government, youth development organizations, health and human services agencies, and others share the costs, small schools can educate children well and be cost-effective in terms of student results — and stewardship of public funds at the same time.

❖ **Work together for increased funding**. While more can be done to create community schools with existing resources, the present constraints on public and private funding streams, indeed the cutbacks that are occurring at various levels, cannot be overlooked. The cross-sector leadership structures forged to support community schools have the potential to serve as a new voice for necessary funding. Leaders should advocate for increased and stable financing of the programs and services needed at a community school, and for money to knit together these services in a community school.

❖ **Create technical assistance capacity to support the development of community schools.** Nearly all the schools and communities described in this report have received technical assistance from a local, state, regional or national resource. Often private funding has supported this technical assistance. Technical assistance has been of particular value in developing relationships among a school and its community partners — organizing coalitions at the community level, establishing site teams at the school, analyzing data and measuring progress, and identifying best practices.

Despite the success of this approach, however, most technical assistance funding continues to focus on discrete, categorical programs rather than on comprehensive strategies like community schools. Policymakers should consider the advantages of coordinated approaches and develop technical assistance efforts that can better support them.

Some communities have created intermediary organizations to support community schools. An intermediary is an organization chosen by a school and its community partners to offer technical assistance in developing the four key elements of a community school strategy.

Typically, an intermediary works with a cross-sector coalition or commission that brings together an array of community stakeholders seeking to create multiple community schools. Intermediary functions can be carried out by local governments, a school district or an independent nonprofit organization. Various arrangements will work as long as there is a commitment to shared leadership and a shared vision among partners.

An Action Agenda

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