Supporting Community Schools

What is a “Community School?” As defined by the Coalition for Community Schools, a community school is a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. When fully implemented, the school becomes the hub of the neighborhood and the access point to services that are tailored specifically to meet child, parent, family and community needs.

By seamlessly and strategically integrating strong academics with housing, health, and other community supports, student learning improves, families become stronger, and communities become healthier, more desirable places to live and learn. A Community School is not a program or initiative. Rather, it is a strategy, a framework, and a way of thinking. Core elements include:

✓ Rigorous Instruction & High Expectations
✓ Aligned Extended Learning Time
✓ Early Childhood Education
✓ Parent and Family Engagement
✓ Adult Education and Workforce Development
✓ Health and Mental Health Services
✓ Social Services
✓ Youth Development

How does CCSI support Community Schools? CCSI is working closely with School 17 in their continued implementation of the community school model, providing the essential structural (or “backbone”) supports needed to help them to achieve their goals. Specific CCSI supports are driven by the school’s priorities and implementation plans. Here are some highlights:

Enrico Fermi School 17 has been working to transition to a community school model for nearly two years. Early priorities have included enhancing trauma informed practices, moving toward a longer school day and year, summer learning, project-based learning, dual language enrichment program, restorative practices, strengthening relationships with parents and families, improving communication and coordination with 50+ school partners, and ensuring highly engaging instruction. CCSI partners with School 17 to provide the support needed for successful implementation, including:

• A full-time, on-site Community Schools Coordinator who partners with the principal to coordinate all the non-academic components of the Community School initiative, including communication with a broad array of stakeholders, developing the structures to enhance and sustain on-site services and supports, and facilitating linkages for case-specific needs
• Staff support for the school’s Community Engagement Team and its 7 active workgroups, which bring together school-based staff, parents and community partners to develop strategies to identify assets and address needs in priority areas including adult education/ workforce development, health and wellness, social services, parent/family engagement, community engagement, youth development, and early childhood education
• Specialized training / implementation support to strengthen practice in key areas such as trauma responsiveness and identifying community assets, strengths and resources

Performance Targets & Outcomes: As a school in receivership, School 17 must meet specific performance targets related to both safety and academic performance. In 2018, School 17 showed improvement on 83% of their metrics for NYSED, pulling them out of receivership for the 2019/20 school year. The demonstratable improvement in performance metrics were in multiple categories. For example, students attended school more consistently with a 33% reduction in chronically absent students from the last school year. The school is also safer with Restorative Practices, a Multi-Tiered System of Support for Academics, and SEL Responsive Classrooms; the number of serious incidents decreased by 44%. Academic performance improved in multiple ELA and Math metrics.

Support for CCSI’s work at School 17 is provided by the Rochester City School District and the Farash Foundation.
John James Audubon School #33 is moving into its first year of implementation of the Community School model. Early priorities have included:

• Improving communication and coordination of current school and community partner services
• Building new relationships with community organizations to strengthen the community school model
• Working with parents and families as partners in their children’s education
• Enhancing culturally responsive education practices
• Supporting consistent student attendance at school
• Focusing on the health of the whole child
• Ensuring high quality, rigorous academics

CCSI and Connected Communities partner with School 33 to provide support needed for successful implementation, including:

• A full-time, on-site Community Schools Coordinator who partners with the Administrative Team to coordinate all the non-academic components of the Community School initiative.
• Staff support for the school’s Community Engagement Team and its 5 active workgroups which bring together school-based staff, parents and community partners to develop strategies to identify assets and address needs in priority areas including: family and community engagement, whole child health, curricular practices, attendance, and data monitoring.
• Specialized training/implementation support to strengthen practice in key areas such as cultural competency, trauma responsiveness and social emotional learning, and identifying community assets, strengths and resources.

Performance Targets & Outcomes: As a school in receivership, School 33 must meet specific performance targets related to academic performance, attendance, family and community engagement, extended learning time and the community school model.

Support for the Community School work at School 33 is provided by Connected Communities and the Konar Foundation.

How Can I Learn More About Community Schools or Make My School a Community School? Contact Elizabeth Meeker, PsyD, Vice President, Consulting Services, at emeeker@ccsi.org.