



# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## TRANSFORMING PUBLIC EDUCATION

### WHAT IS A COMMUNITY SCHOOL?

Community schools are **collaboratively imagined** and **democratically run** public schools designed to meet the unique needs of local students. Through authentic governance structures and a bottom-up approach, educators, students, parents and community organizations utilize a model of shared decision making to provide academic, emotional and community support for student success.

No two community schools are alike because a community school is **designed to address the unique needs of its students** and neighborhood using the assets of its community.

California's historic investment in an educational model aimed at **disrupting poverty** and **addressing racial, economic and other inequities** could not be more timely as our students grapple with these and other issues that impact their academic, social and emotional health.



### WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN CA?

While the concept of community schools has been around since the turn of the last century, the movement to create these centers of transformative change got a huge boost in 2019 when United Teachers Los Angeles (UTLA) members included community schools in their demands during their historic strike. They secured funding for 30 community schools through the Unified Community Schools Initiative.

Since then, multiple local chapters of the California Teachers Association have been working with school districts throughout the state to build and strengthen community schools, in urban and rural areas, as well as large and small communities.

**"Community schools offer a safe space to students that feel lost in a world where there are still major systems of oppression. Students of color need a place where all their identities and complex experiences are celebrated."**

- DIANA MATIAS CARILLO, 11TH GRADER IN OAKLAND, CA, ABOUT WHAT STUDENTS, PARTICULARLY STUDENTS OF COLOR, GAIN FROM COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

## HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN CA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Through the California Department of Education's California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP), community schools are receiving a nation-leading \$4 billion in state funding, as well as \$443 million from the federal government and \$3 million from NEA Community Advocacy and Partnership Engagement Grants, to help school districts build and transition to community schools.

The goal is to transition every school where 80% or more of students live in poverty into a community school over the next five years. It's estimated that this historic investment could result in one-third of California's 10,600 public schools becoming community schools.

Investments in community schools are cost-effective. Studies find that every \$1 invested in a community schools strategy results in up to a \$15 return to the community. Amendments to the CCSPP in the 2022 California State Budget stated explicitly that "these funds shall not be used for punitive disciplinary practices or the engagement of campus law enforcement."

As of Spring 2023, CCSPP has awarded a total of 419 planning grants to local educational agencies (LEAs) and 76 implementation grants to LEAs that support 458 school sites, 447 of which have an unduplicated student count (English learners, eligible for a free/reduced-price meals, or foster youth) of over 80%.

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## DO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS WORK?

Community schools have had remarkable outcomes. A recent Learning Policy: Institute report shows that community schools:

- Increase student achievement and raise enrollment and attendance rates.
- Increase the number of students who go on to college.
- Decrease the achievement gap, the dropout rate and chronic absenteeism.

For more information, read "Building the Heart and Hub" in the October/November 2021 California Educator magazine. Scan the QR code below.



**"This is why I got into this movement and became a teacher - to make a true difference in a powerful way. Community schools are a chance to do this."**

- CT A PRESIDENT DAVID B. GOLDBERG