

The Power of Community Schools:

The 2026 Update on Community Schools Research

About Community Schools

Community Schools are neighborhood hubs, uniquely designed to meet local needs.

The community schools strategy transforms a school into a place where **educators, local community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development.** As partners, they organize in- and out-of-school resources, supports, and opportunities so that young people thrive.

The Community Schools Profile:

- Serving rural, suburban, and urban communities
- Innovative in addressing key K-12 education challenges through community-level change in:
 - Student Attendance
 - Student Achievement
 - Family Engagement

The Impact

Research shows that students in Community Schools:

-  Achieve higher academic performance
-  Demonstrate improved math and literacy proficiency
-  Graduate in increased rates
-  Increased student attendance



For every dollar spent, there is a \$15 return on investment

What Community Schools Do:

-  Cultivate a student-centered school culture, creating environments where all students can learn
-  Provide afterschool programs and college and career readiness
-  Coordinators create and sustain school-community partnerships to support youth, and to connect families and communities



Evidence of the Community Schools Impact

Improved Student Attendance & Engagement

- Community schools have significantly reduced chronic absenteeism across 39 states, and across urban, suburban, and rural areas ([Germain et al., 2024](#)).

Higher Academic Achievement

- Schools implementing the Community School strategy in New York City report higher math and literacy scores, with some schools seeing double-digit gains in proficiency due to extended learning time, tutoring, and wraparound supports ([Covelli et al., 2025](#)).

Increase in Graduation Rates

- Community Schools better support students; resulting in rising graduation rates. In Oakland, California, graduation rates rose from 59% to 73% in 2019 thanks to the Full-Service Community Schools Grant. ([Klevan et al., 2023](#)).

Stronger Family Engagement

- Community Schools strengthen family-school relationships, using methods such as home visits, parent engagement workshops, and community resource hubs. Increasing family participation in education leads to better student outcomes ([Provinzano & Mayger, 2022](#)).

Increasing Student Connection

- In California, Community Schools yielded a 15% reduction in average suspension rates, a change directly linked to Community Schools focus on increasing student connection and supports ([Swain et al., 2025](#)).

High Return on Investment (ROI)

- There is a high return on investment for Community Schools, with a \$15 return on investment for every \$1 invested ([Bowden et al., 2017](#)).

Community Schools Clearinghouse

Visit the Coalition's Research Practice Network Clearinghouse of over 600+ pieces of research on Community Schools and access over 40 webinars on timely topics such as:

- Community Schools' Impact on Student Outcomes
- Connecting Learning to Career
- Preparing and Supporting Educators in Community Schools

The Values of Community Schools

Community Schools are an evidence-based strategy.

Learn about the 6 Community Schools Essentials and relevant research below.

Integrated Systems of Support

North Carolina

Partnering with universities across the state, Community Schools in North Carolina created sustainable support networks allowing vertical integration of resources and service providers on the site and statewide level (Dunston et al., 2026).

Powerful Student and Family Engagement

New York

Families and students at Deposit Elementary Schoolin upstate New York attended quarterly Parent Cafes and participated in over 500 home visits, leading to improved student outcomes and a plan to expand and improve family engagement practices (Anderson-Butcher et al., 2025)

Collaborative Leadership, Shared Power & Voice

Vermont

Five rural Community Schools in Vermont engaged in frequent collaboration with staff, families, and community partners during their model implementation. Including diverse stakeholders resulted in successful and strong buy-in by both the school and the communities (Knox et.al, 2025).

Expanded & Enriched Learning Opportunities

California

The West Kern Consortium's Community Schools initiative in rural California successfully implemented and sustained programs and services leading to academic improvements year-over-year (Maier, 2024).

Culture of Belonging, Safety, & Care

Maryland

Teachers Benjamin Franklin High School in Maryland restructured their curriculum to allow students to learn key concepts while also addressing issues impacting their community. Student were able to engage in project-based learning that led to better social outcomes for community members (Shiller, 2025).

Rigorous, Community-connected Classroom Instruction

Oklahoma

Union Public School District in Tulsa, Oklahoma, established over 100 partnerships with corporate, nonprofit, and faith-based organizations, strengthening student supports like after-school programs, mentoring, and health services (Hartzler, 2022).