

The H.W. Wilson Company/WilsonWeb

AUTHOR: Joy Dryfoos

TITLE: The Rise of the Full-Service Community School

SOURCE: High School Magazine 6 no2 38-42 O '98

The magazine publisher is the copyright holder of this article and it is reproduced with permission. Further reproduction of this article in violation of the copyright is prohibited.

The idea of a community school is not new, but recent years have seen a proliferation of them unmatched in history. The many faces of these one-stop support service facilities are still evolving, and challenges to their development have already begun to emerge.

THE PHRASE "COMMUNITY SCHOOL" HAS BEEN AROUND for years, rooted in early progressive thinking about reforming social institutions, reflecting the ideas of John Dewey and Jane Addams. The Mott Foundation began supporting the concept of community schools in 1935, with the "lighted school house" in Flint, Mich. At one time or another, more than 10,000 schools have offered extended-hour learning, recreation, and social activities in schools under the auspices of local education authorities.

Right now, new variations of full-service community schools--schools that integrate the delivery of quality education with health and social services required by the children and families in the neighborhood--are popping up all over the country, promulgated by youth advocates, community agencies, foundations, state governments and, most recently, through federal initiatives. Schools and community agencies form partnerships to provide seamless "one-stop" environments. Schools are open extended hours, on weekends, and during the summer as safe havens for youth development and community use. No two are alike, but they all have in common the provision of services in a school building by a non-school agency.

Models of full-service community schools are being replicated throughout the country at a rapid pace, making it difficult to account for the many emerging examples.

(See sidebar page 41.) We do know that at least 1,000 schools now have primary health centers. More than 2,000 schools competed for about 400 grants for 21st Century Community Learning Centers that open up facilities after school hours. Dewitt Wallace-Reader's Digest Funds' "extended-services school" initiative is supporting community school development in 70 new sites. At least 60 universities have received federal grants to work in community partnerships, with a focus on schools.

EVALUATING THEIR SUCCESS

With so much interest in establishing community schools, agencies are confident in their potential for improving outcomes. Research on outcomes is at an early stage, with at least 16 major evaluations currently under way related to all the different models, but experience so far suggests that full-service community schools, and the various "add-on" models, can make a difference in outcomes.

Early returns show that in both the Children's Aid Society and the University of Pennsylvania--assisted schools, achievement, attendance, and discipline improved, compared to similar schools. In Marshalltown, Iowa, frequent users of school-based Caring Connection (comprehensive services from 20 different agencies) were much less

likely to drop out. In many of these programs, the highest risk youth are the most likely to use the services, especially where intensive individual attention is the focus. Satisfaction surveys record positive reactions on the part of the students, parents, teachers, and school administrators.

ISSUES IN FURTHER DEVELOPMENT

The creation of a full-service community school ideally grows out of intensive planning involving school personnel, community agencies, youth advocates, businesses, parents, and often the students themselves. Documentation of emerging experience highlights several key issues that must be addressed:

Governance. The more complex the school-community partnership model, the more demanding the administrative arrangements. The mounting rhetoric calls for sophisticated collaborative organizations, whereby school systems and community agencies leave behind their parochial loyalties and pitch in to form a new kind of union. In reality, most of the emerging models have one designated lead agency. If it is the school system, as in Iowa, it dispenses the state grant and local designated funds to a whole array of public and voluntary agencies through contractual relationships. In other places, as in New Jersey, community agencies may be direct state grantees and enter schools through a memorandum of agreement.

An early evaluation of New Beginnings in San Diego, an innovative multi-agency-operated family resource center in a school, warned that it is difficult to overestimate the amount of time collaboration takes. The participants discovered that it was easier to get agencies to make "deals" (sign contracts to relocate workers) than to achieve major changes in delivery systems. Staff turnover, family mobility, fiscal problems, and personality issues were cited as some of the barriers to change.

Staffing and Training. In all models of school-based services, the principal is the prime facilitator. If the goal is to provide both quality education and intensive support services, however, a full-service community school requires the attention of a full-time coordinator. Ideally, this person acts as a partner to the school principal, taking care of administering a program that typically runs in the non-school hours, from early in the morning, through after-school, and into the evenings. In the Children's Aid Society and Beacon models, the coordinator is an employee of the community agency while in some school systems in Missouri, and in Birmingham, Ala., the community school coordinator works for the school system.

The mounting interest in school-community partnerships is reflected in the call for more cross-disciplinary training of teachers, and health, mental health, and social workers. Everyone who works in community schools should be exposed to contemporary youth development concepts and be able to work with diverse cultural and racial groups.

Turf. Bringing a whole new team of workers into a school can be very threatening to the personnel who work there. Traditional school nurses have felt displaced by nurse practitioners who conduct physical examinations, dispense medications, and do counseling. School social workers, psychologists, and guidance counselors wonder why the school system doesn't just hire more of them instead of allowing outsiders to be relocated into the school building. Teachers resent children being called out of classrooms for medical appointments or group counseling sessions.

The principal is the key to fostering collaborative relationships, first through careful and inclusive planning, and second, through sustained communication throughout the

building. Although the initial reaction to change may be negative, experience shows that, within a short period of time, the school staff perceives the positive transformation in the school climate and enjoys having more time to concentrate on teaching.

Controversy. Not everyone agrees that public schools should become the sites for the delivery of health and social services. When school-based clinics first came on the scene, local battles ensued about whether the clinic would encourage sexual activity and promote abortions. A similar reaction was stirred in some communities in regard to mental health services, with the fear that the schools were stepping on parental rights. These tensions abated in light of the overwhelming support and approval of the concept by parents.

In some cases, school systems were reluctant to allow community-based organizations to come into their buildings. Michelle Cahill, of the Fund for the City of New York, recounted how when New York's after-school Beacons first started, some schools were resistant and didn't want anyone else on their premises. Now, almost a decade later, "No one doesn't want a Beacon."

Perhaps the largest remaining area of resistance is among community activists who distrust schools and prefer to see the development of what they believe are truly "community-based" programs on their own turf. This challenge is being met by the organization of community advisory boards for most of the community school prototypes.

Facilities. Much of the activity around community schools is centered in disadvantaged neighborhoods with decrepit schools. The buildings are already overcrowded, making it difficult to find space for clinics, family resource rooms, and child care facilities. In a few schools, the space situation prevents the development of support services. In places where a motivated principal encourages the program to come in, however, space is eventually carved out of closets, cafeterias, and mobile units. When the school is finally repaired, or a new school is built, space for support services receives high priority.

Transportation. Students and some of their families must rely on school buses to utilize services during extended school hours. In communities that lack resources, service providers may have to travel some distance. But school buses can certainly be rescheduled both to bring parents and practitioners to school sites, and to deliver children home at later times. After all, school systems even in rural areas provide transportation for football players, band members, and cheerleaders during evenings, weekends, or anytime there is a big game. Planning for transportation is part of the complex process of putting all the pieces together.

Funding. The first principle of full-service community schools is shared funding resources. School systems should certainly not be taxed with financial burdens for child and family support services when so many other resources already exist. School-based health and family resource centers can be supported through Maternal and Child Health funds, Medicaid, Community Mental Health Centers, and social services. Students can access centers through managed care plans and new child health insurance programs. After-school activities can be provided by local youth development agencies with new funding through the U.S. Department of Education's 21st Century Learning Centers initiative, juvenile justice, substance abuse prevention, and other sources.

The big gap in funding is for the infrastructure that pulls all these activities together. An administrator must be available to identify resources, write proposals, monitor

program activities, supervise the staff, and make sure the pieces work as a comprehensive, integrated package. How does a system fund a community school coordinator? The answer may lie in the Elementary and Secondary School Act, which allows 5 percent of the funds for school systems with disadvantaged students to be used for coordinated services (Title XI). Although this concept was introduced several years ago, few school systems have taken advantage of it.

THE FUTURE OF FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

All over the country, you can find people who believe that school reform will not succeed without addressing human problems, and human problems cannot be solved without upgrading the quality of education. A consensus is arising that the concept of community schools offers a workable solution to an array of interrelated problems--deteriorating schools, troubled children, overburdened families, risky communities, and fragmented service systems.

Advocates are working to create national visibility for these innovative school-community models through the formation of an "Emerging Coalition for Community Schools." We recognize that when a community school is created at the local level, the first order of business is to form a planning committee made up of all the interested potential partners. Now we need to do the same thing across the country. Educators, social service agencies, youth development and advocacy programs, human resource organizations, universities, foundations, public administration groups, businesspeople and, most of all, legislators must be drawn together in a movement to broadly replicate community schools. It is time to turn a good idea into an ongoing sustained effort with national reach and implications.

ADDED MATERIAL

Joy Dryfoos (jdryf65322@aol.com) is an independent researcher and writer, supported by the Carnegie Corporation. She is the author of *Safe Passage: Making It Through Adolescence in a Risky Society* (Oxford University Press, 1998), and *Full-Service Schools: A Revolution in Health and Social Services for Children, Youth, and Families* (Jossey-Bass, 1994).

THE MANY FACES OF THE FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOL

There is no single model for full-service community schools, as agencies and other organizations develop programs to meet the needs of the particular community. Among the many efforts now taking place in schools are:

SCHOOL-BASED PRIMARY HEALTH CENTERS

Health and mental health personnel from community agencies organize clinics.

BEACONS

Community-based agencies provide after-school youth development and family programs.

BRIDGES TO SUCCESS

United Way supports provision of youth services in schools.

CARING COMMUNITIES

Missouri's model pools state funds for integrating school-based services.

COMMUNITIES-IN-SCHOOLS

Local organizations relocate social workers and case managers into schools.

SCHOOL-BASED YOUTH CENTERS

Missouri and New Jersey models for prevention of high-risk behaviors bring community services into schools. California's Healthy Start focuses more on health services. Kentucky's version uses school sites for referral and coordination.

SCHOOL-BASED FAMILY CENTERS

States support provision of family services, child care, and parent education in designated spaces in school.

FULL-SERVICE SCHOOLS

Florida's model relocates public health and social services into schools.

COMPREHENSIVE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

The latest version of community schools digs deeper into transforming the educational components in the school and integrating them with the delivery of support services for children and families along with community development.

CHILDREN'S AID SOCIETY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

reorganize the academic program, and intergrate it with after-school enrichment; contain family resource centers, health centers, and parent education; and build on partnerships between school systems and community organizations.

UNIVERSITY-ASSISTED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

reorganize the academic program in collaboration with university faculty members and students, modeled on the example of the University of Pennsylvania. These schools have after-school enrichment, and focus on community development.

COZI

puts together James Comer's Social Development Program (parent involvement, mental health teams, school climate change) with Edward Zigler's Schools of the 21st Century (child care and family support).

--JD

THE MOTIVES BEHIND THE MOVEMENT

Why are so many people in different parts of the country coming together to create different kinds of full-service community schools? These efforts reflect the convergence of significant social movements of our time.

Preparing children to learn. The domain of education is extended back to age zero, as many school systems begin to get engaged with programs like Parents as Teachers that send home visitors into families with newborns.

Moving families off welfare. These parents often need to go back to school and, at the same time, look to schools for child care not only for young children but also for after-

school activities for middle and high school students.

Involving families. All families are increasingly vulnerable, facing daunting economic and social barriers. School-based programs can offer what these families need (much more than PTA programs on adolescent psychology): English as a Second Language; computer training; GED; help with employment, immigration, and other pressing problems.

Preventing high-risk behaviors. Everywhere communities express concern about the vulnerabilities of youth resulting from drugs, violence, abuse, and early sexual acting out. In recent months, the consequence of access to guns has been dramatized by repeated murders in schools. A few school-based programs have proven to decrease risky behaviors; the addition to the school personnel roster of well-trained primary health and mental health workers has become a necessity.

Enhancing educational reform. The school systems by themselves cannot deal with the problems of children, youth, and their families and, at the same time, retool to compete in a new technological world that requires more rigor and discipline. As Phillip Coltoff, head of the Children's Aid Society puts it, "We need to change our concept of what school reform entails--to create models that enhance academic performance by recognizing the realities that keep children from learning."

Sharing the cost. Local education agencies welcome partnerships with community agencies that lift some of the burden from their shoulders and bring in new financial resources to sweeten the pot. The business-oriented Committee for Economic Development (CED) maintains that schools are not social service institutions and should not be asked to solve the nation's social ills and cultural conflicts. Nevertheless, CED supports the placement of social services in schools, delivered through schools, but under no circumstances funded by educational systems.

Integrating services. Although many programs have been created to deal with problems in the community in the past, they are fragmented and have not achieved the goals of helping families become more supportive or young people become more responsible. The need for integrated, unfragmented, decategorized programs is indisputable.

Connecting these movements provides the rationale for full-service community schools. Schools are where most young people can be found. Schools are where most of the families can establish contact with the people who educate their children and where they can obtain the help they need to be effective parents. The theory is that if we could produce quality education at one site along with access to requisite health, mental health, social, and cultural services for children and families, both educational and psycho-social outcomes should improve.

--JD

FOR MORE INFORMATION

Emerging Coalition for Community Schools
Institute for Educational Leadership
1001 Connecticut Avenue NW Suite 310
Washington DC 20036
Children's Aid Society
Technical Assistance Center
Intermediate School IS218
4600 Broadway

New York 10040
WEPIC (University of Pennsylvania)
3440 Market Street Suite 440
Philadelphia PA 19104-3325