

Great Public Schools  
for Every Student

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May 7, 2018

## **MEMORANDUM**

**TO:** Delegates to the 2018 NEA Representative Assembly

**FROM:** Lily Eskelsen García

**RE:** NEA Policy Statement on Community Schools

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At its May 2018 meeting, the NEA Board of Directors voted to approve submission to the Representative Assembly of a new Policy Statement on Community Schools. The delegates to the 2018 Representative Assembly will be asked to vote on this Policy Statement.

In order to provide context for the vote, I have attached the Report of the Community Schools Task Force. The proposed Policy Statement is Section VII in the report, and is also included in the blue Policy Statement booklet in your delegate mailing.

I encourage you to read the statement and the report carefully.

Attachments:

Report of the Community Schools Task Force



THE CONCEPTION OF OUR SCHOOLS  
AS SOCIAL CENTER IS BORN OF OUR  
ENTIRE DEMOCRATIC MOVEMENT

–JOHN DEWEY

# Community Schools Task Force

Report to the NEA Board of  
Directors — 2017 NBI 13

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

At the 2017 Representative Assembly, NEA adopted NBI-13, which called on the Board of Directors (BOD) to consider a new policy statement on public community schools. The Community Schools Task Force members, recommended by the NEA President and approved by the BOD, spent the months after the 2017 RA exploring the charge:

**To review the current landscape and NEA’s positions or policies on community schools in the context of our mission and bring any recommended changes or a proposed policy statement to the NEA Board of Directors at its May 2018 meeting.**

With each new administration, whether at the national, state, or local level, the education narrative is about school improvement. And, often with the best of intentions, policy is set and implemented that tinkers around the edges. Policymakers identify several potential issues, often based on questionable data, and because of the lack of time, resources, or capacity, decide to implement

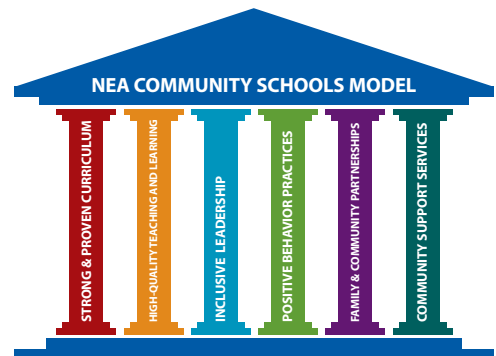
We embrace the child, the family, the community and all that they bring.

– Texas School Board Member

improvement strategies that fail to tackle the systemic issues that plague our schools and communities. Third grade reading scores are low, so additional professional learning is mandated for teachers. A school has low attendance, so policies are adopted that punish parents.<sup>1</sup> Research

and experience tells us that we cannot improve the myriad issues that plague our communities and schools one at a time. These issues are intertwined and connected:

- Students may come to school with untreated medical and psychological problems that interfere with their ability to learn.
- Some students struggle with hunger and malnutrition.
- Many students attend schools with limited resources and have little to no opportunity to receive tutoring or engage in academic enrichment after school.
- Professional learning for educators is often out of context and can lack a strong link to the content being taught in the classroom.
- Harmful discipline practices lead to serious disparities between racial groups and contribute to the school to prison pipeline.
- School leadership is often top down with little room for educator voices or input from families and communities.



<sup>1</sup> Goldstein, D. (2015). Inexcusable absences. *The New Republic*. Retrieved from <https://newrepublic.com/article/121186/truancy-laws-unfairly-attack-poor-children-and-parents>.

These issues and others must be considered within a systemic framework of support and improvement.

The Task Force analyzed current research; examined national, state, and local affiliate practices and policies; and consulted with education experts to identify six pillars that support the creation of successful public community schools that are both community based and democratically controlled.

The work of the Task Force was grounded in the NEA's mission, vision, and core values. And, while the broader education narrative generally centers narrowly on improving struggling public schools, NEA's leaders and members have expanded the conversation to providing great public schools for all students. While some in the education community have limited the use of the Community Schools Model (CSM) to struggling schools, the Task Force believes that all schools can benefit from the six pillars.

The Task Force recommends that the NEA Board of Directors recommend to the 2018 Representative Assembly that the policy statement (Section VII of this report) be adopted and that a coordinated plan be designed and implemented to support community schools with the purpose of providing a free, quality public education for all students. The community schools plan will reflect NEA's mission to provide a great public school for all students by:

- Supporting NEA and its affiliates as leaders and partners in the work with stakeholders, and
- Aligning all activities with the Charter School Implementation Plan; the *My School, My Voice* campaign; and the awareness and advocacy strategies that are designed to secure racial justice in education.



## I. The Task Force, Its Charge and Its Work

At the center of the Task Force’s work was a commitment to examine what school policies, components, and supports are needed so students and their families—especially in communities that are most vulnerable—can grow and thrive. The community school model is comprehensive in scope and supports key aspects of a student’s life that affects their ability to learn and grow. The breadth of the community school model required the Task Force to investigate, analyze, synthesize, and reflect on policies, programs, and resources, both internally within NEA and its affiliates and externally (i.e., school districts, foundations, organizations, and school boards).

In face-to-face and virtual meetings, the Task Force organized their work to center around a number of essential questions:

1. What is a community school?
2. What do we believe, and what do we know about community schools?
3. What does research tell us about community schools, i.e., best practices?
4. What NEA policies are already in place, and are they sufficient?
5. How do NEA affiliates, partners, and the education field approach community schools?
6. Is the Community Schools Model a means for NEA to realize its mission, vision, and core values?

A [community school is a] school that involves community. We have activities for not just students, but for people in the community as well.

– New Mexico middle school student

NEA has a long history of supporting policies and programs that work to provide a great public school for all students. This work is reflected in a number of policy documents that guide leaders and members as they make decisions. As the Task Force moved to complete its charge, they examined policy documents and reports that might impact the support of the Community Schools Model and inform their deliberations.

- **Policy Statements** – *Charter Schools, Discipline and the School-to-Prison Pipeline, Teacher Evaluation and Accountability, and Kindergarten and Prekindergarten*
- **Legislative Program** – outlines NEA support for student learning, growth and development, child care and early childhood education development, parental involvement, youth development, safe schools, education employee professional development, and children’s health (school nurses, children’s safety, children’s nutrition)
- **Resolutions** – summarizes leaders’ and members’ beliefs on curriculum, teaching, leadership, behavior, family, community engagement, and wraparound services
- **Reports** – *NEA ESP Professional Growth Continuum, A New Vision for Student Success: A Report from NEA’s Accountability Task Force, Great Public Schools (GPS) Indicator’s Framework, Education Support Professionals: Meeting the Needs of the Whole Student, and [Great Teaching and Learning: Creating the Culture to Support Professional Excellence.](#)*

In addition, the Task Force heard from experts in the field representing the Coalition for Community Schools, students impacted by the implementation of community schools, and experts from the foundation world. NEA staff from Education Support Professional Quality (ESPQ), Teacher Quality (TQ), Education Policy and Practice (EPP), Human and Civil Rights (HCR), Community Advocacy and Partnership Engagement (CAPE), Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy (CBMA), and the Center for Organizing (C4O) offered their expertise to the Task Force.

## II. Community Schools – A Public School Model to Support Students and their Families

The Community Schools Model is based on the work in Chicago immigrant communities in the late 1800s. In a picture reminiscent of the current reality, there was a lack of resources to support recent immigrant families, and many of their children were living in poverty. Jane Addams, known as the “mother of social work” and the first American woman to receive the Nobel Peace Prize, cofounded a settlement house that provided support for families that was based on her theory that social ills are interconnected and must be approached holistically.<sup>2</sup> John Dewey adapted Addams’ ideas and placed them within the school structure. In his 1902 article titled, “The School as Social Center,” Dewey argued that “...it was the community’s role to organize to attain the services they needed.”<sup>3</sup> Throughout the Depression and through World War II, communities started supporting wraparound services in schools, and in many places the community began to see the school as a place to interact with art and music. Often the impetus for these programs was poverty. Policymakers (President Johnson’s Great Society initiative—Elementary and Secondary Education Act) began to realize that students who came to school without their basic needs met might not be as successful as their peers who were healthy and fed.

NEA and its leaders and members in public schools across the country, have joined with families, communities, school districts, and other key partners, to implement a powerful tool to achieve “the promise of public education to prepare every student to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world.” Community schools provide not only tremendous opportunities for learning and success for students, but also offer hope, opportunity, and transformation to entire communities.

### A. Community School Philosophy

Over 60 years of policy battles and court challenges since *Brown v Board of Education* (1954) have failed to overcome the vast inequities in educational funding, resources, and school conditions. Overcoming the systemic racial injustice and social inequities that face both school children and our members each day is a compelling reason to embrace community schools, providing a genuine avenue to our vision of a great public school for every child and our calling to achieve social justice. Community schools are a model worth investigating and investing in.

Faithfully implementing community schools in accordance with NEA’s *Six Pillars of Community Schools* (2016) is crucial to achieving genuine transformation and not merely attaching a hopeful label to a facade of change. For instance, NEA realizes that its members, through their associations, must be full partners, working alongside each of the stakeholders, to create great schools—community schools. While the meaning of each of these pillars will be discussed in some depth later in this report, they are briefly:

- A strong and proven culturally relevant curriculum
- High-quality teaching and learning
- Inclusive leadership
- Positive behavior practices (including restorative justice)
- Family and community partnerships
- Coordinated and integrated wrap-around supports (Community support services)

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<sup>2</sup> Adams, J. (1910/1930). *Twenty Years at Hull House*. New York: McMillan Co.

<sup>3</sup> Dewey, J. (1902). *The School as Social Center*. *The Elementary School Teacher*. Vol. 3. 73-86.

The Community Schools Model, operating in a context in which all six pillars are present, can act as a fundamental engine for the kind of success our students, NEA members, families, and other stakeholders all need. In community schools, as in all schools, teaching and learning takes place, but with a focus on the whole child—an integrated focus. The community school model provides every student with a well-rounded curriculum that will nurture their natural curiosity, imagination, and desire to learn. Community partners collaborate with school personnel to make sure that resources and programs to support, encourage, and inspire students at every level are available. Schools that embrace the six pillars provide music and art lessons; teachers who are certified to teach physics, English, Spanish, and calculus; counselors to support students’ social and emotional well-being; caring and supportive staff who welcome families into the school; theater class; girls’ volleyball; well-equipped science labs; classes that offer college credit; debate; robotics; and foreign languages. The decisions on how the school operates are based on the needs of students and their families. Education Support Professionals (ESP), teachers, specialized instructional school personnel, administrators, and community and family members serve on leadership teams to make sure that every school provides what students and families need.

[Because of] community schools [I am] able to focus more on academics with students

– Minnesota educator

Embracing and recognizing the worth of each person is at the heart of NEA’s goal to destroy the school-to-prison pipeline, a structure created by the inequities caused by structural and institutional racism.<sup>4</sup> In too many schools, harmful discipline practices remove disproportionate numbers of students of color from the classroom, denying them the opportunity to learn. The community school model supports the use of positive behavioral supports and restorative practices to foster a healthy school climate and to move away from zero-tolerance discipline policies that overemphasize suspension and expulsion.

It is the Association’s role to serve as a crucial partner to leverage and achieve the successful creation, implementation, and continued growth and improvement of each community school. NEA can provide a tremendous tool to ensure that quality working conditions are extended to all educators through fair and equitable contracts, memorandums of understanding, locally agreed upon policies and practices, and through mutually developed and implemented processes for educator professional growth and evaluation. The Association helps to ensure that the school culture values both professional autonomy, professional collaboration, and collective accountability. The individual autonomy for educators and students works in harmony with the collaboration of the Association working with other stakeholders to achieve dramatic student success, professional excellence, and racial and social justice transformation.<sup>5</sup> In short, community schools come to life as the Association and all other partners unite their shared vision and passion.

Community schools provide an opportunity to transform and create an educational system worthy of our students, their families and our members who provide a great public education.

Schools will look different a decade from now. What we think it will look like is community schools. That’s our vision.

– Texas Local Association  
President

<sup>4</sup> 2017 NEA Handbook. National Education Association. Discipline and the School-to-Prison Pipeline. pp. 429-433.

<sup>5</sup> Pink, D.H. (2011). Drive: The Surprising Truth about What Motivates Us. Riverhead Books.

## B. Community Schools Definition

The Community Schools Task Force understands the need for a clear and concise definition of community schools that can be used in presentations or in brief responses to questions. At the same time, a concise definition can be misleading. Creating community schools is a complex process, not a simple product.

To arrive at a definition that fits our NEA values, the Task Force reviewed several definitions from other organizations. The first comes from the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS):

**A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities. Community schools offer a personalized curriculum that emphasizes real-world learning and community problem-solving. Schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone—all day, every day, evenings and weekends.<sup>6</sup>**

The emphasis in the CCS definition on both community partnerships and academics gives this definition its strength. Too often, community schools that fail to emphasize academics in the form of high-quality teaching and a strong curriculum also fail to achieve measurable gains in student achievement. Following this definition would help any school avoid the trap of improved student well-being without improved student learning.

[We] feel more supported when in our staff meetings we're discussing some of the partnerships in our community.

– Texas

A second definition, coming from the National Center for Community Schools (NCCS), is much briefer in comparison:

**“...a strategy for organizing the resources of the community around student success.”<sup>7</sup>**

While NCCS provides this definition from a school superintendent to capture the spirit of a community school, it acknowledges that a more accurate description would have to include the three interconnected support systems that are part of their model:

- A strong core instructional program designed to help all students meet high academic standards
- Expanded learning opportunities designed to enrich the learning environment for students and their families
- A full range of health, mental health and social services designed to promote children's well-being and remove barriers to learning

<sup>6</sup> Coalition for Community Schools. (n.d.). What is a community school? Retrieved from [http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what\\_is\\_a\\_community\\_school.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org/aboutschools/what_is_a_community_school.aspx)

<sup>7</sup> National Center for Community Schools (2011). Building community schools: A guide for action.

The U.S. Department of Education (2014), which provides funding through its Full Service Community Schools Program, defines a community school as follows:

**A full-service community school means a public elementary or secondary school that works with its local educational agency and community-based organizations, nonprofit organizations, and other public or private entities to provide a coordinated and integrated set of comprehensive academic, social, and health services that respond to the needs of its students, students' family members, and community members. In addition, a full-service community school promotes family engagement by bringing together many partners in order to offer a range of supports and opportunities for students, students' family members, and community members.<sup>8</sup>**

This definition provides a more comprehensive description of what a community school does, as well as mentioning key partners in the work of a community school, with one important element omitted: Our purpose for developing the NEA Policy Statement on community schools is to highlight NEA's belief that educators should share leadership with administrators and other stakeholders. Ideally, a definition would include that perspective.

In the recently developed "Six Pillars of Community Schools Toolkit" (2017),<sup>9</sup> NEA created its own definition, but one not developed through a collaborative process:

**A center of the community that brings together academics, health and social services, youth and community development and community engagement under one roof, leading to improved learning, stronger families, and healthier communities.**

One concern shared by most members of the Task Force is that this definition does not include the word "school." In fact, some argue that a definition must use the term "public school," while others can imagine instances in which a private school might function as a true community school.

Finally, members of the Community Schools Policy Task Force collaborated to draft a definition of their own that embodies NEA priorities and values:

**Public community schools are both places and partnerships that bring together the school and community to provide a rigorous and engaging academic experience for students, enrichment activities to help students see positive futures, and services designed to remove barriers to learning. Students engage in real-world problem solving as part of their curriculum. Community schools involve and support families and residents in the public school community, and organize the wealth of assets that all**

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<sup>8</sup> U.S. Department of Education (2014). Full Service Community Schools Program: Frequently Asked Questions. Retrieved February 9, 2018 from <https://www2.ed.gov/programs/communityschools/fscsfaq14.pdf>

<sup>9</sup> National Education Association (2017). The six pillars of community schools toolkit: NEA resource guide for educators, families & communities. Retrieved February 9, 2018 from <http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Comm%20Schools%20ToolKit-final%20digi-web-72617.pdf>

**communities have to focus on our youth and strengthen families and communities. Public schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone.**

Here the emphasis is on the idea of community schools being public schools. The concept of removing barriers to learning, which is central to the mission of every community school, is overtly stated.

This selection of definitions demonstrates how unlikely it is that a brief statement could include those elements of community schools that we know to be vital. For this reason, it is wiser to use definitions cautiously and to rely instead on the Six Pillar Model to give a fuller description of the concept.

### III. Pillars and Mechanisms

**Pillars** – As previously noted, the Community School Model advanced by NEA includes six pillars of practice. Unlike most public education models, these pillars are adaptable to the needs of an individual school’s students, staff, families, and community and pay particular attention to creating, supporting, and sustaining a culturally relevant and responsive climate. The community school model includes two pillars that are vital to NEA members, and which were made part of this model due to NEA participation in its creation. These two pillars are *high-quality teaching and learning* and *inclusive leadership*. All six pillars appear below:

**Strong and proven culturally relevant curriculum** – Educators provide a rich and varied academic program allowing students to acquire both foundational and advanced knowledge and skills in many content areas. Students learn with challenging, culturally relevant materials that address their learning needs and expand their experience. They also learn how to analyze and understand the unique experiences and perspectives of others. The curriculum embraces all content areas including the arts, second languages, and physical education. Teachers and ESP are engaged in developing effective programs for language instruction for English learners and immigrant students. These schools offer rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate. They provide learning and enrichment activities before and after the regular school day, including sports, the arts, and homework assistance. Schools address the needs of parents and families through programs such as English-as-a-Second-Language classes, GED preparation, and job training programs.

Community Schools mitigate against the harm of poverty, but it doesn’t replace high quality teaching.  
– Jeannie Oakes, Professor Emeritus UCLA

**High-quality Teaching and Learning:** Teachers are fully licensed, knowledgeable about their content, and skillful in their practice. Instructional time focuses on learning rather than testing. Individual student needs are identified and learning opportunities are designed to address them. Higher-order thinking skills are at the core of instruction so that all students acquire problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning skills. Educators work collaboratively to plan lessons, analyze student work, and adjust curriculum as required. Experienced educators work closely with novices as mentors, coaches, and “guides on the side,” sharing their knowledge and expertise. ESP members take part in professional learning experiences and are consulted and collaborate when plans to improve instruction are developed. Together, educators identify the methods and approaches that work and change those that do not meet student needs.

**Inclusive Leadership:** Leadership teams with educators, the community school coordinator, and other school staff share the responsibility of school operations with the principal. This leadership team ensures that the community school strategy remains central in the decision-making process.

**Positive Behavior Practices (including restorative justice):** Community school educators emphasize positive relationships and interactions and model these through their own behavior. Negative behaviors and truancy are acknowledged and addressed in ways that hold students accountable while showing them they are still valued members of the school community. All members of the faculty and staff are responsible for ensuring a climate where all students can learn. Restorative behavior practices such as peer mediation, community service, and post-conflict resolution help students learn from their mistakes and foster positive, healthy school climates where respect and compassion are core principles. Zero-tolerance practices leading to suspension and expulsion are avoided.

[Using positive behavioral practices] we’re keeping kids in school when they’ve made a misstep.  
– Minnesota Educator



**Family and Community Partnerships:** Families, parents, caregivers, and community members are partners in creating dynamic, flexible community schools. Their engagement is not related to a specific project or program, but is on-going and extends beyond volunteerism to roles in decision making, governance, and advocacy. Both ESP and teachers are part of developing family engagement strategies, and they are supported through professional learning opportunities. Their voices are critical to articulating and achieving the school's overall mission and goals. When families and educators work together, students are more engaged learners who earn higher grades and enroll in more challenging classes; student attendance and grade and school completion rates improve.

[Together] we agreed on a strategy we wanted to advance for the school.

– California Parent

**Coordinated and Integrated Wraparound Supports (community support services):** Community school educators recognize that students often come to school with challenges that impact their ability to learn, explore, and develop in the classroom. Because learning does not happen in isolation, community schools provide meals, health care, mental health counseling, and other services before, during, and after school. Staff members support the identification of services that children need. These wraparound services are integrated into the fabric of the school that follows the Whole Child tenets.<sup>10</sup> Connections to the community are critically important, so support services and referrals are available for families and other community members.

**Mechanisms** – Beyond a definition of community schools and the Six Pillar Model, the Task Force has identified four mechanisms that are important to the implementation of the model.

- **Community School Coordinator:** Every community school should have a community school coordinator (CSC) that plays a leadership role at the school, is a member of the school leadership team, and is a full-time staff member. The CSC has training and specialized skills that support building and managing partnerships in diverse communities, creating and coordinating an integrated network of services for students and their families, and optimizing both internal and external resources. The leadership team should consist of administrators, ESP, teachers, and other school staff, along with the CSC. All share the responsibility of school operations with the principal. This leadership team ensures that the community school strategy remains central in the decision-making process. The CSC's primary role is to facilitate a deep needs and asset assessment in collaboration with students, teachers, ESP, families, and community stakeholders to determine the root causes of problems and to determine school and community assets that can fill needs. The CSC also facilitates teams of stakeholders dedicated to solving root cause problems.
- **Needs and Asset Assessment:** The foundation for the community school model is a school-based needs and asset assessment that assesses needed academic, social, and emotional supports (including staff expertise and community supports of the school and surrounding community). The needs and asset assessment, facilitated by the CSC, is an inclusive process in which families, students, community members, partners, teachers, ESP, administrators, and other school staff define their needs and assets. Problem solving teams are established based on the needs determined in the needs and asset assessment.

[The] role of the community school coordinator is to connect students with the services to reduce academic barriers

– FRYSC Director, Kentucky

<sup>10</sup> A **whole child** approach, which ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success. ([www.wholechildeducation.org/about](http://www.wholechildeducation.org/about) and [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/150306-ESP\\_DIGIBOOK.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/150306-ESP_DIGIBOOK.pdf))



- **School Stakeholder Problem Solving Teams:** Every community school should have teams of school and community stakeholders dedicated to solving problems that are identified in the needs and asset assessment, as well as problems identified by stakeholders subsequent to the assessment. The solutions identified by the stakeholder problem solving teams change the way things are done in and outside of school hours and, at times, involve partnerships with outside organizations and individuals.
- **Community School Stakeholder/Partner Committee:** The community school stakeholder committee (CSSC) coordinates between school staff, partners (organizations, businesses, town and city service providers), and stakeholders to ensure goals are achieved and obstacles are surmounted. The CSSC, which is inclusive of families, community partners, school staff, students, the Association, and other stakeholders from the school's various constituencies, works in collaboration with the school leadership team and supports coordination across and among community schools within a school district.

Don't rush. Take your time. [Community Schools] won't happen all at once.  
 – New Mexico Middle School Student

The Six Pillars enumerate the elements of the model, and the four mechanisms identified by the Task Force provide important keys to successful implementation.

## IV. Scope and Scale: Best Practices and Lessons Learned

As the Task Force examined states, districts, and schools that are implementing the Community Schools Model, they identified best practices and lessons learned. The model is involved and can be complicated with so many stakeholders engaged in decision making. The model requires all stakeholders (Association, school staff, administrators, parents, etc.) to rethink and examine their traditional roles and expand their thinking to support new ways of acting and interacting.

NEA is involved in school improvement and community school efforts in over 50 districts. Together these districts encompass over 4 million students, more than 6500 schools, and over 225,000 educators in 22 states.

Along with our allies, NEA has studied many community schools and now has a firm understanding of the best practices that can achieve transformational results. In addition, NEA leaders, members, and their partners have spent several years testing various strategies to scale community schools that adhere to best practices. These efforts to scale community schools have taught us many valuable lessons that are key to sustaining community school efforts and ensuring best practices are followed.

- **Building Support for the Community School Strategy:** Our polling and experience tells us that our members and the general public have a hard time accurately defining community schools. Most people equate “community school” with “neighborhood schools.” Based on this understanding, the Task Force identified a three-pronged strategy to build support for community schools.
  1. Deep organizing and engagement with members and allies to learn what they love about their schools and what they feel their schools need to put them on a better path to achieving their vision. This involves surveys, focus groups, forums, and many one-on-one conversations. Without explicitly mentioning the term “community school,” one is able to more deeply learn about the key priorities of our members and other school and community stakeholders. This information galvanizes and mobilizes stakeholders to take actions to win the solutions, resources, and supports that they have identified. The community school model is a foundational solution that should be adopted at all schools, while highlighting the needs and solutions that stakeholders have vocalized.
  2. Increase the understanding of the community school model with members, school and community stakeholders, school board members, district leaders, and other relevant decision makers on a district/city/state level. Presentations on the results of best practice community schools and site visits to those schools are important tools for getting decision maker and stakeholder support.
  3. Encourage and support non-NEA organizations to demonstrate the power of the community school strategy as a tool for school improvement. Various organizations, including the Coalition for Community Schools, the Center for Popular Democracy, the Learning Policy Institute, the National Education Policy Center, and others, have produced reports that clearly articulate community schools as a powerful tool for school improvement. These reports have been especially useful with district leaders and other decision makers.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> NEA Handbook. Section A. Serve as the national voice for education public perceptions of education; A-2 Educational Opportunity for All (1969, 2014) & A-3 Excellence in Education (1983, 2004)

- Building an Education Coalition to Anchor the Community School Strategy:** All districts have many initiatives and competing priorities. Even in districts where the school board and district leadership are excited and committed to using the community school model, the Task Force found that districts often fail to launch the community school model at any schools. It takes the persistence of a coalition of stakeholder organizations—including NEA affiliates—to help ensure that the strategy is a top priority. In addition, a coalition is also important to ensure that districts adhere to best practices. Districts often veer away from best practices without strong coalitions and best practice structures in place. Finally, districts consistently experience leadership changes at the Association, school, school board, and district levels. A coalition provides a buffer against this consistent volatility. The Task Force recommends the creation of a coalition of stakeholder organizations that is coordinated and has clear goals. In addition, the Task Force recommends the coalition hire a full- or part-time staff person dedicated to coordinating the coalition and supporting the implementation of coordinated strategies. The Task Force’s research found coalitions without a person dedicated to coordinating them tend not to achieve their goals. Finally, the Task Force recommends all community school campaigns include a component with significant energy spent on engaging members and allies to learn what they love about their schools and what they feel like they need to achieve their vision.<sup>12</sup>
- Political Changes to Win Community Schools and Other School Improvement Strategies:** School improvement is a hotly contested space occupied by various interests, including those like Betsy DeVos, the Koch Brothers, and others who believe our education system should be privatized. These factions run candidates for school board and various other levels of elected offices to further their agenda. School boards are then populated with members who are not supportive of public education and support questionable school improvement policies that are harmful to students, members, and school and community stakeholders. We cannot fulfill the promise of public education for all students when school board majorities and district leadership are not supportive of our strategies. To address this reality, the Task Force urges affiliates to run grassroots and grasstop campaigns to win school board majorities. Many affiliates have used community schools to organize candidates. These majorities are very supportive of the NEA agenda and help ensure district leadership is also supportive of our agenda (e.g. Aurora, Duluth, Las Cruces, Jefferson Co., Ysleta, Los Angeles, San Francisco, San Diego). The Task Force recommends that education coalitions develop a platform based on grassroots efforts that school board members and other elected leaders must sign on if they wish to gain our support.<sup>13</sup>
- Policy on a District Level:** To properly anchor the community school strategy within a district and its schools, it is important to enact a community school policy. A policy provides clarity around best practices and documents a commitment to the strategy. A policy is also a useful tool to ensure that the community school strategy has a central place within a district’s broader strategic plan and that it is appropriately funded. The Task Force recommends

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<sup>12</sup> NEA Handbook. Section A. Serve as the national voice for education public perceptions of education; A-5. Collaborative Partnerships (2012).

<sup>13</sup> NEA Handbook. Section A. Serve as the national voice for education public perceptions of education; A-7. School Boards (1980, 2006).

that school boards pass policies that capture the overall vision and goals for community schools within the district, while including a provision to develop a stakeholder team dedicated to creating the implementation details necessary to ensure clarity. A stakeholder team better ensures that the stakeholder voice is a key part of all decisions.<sup>14</sup>

- **Provide Resources to Affiliates and Allies:** The Great Public Schools Fund, Great Public School state and local partnerships, Center for Organizing, Collective Bargaining and Member Advocacy, and Community Advocacy and Partnerships Engagement grants have been critical to affiliate efforts to help scale the community school strategy. These grants generally do not go to affiliates to supplement district funding for community school staff or activities. There are too many districts (14,000) and schools (98,000) for NEA to be able to have a wide impact by supplementing districts' costs to run community schools. Instead, the resources have been used to build the support necessary to win resources from districts, cities, counties, and beyond in recognition of the fact that our affiliates need support in building these campaigns. In other words, there is a strong desire to develop and implement community school campaigns and little existing capacity to implement the campaigns alone.<sup>15</sup> And, while NEA funding is available from a number of sources, the goal must be to continually advocate for sufficient and equitable funding.
- **Avoiding Top Down Implementation:** Many of the school improvement strategies educators experience are mandated from the top down without including getting stakeholder opinions. Districts that have scaled the community school strategy successfully have allowed local stakeholders to decide that they want to implement the strategy used at their schools. This is typically done through an application process that ensures support and tests for readiness. The Task Force recommends that districts create an application process that includes a readiness rubric to be evaluated by a district/stakeholder committee.
- **Asset Mapping and Improvement Science:** The community school strategy is designed to solve problems that previously have gone unsolved. One best practice that all high-quality community schools have in common is an ongoing needs assessment process that uncovers deep stakeholder-driven needs, as well as asset mapping and stakeholder driven problem solving. While some districts have a culture of stakeholder-driven problem solving and a clear methodology, most do not. It is important to pair the community school strategy with high-quality problem solving methodologies, supports, and improvement science tools such as those promulgated by the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching. The problem-solving structure in community schools helps to ensure that those solutions are adjusted/tweaked to work properly in each respective context. The Task Force recommends that NEA and its partners develop tools to ensure districts conduct strong needs and asset assessments.

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<sup>14</sup> NEA Handbook. Section A. Serve as the national voice for education public perceptions of education; A-7. School Boards (1980, 2006).

<sup>15</sup> NEA Handbook. Section A. Serve as the national voice for education public perceptions of education; A-5. Collaborative Partnerships (2012).

- **Community School Evaluation of Effectiveness and Promotion of Successes:** We are now in the first two years of creating and supporting new community schools that are using our model (four mechanisms, Six Pillars). This model involves constant measurements of various hypotheses of problems that have evaded solutions. While this cycle of hypothesis, measurement, and evaluation is important to the success of any community school, it is also important to conduct regular higher altitude program assessments that track the effectiveness of the entire effort. This allows for important adjustments and the deepening of commitments by implementers, policymakers, and funders. It is also important to develop an intentional communication strategy designed to lift up the successes in the media and in other offline venues, such as community forums.<sup>16</sup>
- **Community School Implementation Support:** All well-designed policies are only as good as their implementation. Association leaders and members play an important role in helping districts get started, which typically involves convening stakeholders, facilitating the writing of district level planning guides, troubleshooting, helping to design the needs and asset assessments, providing problem solving skills, and connecting new community school efforts with seasoned best practice districts. The goal is to create self-sufficient community school efforts. The Association supports the spread and scale of the community school model by convening sites that are implementing best practice versions of the community school strategy and providing opportunities to learn from each other. Another macro level support is connecting schools with best practice solutions to the needs identified by stakeholders in their needs and asset assessments. As NEA continues to scale the community school strategy, the Task Force recommends that NEA continue to play a key role in launching new community school efforts, supporting existing efforts, and convening stakeholders to provide a learning community.
- **Integrating Community School Campaigns into Existing Priorities and Moments:** Various NEA affiliates have used existing critical moments to advance the community school strategy. A growing number of affiliates use contract negotiations to secure district commitments to the community school strategy. Others have added the community school strategy into their regular lobbying and advocacy activities. The Task Force recommends that affiliates integrate their community school scaling goals into existing activities, as well as create new opportunities to win community schools.

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<sup>16</sup> NEA Handbook. Section A. Serve as the national voice for education public perceptions of education; A-4. Understanding and Support of Public Education (1969, 2014)

## V. Funding Community Schools

NEA's core values guide its work and define its mission. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.<sup>17</sup> While this value is central to NEA's responsibility to students, experts agree that the best way to improve and sustain our economy is to invest in public schools.<sup>18</sup> And, yet funding public schools in a sufficient, equitable, productive, and sustainable way continues to be a challenge.<sup>19</sup> Across the United States, schools receive varied levels of funding, which continues to widen the achievement gap between affluent students and students living in poverty.

[These are] tax dollars being wisely used on a program getting results.

– Kentucky Congressman

Logic and research tells us that supporting students and families even before they enter formal schooling, making sure that all students are prepared to learn, aligning all the services for families and students, and supporting educators to do their work leads to students making academic gains. The Task Force understands that funding community schools has a real return on investment. Adequate funding for community schools depends on school size, operational design, and the supports and services offered.<sup>20</sup> Research suggests that for every dollar (\$1) spent on a community school, as much as three (\$3) may be leveraged from other sources.<sup>21</sup>

A multi-stranded, “braided” funding model—based on a wide variety of appropriate and strategic sources—is the funding strategy that has helped sustain and scale-up the most successful community schools across the country. This includes a mixture of both in-kind/indirect financial resources such as donations of supplies or food, volunteer time and other services, access to and use of physical space, as well as direct financial resources such as grants, awards, monetary donations from various sources, and other types of financial support. A community schools coordinator, for example, may leverage a mix of appropriate before- and after-school programs identified to meaningfully support the curriculum, as well as address both the specific needs and talents of the students in the school. The CSC may establish partnerships with medical and other health service providers to attend to students' needs during school hours.

We can't do it alone. We need partners.

– Texas Superintendent

Further, a community school becomes the heart and hub of the community by providing access to programs and services needed by its residents and others. Community schools can strategically bundle and offer under “one roof” other academic, health, social, and human services typically provided independently by various external organization and agencies. (Examples: access to an adult literacy, language, and citizenship programs, and pro bono legal services offered at the school during nonschool days and hours.) These programs and services are typically funded by nonprofit organizations, government agencies, or local institutions of higher learning. By using this nontraditional service delivery model, educators and their associations, school administration, and community partners work collaboratively to remove barriers arising from the broader community issues affecting students and families, and which intrinsically impact student achievement and school attendance.

<sup>17</sup> [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Vision\\_Mission\\_Values\\_2017\\_NEA\\_Handbook.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/Vision_Mission_Values_2017_NEA_Handbook.pdf)

<sup>18</sup> McKinsey and Company, *The Economic Impact of the Achievement Gap in America's Schools* (April, 2009).

<sup>19</sup> NEA. *Backgrounder: School Funding*. (2013). [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/School\\_Funding\\_FINAL.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/School_Funding_FINAL.pdf)

<sup>20</sup> Blank, M., Jacobson, R., Melaville, A. & Pearson, S. (2010). *Financing Community Schools: Leveraging Resources to Support Student Success*. Coalition for Community Schools.

<sup>21</sup> The Finance Project. (2013). *Measuring Social Return on Investment for Community Schools*. Washington, DC.

The funding mix to support community schools varies depending on various factors. One thing is certain: Community schools require sustainable funding and resources.

A sustainable funding strategy for community schools must leverage public and private investments by generating additional financial resources from partners and other sources, develop various sources of support to survive the ebb and flow of grant funding and budget fluctuations, align various funding streams to achieve results, which may include consolidating funding to gain more flexibility, and anchor a funding strategy around relatively permanent funding streams, such as Title I and Medicaid.<sup>22</sup> While the Task Force acknowledges that currently public community schools leverage public and private investments to fund the services students and their families need, sustainable public funding must be supported by tax structures and economic development policies capable of supporting investment in public schools, and they should be fair and equitable for all citizens. Tax structures should be progressive enough to generate the necessary funding in both good and bad economic times.

Once there is support and commitment to launch community schools—ideally by enacting a community schools district policy within its broader strategic plan to ensure appropriate, adequate and equitable funding—and a deep and thorough school and community assets and needs assessment process is completed, we recommend the following:

- The school district anchors the community schools funding efforts, including the funding of the community schools coordinator. The Task Force understands that in some communities/districts community schools coordinator positions are funded through external funding. To assure that all students have access to services, this position is ideally funded as part of the regular school budget.
- The school district, in partnership with the community’s education coalition, should seek additional funding and other support and resources from within and external to the community. These funding sources may include local leadership and support agencies such as the United Way, YMCA, etc.; local- and state-based foundations; funding from city, county, state, and federal government and agencies; the local Chamber of Commerce and members of the business community; local institutions of higher learning and their schools of health, medicine, education, social work, etc.
- The following critical factors must be taken into account when creating a community school’s unique funding mix and strategy: 1) the results of a deep, six-month-to-one-year-long assets and needs assessment process, which includes surveys, one-on-one interviews, town halls, focus groups, etc.; and 2) the problem-solving strategies identified by stakeholder problem-solving teams within a community school.

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<sup>22</sup> United Way, Schott Foundation for Public Education and its Opportunity to Learn Campaign, Community Foundations, School Districts, etc.



**Federal: Specific community school funding provisions under the Elementary and Secondary School Act (ESSA) and other federal funding streams**

| Expanded Learning Opportunities   | Health and Social Supports and Services   | Family and Community Engagement  | Early Childhood Development   |
|---|---|--|---|
| <p><b>USED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Title I, Part A Grants to LEAs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> 21st Century Community Learning Centers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Rural Education</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Career &amp; Technical Education State Grants</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Trio Programs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> GEAR-UP</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Federal Work-Study</li> </ul> <p><b>DOJ:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Youth Mentoring</li> </ul> <p><b>USDA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> National School Lunch Program/Afterschool Snack Service</li> </ul> | <p><b>USED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Title I, Part A Grants to LEAs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> School Safety National Activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Education for Homeless Children and Youths</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Promise Neighborhoods</li> </ul> <p><b>HHS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Grants to States for Medicaid</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Child Health Insurance Program</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Health Center Program</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Safe Schools/Healthy Students</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Healthy Transitions</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Project AWARE</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Services Block Grant</li> </ul> <p><b>USDA:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Summer Food Service</li> </ul> <p><b>HUD:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Community Development Block Grant</li> </ul> | <p><b>USED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Title I, Part A Grants to LEAs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Grants for Statewide Family Engagement Centers</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Parent Information Centers (IDEA)</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Adult Education</li> </ul> <p><b>HHS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Family Engagement Inventory</li> </ul> <p><b>DOL:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Youth Activities</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> YouthBuild</li> </ul> | <p><b>USED:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Title I, Part A Grants to LEAs</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Preschool Grants</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Special Education Grants for Infants and Families</li> </ul> <p><b>HHS:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Head Start</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Preschool Development Grants</li> <li><input type="checkbox"/> Child Care &amp; Development Block Grant</li> </ul> |

The example below highlights a variety of sources funding two community school sites in Austin, Texas. While many community schools are not yet at this level of development, the Austin story still serves as a model of continuous improvement in which the Six Pillars and the accompanying four mechanisms (assets and needs assessment, strategic planning, partners, and the community school coordinator) are implemented with fidelity. Transformational outcomes are obtained through these synergistic elements.

**Austin, Texas: Walter P. Webb Middle School and Reagan Early College High School**

The Austin story of community school development is one of success and scalability. It is also the story of educators, families, students, and community collaborating and partnering with the school district to initiate transformational change and school improvement. Starting in 2007-2008 school year, this particular community school strategy in Austin began with two schools in the



Austin Independent School District (AISD): The Walter P. Webb Middle School and the John H. Reagan High School, now known as Reagan Early College High School. Previously, both schools had failed to meet state accountability standards for several years. By 2015, the nonprofit organization Austin Voices for Education and Youth (AVEY) and its community partners became the recipients of a \$2.4 million+ Full Service Community School Program federal grant award from the U.S. Department of Education (USED), covering a five-year period. Their winning proposal, the [Lanier Full-Service Community School Project](#), was one of 12 awarded by the USED that year. The proposal's project sites include: Lanier High School (grades 9–12), Burnet Middle School (6–8), Cook Elementary School (K–5) and Wooldridge Elementary School (K–5).

Significantly, the project's logic model and program design includes "improved conditions for learning" as one of its five integrated strategies. Other strategies include "strategic interventions for all student needs" including needs assessments, asset maps, response to intervention (RTI), referral processes, social emotional learning, after school programs, mentoring, and tutoring, as well as the strategies for coordination and continuous planning—the latter includes staff training. These project elements specifically address the Pillars of "Strong and Proven Curriculum" and "High-Quality Teaching." The project also addresses the remaining four of Six Pillars.

## VI. Recommendations of the Task Force

The recommendations are built on a three-phase plan to engage stakeholders and implement the Community Schools Model to meet the needs of all students.

**Phase 1** – Introduce stakeholders to the model, and increase stakeholders’ knowledge of community schools. Use identified state and/or local issues and the community school model to propose solutions. Develop vision and goals to inform program evaluation and drive constant improvement.

**Phase 2** – Design a strategy to identify school(s) with students and families that would benefit from the community school model. Build a strong coalition, engage policymakers, unlikely allies, families, parents, and other affected community members. Use this coalition to start a community school and get a commitment from the school or school district for a community school coordinator.

**Phase 3** – Support community schools in implementation. Encourage deep and frequent needs assessments for school staff, parents and families, community members, and students. Use the assessment results to make collaborative decisions on needs. Build a problem-solving climate in the school that uses school improvement strategies and tools. Develop policies to support scale and spread of the community school model.

The Community Schools Task Force recommends that the NEA Board of Directors submit this report and the policy statement (Section VII) to the 2018 Representative Assembly (RA) for approval and that the NEA Board act immediately by approving and recommending to the RA the following actions by NEA to sustain and bolster current and future efforts to scale and support the community school strategy within the 2018–2020 Strategic Plan and Budget.

1. NEA will increase the awareness among its members, locals, and states on the efficacy of using the Community Schools Model to improve schools. NEA will do so by:
  - a. Educating members through professional learning and training at existing NEA meetings on the Community Schools Model;
  - b. Identifying successful practices and sharing those through existing vehicles; and
  - c. Identifying and/or developing model policy that can be used at district or state level to advocate for community schools.
2. NEA will direct all relevant departments to contribute to a plan that includes the key ways each department will partner with affiliates and key partners in their campaigns to implement a community schools strategy. The plan will integrate with the current Charter School Implementation Plan; the My School, My Voice (ESSA Implementation); and the activities designed to secure racial justice in education.

## VII. Proposed Policy Statement

### Proposed Policy Statement on Community Schools

To be considered and acted on by the 2018 Representative Assembly.

#### Introduction:

Consistent with NEA’s core values that “public education is the gateway to opportunity,” and that “all students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character,”<sup>23</sup> and recognizing that opportunity gaps in our society have resulted in an uneven and unjust public education system where some communities have public schools that provide “individuals with the skills and opportunities to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy”<sup>24</sup> and some do not, NEA believes all schools should use research-backed school improvement strategies designed to support a racially just education system that ensures that all students and their families have the support needed to thrive and grow. The Community School Model (CSM) has a strong track record of closing opportunity gaps, supporting a culturally relevant and responsive climate, and causing significant and sustained school improvement. NEA supports the use of the Community Schools Model in public schools where the local staff and community are supportive.

#### Definitions:

**Public Community Schools:** Public community schools are both places and partnerships that bring together the school and community to provide a rigorous and engaging academic experience for students, enrichment activities to help students see positive futures, and services designed to remove barriers to learning. Students engage in real-world problem solving as part of their curriculum. Community schools involve and support families and residents in the public school community and organize the wealth of assets that all communities have to focus on our youth and strengthen families and communities. Public schools become centers of the community and are open to everyone.

**Community School Model:** Any public school can use the community school model, which is intended to be tailored to the specific needs of an individual school’s students, staff, families, and community members. The community school model advanced by NEA is based on Six Pillars of Practice as implemented through four key mechanisms.

**Stakeholder:** Stakeholder refers to anyone who is invested in the welfare and success of a school and its students, including administrators, educators, students, parents, families, community members, local business leaders, and elected officials such as school board members, city councilors, and state representatives. Stakeholders may also be collective entities, such as local businesses, organizations, advocacy groups, committees, media outlets, and cultural institutions, in addition to organizations that represent specific groups, such as associations, parent-teacher organizations, and associations representing superintendents, principals, school boards, or educators in specific academic disciplines.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>23</sup> NEA Core value on Equal Opportunity. “We believe public education is the gateway to opportunity. All students have the human and civil right to a quality public education that develops their potential, independence, and character.”

<sup>24</sup> NEA Core value on Democracy – “We believe public education is the cornerstone of our republic. Public education provides individuals with the skills to be involved, informed, and engaged in our representative democracy.”

<sup>25</sup> Great Schools Partnerships. Glossary of Education Reform. Stakeholders. <https://www.edglossary.org/stakeholder/>

**Partners:** Partner refers to external organizations and individuals that form informal and formal relationships with a school that is using the Community School Model to fill strategy needs. These organizations can include local businesses, advocacy groups, educator associations, parent-teacher organizations, religious organizations, schools, universities, nonprofit organizations, and other types of organizations that local stakeholders determine fill a strategic need.

The Six Pillars include:

- 1. Strong and Proven Culturally Relevant Curriculum:** Educators provide a rich and varied academic program allowing students to acquire both foundational and advanced knowledge and skills in many content areas. Students learn with challenging, culturally relevant materials that address their learning needs and expand their experience. They also learn how to analyze and understand the unique experiences and perspectives of others. The curriculum embraces all content areas including the arts, second languages, and physical education. Teachers and ESP are engaged in developing effective programs for language instruction for English learners and immigrant students. Rigorous courses such as Advanced Placement or International Baccalaureate are offered. Learning and enrichment activities are provided before and after the regular school day, including sports, the arts, and homework assistance. The needs of parents and families are addressed through English-as-a-Second-Language classes, GED preparation, and job training programs.
- 2. High-quality Teaching and Learning:** Teachers are fully licensed, knowledgeable about their content, and skillful in their practice. Instructional time focuses on learning rather than testing. Individual student needs are identified and learning opportunities are designed to address them. Higher-order thinking skills are at the core of instruction so that all students acquire problem solving, critical thinking, and reasoning skills. Educators work collaboratively to plan lessons, analyze student work, and adjust curriculum as required. Experienced educators work closely with novices as mentors, coaches, and “guides on the side,” sharing their knowledge and expertise. ESP members take part in professional learning experiences and are consulted and collaborate when plans to improve instruction are developed. Together, educators identify the methods and approaches that work and change those that do not meet student needs.
- 3. Inclusive Leadership:** Leadership teams with educators, the community school coordinator, and other school staff share the responsibility of school operations with the principal. This leadership team ensures that the community school strategy remains central in the decision-making process.
- 4. Positive Behavior Practices (including restorative justice):** Community school educators emphasize positive relationships and interactions and model these through their own behavior. Negative behaviors and truancy are acknowledged and addressed in ways that hold students accountable while showing them they are still valued members of the school community. All members of the faculty and staff are responsible for ensuring a climate where all students can learn. Restorative behavior practices such as peer mediation, community service, and post-conflict resolution help students learn from their mistakes and foster positive, healthy school climates where respect and compassion are core principles. Zero-tolerance practices leading to suspension and expulsion are avoided.

5. **Family and Community Partnerships:** Families, parents, caregivers, and community members are partners in creating dynamic, flexible community schools. Their engagement is not related to a specific project or program, but is on-going and extends beyond volunteerism to roles in decision making, governance, and advocacy. Both ESP and teachers are part of developing family engagement strategies, and they are supported through professional learning opportunities. Their voices are critical to articulating and achieving the school's overall mission and goals. When families and educators work together, students are more engaged learners who earn higher grades and enroll in more challenging classes; student attendance and grade and school completion rates improve.
6. **Coordinated and Integrated Wraparound Supports (community support services):** Community school educators recognize that students often come to school with challenges that impact their ability to learn, explore, and develop in the classroom. Because learning does not happen in isolation, community schools provide meals, health care, mental health counseling, and other services before, during, and after school. Staff members support the identification of services that children need. These wraparound services are integrated into the fabric of the school that follows the Whole Child tenets.<sup>26</sup> Connections to the community are critically important, so support services and referrals are available for families and other community members.

*Public Community School Implementation:* Implementation of the Community Schools Model requires that dedicated staff and structures use proven implementation mechanisms.

1. **Community School Coordinator:** Every community school should have a community school coordinator that plays a leadership role at the school, is a member of the school leadership team, and is a full-time staff member. The CSC has training and specialized skills that supports building and managing partnerships in diverse communities, creating and coordinating an integrated network of services for students and their families, and optimizing both internal and external resources. The CSC connects students and their families with services in the community.
2. **Needs and Asset Assessment:** The foundation for the community school model is a school-based needs and asset assessment that assesses including academic, social, and emotional needs and assets (including staff expertise and community supports of the school and surrounding community). The needs and asset assessment, facilitated by the CSC, is an inclusive process in which families, students, community members, partners, teachers, ESP, administrators, and other school staff define their needs and assets. Problem-solving teams are established based on the needs determined in the needs and asset assessment.
3. **School Stakeholder Problem-solving Teams:** Every community school should have teams of school staff and community stakeholders (families, parents) dedicated to solving problems that are identified in the needs and asset assessment. The solutions identified by the stakeholder problem-solving teams change the way things are done in and outside of school hours and, at times, involve partnerships with outside organizations and individuals.

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<sup>26</sup> A **whole child** approach, which ensures that each student is healthy, safe, engaged, supported, and challenged, sets the standard for comprehensive, sustainable school improvement and provides for long-term student success. ([www.whole-childeducation.org/about](http://www.whole-childeducation.org/about) and [http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/150306-ESP\\_DIGIBOOK.pdf](http://www.nea.org/assets/docs/150306-ESP_DIGIBOOK.pdf))

- 4. Community School Stakeholder Committee:** The community school stakeholder committee (CSSC) coordinates between school staff, partners (organizations, businesses, town and city service providers), and stakeholders to ensure goals are achieved and obstacles are surmounted. The CSSC, which includes families, community partners, school staff, students, and other stakeholders from the school's various constituencies, works in collaboration with the school leadership team and supports coordination across and among community schools within a school district.

### **The Role of the Association in Advancing the Community School Model**

**Awareness.** NEA believes that there must be increased awareness among its members and the public about the large body of evidence that demonstrates the efficacy of the Community School Model in supporting racial justice in education and closing opportunity gaps to achieve measurable school improvement gains. NEA encourages schools and districts to use the community school model.

**Advocacy.** NEA has a responsibility to advocate for community school policies and procedures, legislation, and practices that will result in school improvement gains. As educators, NEA is in the best position to advance the adoption of community school policies.

## **VIII. Conclusion**

In calling for great public schools for all students, NEA leaders and members have defined for the nation a vision and mission that ensures that all students are prepared to succeed in a diverse and interdependent world. The Community Schools Task Force believes that the community schools model is not only a strong model for school improvement, but through its identified Six Pillars can ensure that all students and their families receive the supports necessary to thrive and grow; that all educators can use their expertise and judgment to ensure student success; that relationships between educators and the community are strengthened; and that the promise of public education is realized. The Association, educators, communities, and school districts have the responsibility to advocate for policies and practices that encourages strategies that focus on the needs of students and their families. The Task Force calls on NEA to adopt the proposed policy statement.





## Attachment A: NEA Task Force Members and Participants

### Task Force members:

#### Cochairs:

Eric R. Brown, NEA Executive Committee, Illinois  
Rebecca (Becky) Pringle, NEA Vice President, Pennsylvania

#### Members:

Charmaine Banther – Cochair, Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, California  
Lakilia Bedeau – Paducah Tilghman High School’s Tornado Alley Youth Service Center Director, Kentucky  
Abby Beytin – President, Teachers Association of Baltimore County, Maryland  
Debby Chandler – President, National Council for Education Support Professionals, Washington  
Kerrie Dallman – President, Colorado Education Association, Colorado  
Jonathan Cole – President, Lafayette Parish Association of Educators, Louisiana  
Tracey Johnson – President, Columbus Education Association, Ohio  
Mary Levi – Cochair, Ethnic Minority Affairs Committee, California  
Amy Mizialko – Vice President, Milwaukee Teachers’ Education Association, Wisconsin  
Virginia M. Mills – President, Education Support Employees Association, Nevada  
Cecily Myart-Cruz – Vice President, United Teachers Los Angeles, California  
Joe Nuñez – Executive Director, California Teachers Association, California  
Miguel Angel Saldaña Villegas, NEA Director, Washington  
Mary Parr Sanchez – Vice President, NEA-New Mexico, New Mexico  
Denise Specht – President, Education Minnesota, Minnesota  
Sean M. Spiller – Vice President, New Jersey Education Association, New Jersey  
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Kyle Serrette – Teacher Quality  
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# Attachment C: Current NEA Policies Relevant to Community Schools

## NEA Legislative Program – 115th Congress of the United States

### High Quality Public Education

#### a. Student Learning, Growth, and Development

- a “whole child” approach to learning, teaching and community engagement that encourages parental and community involvement in all aspects of a child’s education; addressing multiple dimensions such as students’ physical, social, and emotional health and well-being; ensures equity, adequacy, and sustainability in resources and quality among public schools and districts; and ensures that students are actively engaged in a wide variety of experiences and settings within and outside the classroom;
- programs that promote the infusion of the arts and design into student learning of science, technology, engineering and math as a means of fostering student creativity, innovation, and inventiveness;
- programs that provide all students—prekindergarten through graduate school—support in developing advanced critical thinking and information literacy skills and mastery of new digital tools;
- programs and policies designed to achieve equity in education funding, resources, and opportunities;
- federal programs to assist schools in educational reform and restructuring efforts;
- programs to provide assistance to local school districts to provide optimum class size;

#### Assessments

- legislation that grants all states flexibility to waive required annual testing and to design assessment programs that assess student learning at least once in elementary, once in middle, and once in high school;
- federal legislation for, and implementation of, assessment plans that completely conform to NEA Resolutions;
- appropriate alternative options to standardized testing for measuring individual progress and proficiencies of students with special needs, including the ability to test students at their functioning level rather than their grade level, and/or limited English proficiency;
- allowing students who receive at least half of their instruction in a language other than English to be given the option of testing in the language of instruction; where the assessments do not exist they should be developed.

#### b. Child Care and Early Childhood Education Development

- federal programs to facilitate and enhance school readiness;
- federal assistance for early childhood education programs, including Head Start;
- mandatory full-day kindergarten attendance for children, and the federal resources necessary to do so;
- early childhood development and education services by certified personnel for all children, with access ensured regardless of income;

- federal resources to enhance the availability and quality of public school child care and early education programs, including preschool and before- and after-school programs;
- federal resources to support early childhood education programs that are school based, school linked, or established with formal partnerships with community-based organizations;
- coordination with the public school system of those child care services delivered by nonpublic providers and assurance of standards of excellence, nondiscrimination, and the separation of church and state;
- stringent educational, health, and safety standards to protect and enrich preschool and school-age children, including strict regulation and enforcement to ensure trained and licensed child care and development workers and qualified volunteer personnel;
- incentives for employers to establish quality child care programs at or near the work site.

**c. Parental involvement**

- federal support for development of full-service community schools and wraparound services that coordinate the delivery of educational, developmental, family, health; including mental health services for students and their families that address trauma and adverse childhood experiences; and other comprehensive services through community-based organizations; give students, families and communities accesses to such services; support parent, family and community involvement in schools; and integrate services to ensure that schools function as comprehensive community centers;

**d. Youth development**

School Counseling

- elementary and secondary school counseling and other pupil services, including school psychology and school social work and school-based student assistance program staff, provided by appropriately certified and/or licensed professionals;
- establishment of administrative structures to facilitate effective integration of counseling into the entire education experience;
- grants to expand and implement counseling programs provided by appropriately certified and/or licensed school counselors;
- school staffing ratios of specialized instructional support personnel to students at the levels recommended by nationally recognized professional organizations.

**e. Safe Schools**

- federal assistance for mental health services to students, including support from social workers, psychologists, nurses, counselors, and other student service professionals as part of a comprehensive program to prevent school violence;
- the establishment and implementation, in consultation with school personnel and parents, by each school district of a well-publicized and uniformly enforced disciplinary code that promotes nondiscriminatory practices to provide an orderly learning environment;

#### **h. Education Employee Professional Development**

- establishment and funding of professional development opportunities designed and directed by teachers and education support professionals;
- initiatives to support the development of cultural competence among all educators;
- national efforts to improve the professionalization of teaching;
- programs that provide adequate opportunities, experiences, and resources for education practitioners to teach and learn from peers;
- opportunities for staff development and in-service training for all education employees;
- access to relevant, high-quality, interactive professional development in the integration of digital learning;
- the establishment of state or locally based paraeducator certification programs, coupled with requirements that school districts provide paraeducators with the necessary training and professional development;
- training for preservice, early career, and experienced educators that defines the school-to-prison pipeline and includes strategies for peer-to-peer, educator-to-parent, educator-to-student, and student-to-educator communication; and that provides an understanding of educational trauma and its impact on a student's education.

## **II. Supporting Student Success**

#### **a. Children's Health**

- access to quality prenatal, perinatal, and postnatal care services;
- development and maintenance of health care programs for children;
- federal programs that promote childhood obesity prevention and support for healthy lifestyle choices, including fostering good nutrition, fitness, and overall wellness;
- adequate funding for Medicaid and the Supplemental Children's Health Insurance Program (SCHIP) to ensure health coverage for uninsured children, with the eventual goal of single-payer healthcare coverage for all residents of the U.S. aged 22 years and under;
- federal resources to ensure quality, safe health care standards for all children, including strict regulation and enforcement by professional/certified school nurses;
- legislation that provides that a licensed professional health care worker is present in every school for the duration of the student school day;
- legislation that provides for the inclusion of physical education and health education in appropriate federal education programs; ensuring the ability of health care professionals and other related education support professionals to communicate with language minority parents, to the extent practicable, in the language the parent understands best;

#### **School Nurses**

- federal funds to support safe, quality health care standards by professional/certified school nurses;
- federal programs to help achieve a school nurse-to-student ratio of one school nurse to every 750 or fewer students at each site that is appropriate to provide quality school health care;

- federal programs to enhance school-based health programs;
- establishment and funding of programs to support safe, quality medical practices provided by professional/certified school nurses;
- federal funds to support professional/certified school nurses who can communicate effectively with English language learners and their families.

**b. Children's safety**

- legislation to assist in developing programs to protect children from danger, ill health, or hunger;
- federal assistance to schools and communities for implementation of effective staff, youth and student suicide prevention programs, including professional development for teachers and education support professionals in suicide prevention, alertness, intervention and post-vention programs for prekindergarten through higher education;

**c. Children's nutrition**

- federal support for school meal programs that follow age-appropriate guidelines to provide adequate, appetizing, and nutritious foods;
- provision of nutrition assistance to families unable to meet basic nutrition needs;



## NEA Resolutions that Support Community Schools (2017 Handbook)

### Pillar 1 – Strong and Proven Curriculum

- A-1 Public Education
- B-2 Independent Reading Skills
- B-3 Effective Communication
- B-4 Middle School and Junior High School Programs
- B-14 Racism, Sexism, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity Discrimination
- B-16 Hispanic Education
- B-17 Asian and Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander Education
- B-18 Micronesian Education
- B-19 Black American Education
- B-21 Equal Opportunities Through Mathematics and Science Education
- B-26 Education of Migrants
- B-29 Gifted, Talented, and Creative Students
- B-30 Educational Programs in Support of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Questioning Students
- B-31 Alternative Programs for At-Risk and/or Students with Special Needs
- B-32 Educational Programs for English Language Learners
- B-34 Education for All Students with Disabilities
- B-40 Driver Education
- B-41–63 (*Various Content Areas Mentioned*)
- B-64 Standards for Student Learning
- B-70 Character Education
- B-75 Fair and Equal Access to Technology
- B-79 Communication Between Hearing and Deaf/Hard of Hearing People
- E-4 Selection and Challenges of Materials and Teaching Techniques
- E-5 Development of Curriculum
- E-6 Development of Materials
- E-7 Cultural Diversity in Instructional Materials and Activities
- E-8 Women in Instructional Materials
- E-9 Religious Heritage in Instructional Materials
- E-11 Professional Discretion in the Classroom

### Pillar 2 – High-Quality Teaching

- B-2 Independent Reading Skills
- B-3 Effective Communications
- B-16 Hispanic Education
- B-34 Education for All Students with Disabilities
- B-65 Individual Learning, Growth, and Development
- B-66 Social Emotional Learning
- B-72 School Library Media Programs
- B-74 Technology in the Educational Process
- B-78 Distance Education
- D-1 The Teaching Profession
- D-6 Teacher Preparation Programs: Content and Evaluation
- D-7 Teacher Preparation Programs: Clinical Practice



- D-15 Professional Development for Education Professionals
- D-16 Professional Development for Education Support Professionals
- E-1 Instructional Excellence
- E-4 Selection and Challenges of Materials and Teaching Techniques
- G-3 Licensure

**Pillar 3 – Inclusive Leadership**

- D-1 The Teaching Profession
- D-11 Educator Career Paths
- D-13 Administrator Preparation
- E-2 Educator-Led Schools
- F-22 Site-Based Decision Making

**Pillar 4 – Positive Behavior Practices**

- B-14 Racism, Sexism, Sexual Orientation, and Gender Identity Discrimination
- B-31 Alternative Programs for At-Risk and/or Students with Special Needs
- B-34 Education for All Students with Disabilities
- B-71 Conflict Resolution Education
- C-7 Student Stress and Anger
- C-11 Safe Schools and Communities
- C-13 Discipline
- D-18 Professional Development in Behavior Management, Discipline, Order, and Safety
- I-29 Bullying

**Pillar 5 – Family & Community Partnerships**

- A-4 Understanding and Support of Public Education
- A-5 Collaborative Partnerships
- A-6 Parental Involvement
- A-8 Business Support for Public Education
- A-38 Community Education
- B-9 Adult Education
- B-27 Communication between Educators and Non-English Speaking Parents, Guardians, and Caregivers
- B-34 Education for All Students with Disabilities
- B-37 Youth and Adult Training Programs
- B-38 Education through Service Learning and Community Service
- B-77 communication Using Social Media and Technology

**Pillar 6 – Community Support Services**

- A-28 Funding for Extracurricular Programs
- C-1 Health Care for All Children
- C-2 Vaccinations
- C-4 Nutrition
- C-6 Comprehensive School Health, Social, and Psychological Programs and Services
- C-7 Student Stress and Anger
- C-23 Reduction of Gang-Related Crime
- C-34 Effect of Homelessness on Children and Youth
- C-35 Child Care
- C-36 Programs Before and After School
- D-14 Supervision of Extracurricular Activities







*Great Public Schools for Every Student*

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