



# Community Schools: Closing Opportunity Gaps for Students in Need

**Key Takeaway:** This longstanding approach provides an environment where all students, especially those who are underserved, can learn and thrive academically, physically, and emotionally.

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**Read the report:** [Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence](#)

Washington, DC (December 14, 2017) — Growing economic and racial inequality are impacting many children's health and welfare, as well as educational and life success. To address these inequalities, policymakers increasingly look to community schools as an effective approach for supporting students and their families in neighborhoods facing concentrated poverty. Through partnering with community agencies, community schools integrate academics and collaborative leadership with health and social services, youth and community development, and family and community engagement. A [new study](#) from the Learning Policy Institute finds that, when implemented well, these schools help students overcome such challenges, improving their educational outcomes by removing out-of-school barriers to learning.

The report, [Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence](#), was produced in collaboration with the National Education Policy Center. It synthesizes the findings from 143 rigorous research studies on the impact of community schools on student and school outcomes. Its aim is to support and inform school, community, district, and state leaders as they seek school intervention and support strategies under the Every Student Succeeds Act and consider community schools as a strategy for providing high-quality education that promotes greater equity. It will be released December 14 at a [symposium in New York City](#) on community schools hosted by Teachers College Columbia University and the Children's Aid Society.

The report finds that, while community schools vary in the programs they offer and the ways they operate, four

features—or pillars—appear in most community schools:

- Integrated student supports,
- Expanded learning time and opportunities,
- Family and community engagement, and
- Collaborative leadership and practice.

“The conditions that these pillars enable are those that decades of research have identified as school characteristics that foster students’ intellectual, social, emotional, and physical development,” said Jeannie Oakes, a report co-author and LPI Senior Fellow, and Presidential Professor Emeritus in Educational Equity at the University of California, Los Angeles. “Because of that, state and district policymakers can consider community schools as a highly effective, evidence-based intervention for schools identified as low performing under the Every Student Succeeds Act.” Oakes co-authored the report along with Anna Maier, LPI Research and Policy Associate; and Julia Daniel, a doctoral candidate at the University of Colorado Boulder.

“This is exactly the kind of study that the community schools field has been waiting for—one that pulls together all of the existing evaluation research and frames the very positive findings in the context of national education policy. The strong implications for greater equity make the study’s conclusions all the more compelling,” said Jane Quinn, Director of the Children’s Aid National Center for Community Schools.

The report and accompanying brief include examples of effective community schools across the country, from Oakland to Tulsa to Boston, providing pragmatic research-based lessons for policy development and implementation. The report also recommends further rigorous research into community schools to establish a better understanding of the conditions under which the various elements of the community schools strategy are most effective.

Find the new report, *Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence*, by Jeannie Oakes, Anna Maier, and Julia Daniel, at: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-effective-school-improvement-report>

Find the accompanying brief, *Community Schools: An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement*, by Jeannie Oakes, Anna Maier, and Julia Daniel, at: <http://nepc.colorado.edu/publication/equitable-community-schools>

The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) conducts and communicates independent, high-quality research to improve education policy and practice. Working with policymakers, researchers, educators, community groups, and others, the Institute seeks to advance evidence-based policies that support empowering and equitable learning for each and every child. Nonprofit and nonpartisan, the Institute connects policymakers and stakeholders at the local, state, and federal levels with the evidence, ideas, and actions needed to strengthen the education system from preschool through college and career readiness. Visit LPI at: <https://www.learningpolicyinstitute.org>

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