



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

TRANSFORMING PUBLIC EDUCATION



WHAT IS A COMMUNITY SCHOOL?

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

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

California's historic investment in an educational model aimed at **disrupting poverty** and **addressing racial, economic and other inequities** could not be more timely as students continue to recover, academically, socially and emotionally from an ongoing pandemic.



WHAT IS THE HISTORY OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN CA?

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

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



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

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

HISTORIC INVESTMENT IN CA COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Community schools are receiving unprecedented state funding, as well as \$443 million from the federal government and \$3 million from NEA Community Advocacy and Partnership Engagement Grants, to help school districts transition to community schools. It's estimated that this could result in one-third of California's 10,600 public schools becoming community schools.

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

The goal is to transition every school where 80% or more of students live in poverty into a community school over the next five years.

A portion of the funding will support the Lead Technical Assistance Center, a partnership between Alameda County Office of Education, the University of California at Los Angeles, the National Education Association and Californians for Justice. Four regional technical assistance centers will be announced in the Spring of 2023. In November 2021, the California Department of Education awarded the first round of \$649 million in grants:

- 192 local education agencies (LEAs) received two-year planning grants.
- 76 LEAs received implementation grants covering 438 schools.

DO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS WORK?

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

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

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



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

- CTA VICE PRESIDENT DAVID B. GOLDBERG