

Canyon’s Community Schools Initiative: An Overview

Community Schools are hubs of academic learning, healthy child development, family support, and neighborhood cohesion. Together, schools and various public and private partners provide comprehensive and coordinated academic, social, mental, physical, and vocational programs/services for students, families, and the community. The best Community School models combine school-based and -linked services to maximize family, school, and community resources. Community school approaches have been shown to produce positive school- and student-level outcomes (Blank et al., 2003).

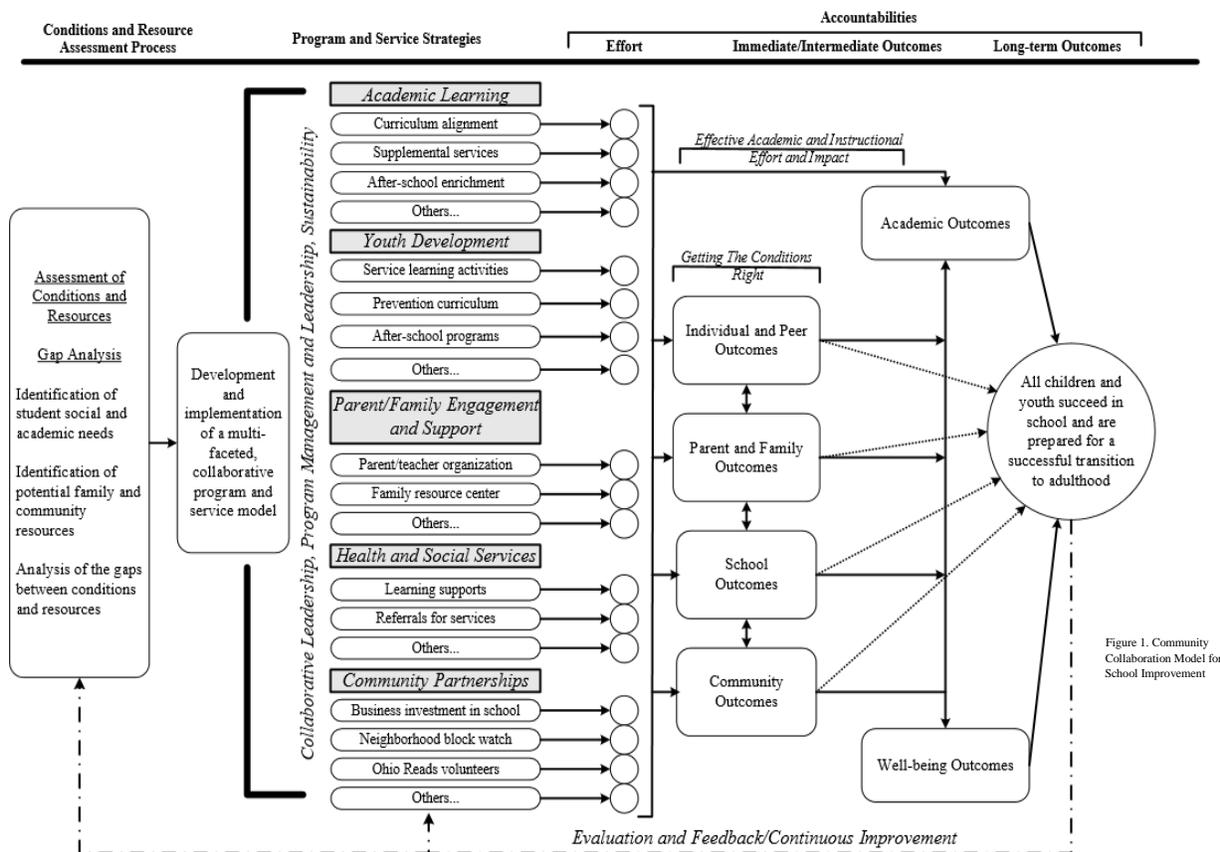


Figure 1. Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement

Canyons School District strategically planned for schools in the Hillcrest High School feeder-pattern to become Community Schools. The four Title I elementary schools, Copperview, East Midvale, Midvale and Sandy began the initiative in 2012. The work scaled up with Midvale Middle School, Diamond Ridge Alternative High and Hillcrest High School in 2016. Using the Community Collaboration Model for School Improvement (CCSMI; Anderson-Butcher et al., 2008), CSD’s Community School Initiative prioritizes five pillars. These include: academics, parent/family engagement, youth development, health and social services, and community partnerships.

Example strategies in each pillar are described here:

Academics: After-school tutoring programs targeting students with greatest needs in reading and math; secondary student support labs offering intensive interventions, on-line learning and a proficiency-based credit recovery program; Afterschool enrichment programs, Enhanced curriculum-based instruction in classrooms, English-Language Learners programs.

Parent/Family Engagement: Home visits; English Language Learning Classes; Parents as Teachers (PAT) outreach; Enhanced parent/teacher conferences; Family nights; Parent volunteerism; Basic academic skills for parents, ESL, computer, financial literacy, High School Diplomas and GED.

Youth Development: Classroom social skills interventions, Recess interventions; Afterschool programs; Behavioral incentive programs; Improved Multi-Tiered System of Supports/Positive Behavioral Intervention Supports, Peer Tutoring, Mentors.

Health and Social Services: School-based behavioral mental health; Local food bank partnerships; Linkages to health/dental clinics; CARE wraparound teams that problem-solve challenging student/family needs.



Community Partnership: Adopt-a-school programs; Business partnerships; Community gardens; Intentional linkages with families to existing resources; Community-wide councils focused on city-wide planning. Cross-sector civic, governmental, non-profit, faith-based, business and educational formal Partnerships for Student Success initiative.

Partners involved in the CSD Community Schools Initiative include key organizations such as United Way of Salt Lake, Midvale City, Valley Behavioral Health, Hopeful Beginnings, PLAYWorks, Savage Industries, Sandy Chamber of Commerce, The Boys & Girls Clubs of South Valley, Utah Food Bank, Community Nursing Services, the University of Utah, as well as a variety of others.

Community Schools participation numbers alone serve as important progress indicators. For instance:

- 260 youth were served in afterschool tutoring each year;
- Over 150 youth each year are being served in prekindergarten classrooms;
- 818 youth involved, on average, in the afterschool/summer program each year (with many youth on the waiting list);
- Over 500 students were involved in Care Team supports each year; and 210 youth were seen by a clinical therapist through school-based services.

Parents/caregivers also were involved in new opportunities (such as Plazas Comunitarias and Monterrey Tecnología, Parents as Teachers, ESL, and computer classes). In addition, parent volunteerism has exploded at the Community Schools. In fact, 730 parents/caregivers contributed 1,353 hours of volunteer time one school year!

System-wide improvements also have been made, in areas such as enhanced school improvement planning, improved data systems, strengthened identification, linkage, and referral systems, and expanded professional development for teachers/staff/partners.

Research documents how the CSD Community Schools are improving (see Anderson-Butcher & Paluta, 2015). In particular, academic achievement and growth data improved in three of the four buildings (yet performance is still below benchmarks and state averages). Behavioral data also showed improvements, as both absenteeism and ODRs decreased over the course of implementation. Additionally, marked improvements were noted in teacher/staff perceptions, especially in relation to increased supports available for their students, reduced stressors among students and themselves, and an improved learning support system overall. Parent/caregiver perceptions of school and community supports also improved. Given these successes, CSD's Community Schools will build from the strong foundation for student success laid by these seven schools and their many partners since adoption.

To learn more about CSD's Community Schools Initiative, please contact Karen Sterling at (801) 826-5111 or Michele Vogeler at (801) 826-5023.