

Motion: ATF Support for Community Schools and Wrap Around Services

Whereas, too many students come to school with needs and risks that impede their ability to thrive academically such as, but not limited to; homelessness, truancy, hunger, violence, substance abuse, transience, unstructured time, and mental and physical health needs;

Whereas, public schools will be most successful in addressing the achievement gap if we address the opportunity gap;

Whereas, we can address the opportunity gap by focusing on factors that are beyond the control of teachers and schools yet have a direct effect on student outcomes. These factors include, but are not limited to; healthcare, social services, after school programs, and parental involvement, which are too often divorced from school life, although they are critical to student success;

Whereas, these supports are even more crucial at a time like the present, when a struggling economy puts even greater pressures on families and schools;

Whereas, community schools offer a means to eliminate the achievement gap by educating the whole child and providing our neediest students with the supports they need to succeed;

Whereas, the American Federation of Teachers, our national affiliate, is an ardent advocate of community schools and the wraparound services they deliver to disadvantaged children and their families;

Whereas, community schools are not a new concept. They have their roots in the earliest, richest traditions of public education and now recognized nationally in 34 states through the Coalition of Community Schools;

Whereas, the time has come to broaden the debate about accountability to include shared responsibility for the success of our children;

Whereas, 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;

Whereas, through partnerships with various agencies and community resource organizations, community schools offer an array of academic supports and other services to schools, students and their families;

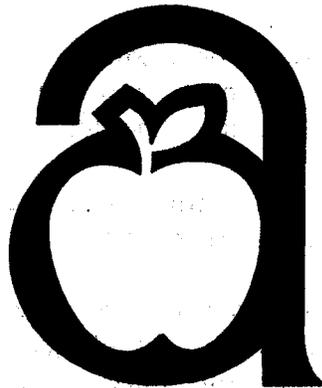
Whereas, community schools become hubs of the community by being open before and beyond the regular school day, offering programs and services in areas such as academic assistance for students, early childhood and after school

programs, health and social services, adult education and youth development classes, family and community engagement, medical, mental health, and social services;

Whereas, community school partners may include a variety of providers and funders. Partners must provide equal access to all children;

Whereas, community schools are based on a comprehensive and strategic plan agreed to in writing (e.g., contracts, memoranda of agreement and memoranda of understanding) between the partner organization(s), including the providers and funders, and the school. Oversight of the school site(s) requires written agreements to avoid problems of governance and operation of community schools. Written agreements also provide planning and a process for creating community school models that can be taken to scale with buy-in by all stakeholders;

Therefore be it resolved, we propose systematically transforming schools, serving our neediest students, into community schools providing a much-needed strategy and effective way to garner additional resources to reduce the demand on school staff for addressing all the challenges that students bring to school; provide additional learning opportunities that develop academic and non-academic competencies; and build social capital--the networks and relationships that support learning and create opportunities for young people while strengthening their families and communities.



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