



COMMUNITY SCHOOL

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Quarter 1 Report

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The RCSD goal is to develop high quality community schools in the RCSD. Over the past several months we continue to actively continue to engage in the community schools initiative as we continue to engage the broader community about the outstanding work done in our designated community schools.

Overview:

The Rochester City School District recognizes the transformational power of community schools as a strategy to help our students, families and community thrive. This strategy has been emerging within the context of the NYSED expectations for Receivership schools in Receivership, the [Path Forward](#) and the design of the [Superintendent’s Receivership Schools and Innovation as a strategy devoted to the transformation of schools in Receivership](#). The most recent structural support is the [creation of a Director of Community School position in the 17-18 Budget](#), adopted by the Board of Education on May 11, 2017.

Thus far, the District has been thoughtful about initiating this work from the school level, supporting the school-based teams in listening and learning to the community in each school; providing responsive assistance; and, only after learning from the early phase of implementation, recently beginning to design a more formal infrastructure. The District grounds its emerging theory of action for community schools in the research base, synthesized in the 2017 Community Schools Standards¹ (inset to the right) and in the context of ESSA, which includes several provisions regarding community schools. In particular, the Guiding Principles section of the Standards align with the District’s values of [Equity, Relational Capacity, Innovation, Coherence and Accountability \(ERICA\)](#).

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS STANDARDS

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS GUIDING PRINCIPLES
Seven principles guide the community schools approach to school transformation, and provide a framework that undergirds each of the community school implementation standards.

- 1. PURSUE EQUITY**—Educational excellence and equity are inseparable. Community schools work actively to identify and confront policies, practices and cultures that keep students of different backgrounds and races from achieving equitable outcomes. Community schools proactively and intentionally empower those typically disempowered by barriers to participation.
- 2. INVEST IN A WHOLE-CHILD APPROACH TO EDUCATION**—Meaningful teaching and learning embraces but goes beyond mastery of core academic subjects to include youth development principles; holding high expectations for children, youth, and adults; and developing their social-emotional, health, critical thinking, and problem solving skills.
- 3. BUILD ON COMMUNITY STRENGTHS TO ENSURE CONDITIONS**—Community schools utilize the assets of the entire community—including the gifts of people who live and work there, parents, families, residents and community partners to create the optimal learning conditions for each student.
- 4. USE DATA AND COMMUNITY WISDOM TO GUIDE PARTNERSHIPS, PROGRAMS, AND PROGRESS**—Reliable and community-specific data, coupled with the wisdom of youth, families and residents, guides how educators and community partners work together to achieve measurable results.
- 5. COMMIT TO INTERDEPENDENCE AND SHARED ACCOUNTABILITY**—Student success requires explicit investment in collaborative planning and implementation between educators and community partners and across program areas and disciplines. Mutually agreed upon results and related indicators, as well as written agreements enable educators and community partners to hold each other accountable.
- 6. FOSTER A BUILDING TRUSTING RELATIONSHIPS**—Deep collaboration takes dedicated effort and time, and becomes evident in the daily formal and informal social exchanges within a school community and between the school and the broader community. Trusting relationships fuel school transformation by helping to create a nurturing safe, respectful climate where caring adults, families and students come to rely on each other as part of a shared approach to student success.
- 7. FOSTER A LEARNING ORGANIZATION**—Improved student learning depends on a school community where educators and community partners work together towards continuous improvement. Time and support are available for individual and collective reflection and adjustment as well as shared learning and professional development, to facilitate responsiveness to student needs.

In combination, and when guided by a coherent and rigorous vision of how students, schools, and communities can thrive, these principles provide a strong foundation for the pursuit of the community school strategy.

We are pleased to offer this update on our schools that have formally adopted the community school strategy, as part of their State Education-approved improvement plan. These schools are 9, 17, 22 and 45, and the East EPO. The District recognizes that many other schools have elements of this strategy in place, and the framework for developing and sustaining community schools will include an articulated continuum relative to the strategy.

¹ (Institute for Educational Leadership and Coalition for Community Schools, 2017)

Theory of Action – an Emerging Common Language

RCSD has long supported the underlying theory of action behind the community school strategy—that in seeking to serve the whole child, schools work to connect students and families to resources. In many schools, counselors, social workers, parent liaisons, teachers or administrators have done this work, student-by-student. More formally, Student Support Centers served a similar function in the past. Some schools have health clinics or City Rec on campus. Recently, our [Expanded Learning Time \(ELT\) model](#) established many of the necessary components of a community school: clear instructional and social-emotional priorities, embedded community partners providing enrichment and social-emotional supports onsite, regular partnership meetings, and coordinating of data and communication structures. In these respects, community schools is not completely new, although the scale and the emerging understanding of this work as anchored in the community at large may be.

Community schools are defined as “a place and a set of partnerships” that focus community resources on students and families, resulting in students who are ready and able learn in school. A community school acts as a hub, offering a coordinated approach to connect and cultivate assets in the community and to link families to services, so that educators can focus on teaching and students can focus on learning. Particularly in economically stressed communities like the City of Rochester, community schools can play a transformational role, removing barriers for students and families, and simultaneously strengthening schools and communities. In addition, the schools are aligned with district’s plan regarding the social and emotional supports and trauma informed schools including the Joy DeGruy work on relational capacity and deep work in Restorative Practices,



Community schools place the child/family at the center of a *coordinated* program including solid instruction, expanded learning opportunities and comprehensive support services. At each school, a Community School Coordinator works to identify the needs and assets present, to build relationships, and to develop and manage the resulting partnerships. The Community School Coordinator taps community resources in strategic ways such that more students can achieve at school. A community school, like a smart phone, provides each family access to a wide range of personalized supports. At the highest levels of impact, the partnership is reciprocal, with community resources being harnessed for school success, and the school leveraging its assets for community improvement as well.

The underlying principles of a community school approach are articulated in New York’s theory of action for schools, the Diagnostic Tool for School & District



Conventional School Model



Community Schools

Effectiveness (DTSDE). The research is clear that becoming a community school is a long-term strategy taking 5-10 years to move to the high levels of trust and coordination required to best serve children and families.

District-level Supports and Actions

Over the course of the past several months the district has taken to following actions, which includes the Path Forward, to engage building leaders, teachers, families and community stakeholders.

Date	Activity
July 2017	Provide initial introductory session for new schools, and position them to co-construct grant opportunity. Work with schools to develop initial grant plan, building logically on existing Receivership Plan.
October 2017	Visit from Shital Shaw, Conversations District leadership, union leaders, Community School Staff, selected school-based personnel to provide an opportunity for Shital Shah to inform District strategy, and learn from RCSD approach. Shape common understanding among RCSD leaders.
October, 2017	Discussion with Cincinnati Community Schools leaders
October-December	Developed job descriptions for Community School Director and Site Coordinators. Posted, interviewed and hiring for all positions
Winter 2017	Develop and convene Community Advisory Group, establishing broad support and collective ownership.

Thus far, the District has supported the schools through the provision of resources to hire/contract the Community School Coordinator and fund the expanded day programming including contracted partners. In addition, the Office of School Innovation (OSI) has supported the schools through the hiring and professional development of the coordinators and collegial learning among principals, including travel. OSI successfully secured an AmeriCorps VISTA to support the work centrally. We have provided responsive supports around the needs assessment process, contract and partnership management, facilitation of community relationships and resources, and required SED reporting. Along the way, we have gathered the emerging areas that will require a review of District policy or practice to support, and are ready to assist in the process of designing the required technical assistance and infrastructure at the District-community level.

Each School's Signature Emerging

Being a community school means listening and responding to the local school community—students, families, staff, neighbors and partners. As agency and efficacy develops, each school will reflect that in a unique signature and suite of services. The specific needs and assets that are identified will determine what services and opportunities each school should develop.

Our schools have invested laudable efforts into organizing and launching this strategy, with the 16-17 School Year essentially Year 1 at Schools 9, 22 and 45; School 17 was able to begin in the 15-16 SY through philanthropic support. The most visible difference is that each school has a full-time Community School Coordinator devoted to building relationships, identifying needs and assets in that particular community, prioritizing and mobilizing partnerships and services, and coordinating the myriad of resources that exist in the community and school. Guided by best practice, these coordinators are working this year to conduct a widespread needs assessment of their school, which resulted in a prioritized set of actions for the 17-18 SY. Please note that each of these schools has met the qualitative expectations of the required State Education rubric, and formally submitted an update to NYSED in June 2017. Given the context-specific nature of the strategy, each school is emerging with a unique vision (visioning exercise shown to the right), set of partners and priorities, and pace. It is important to report that as a result of the NYSED Community Schools Grant the additional five Receivership schools which includes schools 3, 8, 41, James Monroe High School and Northeast College Preparatory High School



A brief synopsis to date is shared in the table on the below. What is difficult to capture on paper is the hard work that has been done to deepen understanding and awareness of the strategy; nurture relational capacity at both individual and institutional levels, and create coherence by integrating this strategy into overall school, district and community improvement initiatives.

Community Schools At-a-Glance

Please note, this is a very truncated picture of the work to date. Community School work is largely relational and therefore difficult to capture on paper. These schools are investing deeply in learning about, and listening to, their communities as they create their short and long-term visions, foster relationship and integrate this strategy into overall school, district and community improvement. Decisions regarding the internal structures in the school is discussed with Community Engagement Teams and School Based Planning Teams.

RCSD Community Schools

<i>Nathaniel Rochester Community School #3</i>	Year 1 Lead Agency Site Coordinator
<i>Roberto Clemente #8</i>	Year 1 RCSD Site Coordinator
<i>Martin Luther King #9</i>	Year 2 RCSD Site Coordinator
<i>Enrico Fermi #17</i>	Year 3 Lead Agency Site Coordinator
<i>Kodak Park #41</i>	Year 1 Lead Agency Site Coordinator
<i>Mary Bethune Mcleoud #45</i>	Year 2 Lead Agency Site Coordinator
<i>James Monroe High School</i>	Year 1 RCSD Site Coordinator
<i>Northeast College Preparatory High School</i>	Year 1 RCSD Site Coordinator