

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Recognition is growing that schools cannot meet the challenge of educating our students on their own. Students bring a variety of needs into the classroom that must be met in order for them to succeed in school and graduate from high school ready for college. Schools are often ill-equipped to address these needs and must leverage every available resource in the community to do so. Specific policies are needed to provide school districts and communities with incentives for developing community involvement policies targeting the non-academic needs that affect student achievement as well as funding collaborations among schools, school districts, and community-based organizations (CBOs) that leverage support services into schools.

Related Federal Legislation

Working to Encourage Community Action and Responsibility in Education (WE CARE) ACT, H.R. 3762. The WE CARE Act would strengthen community engagement in federal education policy in order to meet the needs of students inside and outside the classroom. Specifically, it provides incentives for school districts, CBOs, and others to work together to develop and implement community involvement policies. These policies would leverage resources from the community to help meet students' non-academic needs and prepare them for success in the classroom. In addition, the proposal calls on states and districts to include an analysis of the non-academic needs of students in their plans, along with a strategy for partnering with CBOs and others to meet those needs. Finally, the WE CARE Act calls on districts and schools to engage community stakeholders in the development of school improvement plans in order to utilize every possible resource available to help students and schools make adequate yearly progress.

Full Service Community Schools Act, H.R. 2323/S. 1391. The Full Service Community Schools Act makes grants available to local partnerships between school districts and CBOs as well as state collaboratives for purposes of coordinating education and social service programs at a school site. These services may include early childhood education programs, literacy and reading programs for youth and families, parenting education activities, community service, job training and career counseling services, nutrition services, primary health and dental care, and mental health preventive and treatment services. The legislation authorizes \$200 million, with 75 percent of the funds allocated for local grants, 20 percent to state grants, and the remaining funds used for technical assistance and evaluation.

Keeping Parents and Communities Engaged (PACE) Act, S. 1302. The Keeping PACE Act, authorized at \$260 million per year for five years, strengthens parent and community engagement in schools to support student performance and increase graduation rates. Grants are awarded to states to support subgrants to: 1) schools and districts for parent and community outreach coordinators; 2) CBOs to link services to children, their families, and their schools; and 3) consortia of districts, mayors, and nonprofits to renovate school facilities for the community's use.

Related Research and Publications

Making the Difference: Research and Practice in Community Schools (2003)

Coalition for Community Schools

<http://www.communityschools.org/mtdhomepage.html>

This report synthesizes research from the fields of health, mental health, youth development, family and community engagement, and community-building and demonstrates the connection to student learning. Based on the research, *Making the Difference* presents five conditions for learning that need to be in place for children to succeed at high levels. The report features evaluation data from 20 different community school initiatives and a synthesis of their combined results. By integrating existing community resources with the assets of the school, 15 community schools highlighted in the report produced remarkable improvements in efficiency and results. A lengthy bibliography, resource list, and community school networks contact information is included.

The Family: America's Smallest School (2007)

Paul E. Barton and Richard J. Coley, Educational Testing Service

http://www.ets.org/Media/Education_Topics/pdf/5678_PERCReport_School.pdf

The Family outlines the non-school conditions that have an impact on student achievement. The report calls on policy-makers to address home and family conditions in order for all students to succeed in school.

Community Programs to Promote Youth Development (2002)

The National Academy of Sciences and Institute of Medicine

http://www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10022

This seminal report on youth development describes the elements of a youth's life that must be in place in order to ensure their healthy development, as well as the features of successful programs that help youth thrive.

Recommended Federal Policy Experts

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