

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE



The NEA Foundation's Community Schools Initiative invests in partnerships

between families, schools, and communities in the Deep South (Arkansas, Louisiana, and Mississippi) that are reimagining what it means and what is required to embrace and support student learning and student success.

The Foundation envisions schools as places that foster educators' and students' love of learning, enabling both to excel. We recognize that realizing this vision will require an equitable distribution of educational resources, high-quality teaching and learning at every educational level, and a commitment to supporting and ensuring every child's optimal educational experience. Through the transformative power of effective partnerships, we believe we can close persistent educational opportunity gaps and improve both students' and communities' educational experiences and outcomes.



WHAT ARE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS?

Community schools are a proven strategy for advancing educational equity, improving student outcomes, and enriching families' social and economic health and well-being. Community schools disrupt inequity through a "whole child" approach that addresses the academic, social, emotional, and health needs of students and communities. This can include physical, mental, vision, and dental health services, academic enrichment and after school programs, cultural celebrations, home visits, food and clothing pantries, college, career, and workforce preparedness, and many other resources rooted in the whole child approach to teaching, learning, and supporting student success.

Community schools are co-created through partnerships between educators, students, families, community organizations, businesses, regional and national institutions, policymakers, and others striving to harness

“In my more than 18 years working in education, I've seen the barriers that students face. Students who have clothing needs, who have food needs, who have emotional and healthcare needs. With the community schools model, we make it a priority as a community to give students adequate resources so they can be academically successful.”

Patrick McGriggs, Director of Safe Schools and Healthy Students, Jackson, MS

THE NEA
FOUNDATION[®]

1201 16th Street, NW
Washington, DC 20036

neafoundation@nea.org
neafoundation.org



THE FOUNDATION'S COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVE TAKES A FOUR-PRONGED APPROACH:

- 🍃 **GRANTS:** Early catalytic investments from the Foundation support community schools planning and early implementation in strategic areas of high need and opportunity.
- 🍃 **TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE:** The Foundation provides staff and other expert resources to support communities in developing community schools. While the Foundation does not prescribe a community's approach, it actively facilitates planning and development by offering supportive resources and technical assistance tailored to each community's distinct needs and opportunities.
- 🍃 **CONVENINGS:** The community school grant sites of The Foundation collectively comprise The Southern Regional Alliance for Community Schools. This alliance, convened quarterly by The Foundation, supports shared learning and provides a space for problem-solving and the opportunity to speak honestly about struggles, challenges, and achievements.
- 🍃 **POLICY CHANGE:** Alongside its community schools partners, The NEA Foundation advocates for policies at the local, state, and federal levels that support effective family, school, and community partnership, a liberatory curriculum and pedagogy, resource equity, educator and student voice, and community schools.

KEY INITIATIVES, PROGRAMS AND GRANTMAKING, *continued*

communities' assets and meet the comprehensive academic and support needs of students, families, and communities. By embracing democratic principles that foster strong ties between a school, educators, and the community, community schools also cultivate local leadership and self-sufficiency, leading to sustainable development.



The Foundation's Community Schools Initiative prioritizes communities' self-determination, agency, and unique needs- and opportunity-based approaches. By doing so, it has not only delivered essential investments to several too-often neglected Southern and rural communities, but has also strengthened their capacity to break the cycle of generational poverty rooted in a long history of racism and inequality.

“Where you have children who are struggling, it's the perfect place for a community to come in and wrap their arms around these children and figure out how to best help them.”

Candace Williams, Executive Director, Rural Community Alliance, Little Rock, AR