

## Local School Partnerships Create Healthy Communities



Anchor institutions recognize the important role of public education in creating a healthy community and, to this end, many engage in local K-12 school partnerships. Graduating from high school has direct economic bearing on a young person's employment and earning potential, therefore a strong public school system is intrinsically linked to a community's economic health. And anchor institutions – particularly colleges and universities, but hospitals as well – are uniquely positioned to positively affect educational outcomes in community public schools. Furthermore, having strong local public schools offers many benefits for anchor institutions including better prepared future students and employees and more attractive neighborhood conditions for the institution.

There are many promising models of anchor institution engagement in public education – from community schools to opening a charter school to adopting a local existing public school. A community schools approach uses the school like a community center, connecting partner institutions and community resources not only to improve learning but also to promote healthy communities and service families. The result of the community schools approach is often increased interaction among students, residents and institutions which leads to a more connected and more secure community. Adopting an existing public school or opening a new charter school involves significant financial investment on the part of an anchor institution as well as intensive professional development. In all of the above approaches, anchor institutions bring a wealth of resources to the school partner from student tutoring and mentoring to curriculum development and professional development.

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Anchor institution partnerships with local schools further improve community health in the most literal sense by offering health education and clinical outreach. By opening, or supporting, local health clinics, institutions provide much needed services to residents while also creating valuable experience for medical students and staff. Improving the health of local residents helps them to learn better and work harder while health clinics also offer new jobs and real estate opportunities.

### Making it Work

Like many community development strategies for anchor institutions, developing a strong local schools partnership requires leadership and investments of dollars – be they endowment dollars or additional grant funding. A collaborative and participatory approach to a community schools partnership is also integral to the success of the partnership. Therefore it is important to work with multiple community stakeholders on all aspects of the partnership for the duration of the partnership. Here are a few tips for creating a successful partnership:

- Involve multiple community stakeholders at all levels of the partnership.
- Partner with other local anchor institutions to leverage resources.
- Adapt programs to fit the needs of students, residents, families and the broader community.

## Best Practices

### *Strive Partnership*

Begun in Cincinnati, the Strive partnership is a replicable “cradle to career” approach to educating and improving the lives of kids in disinvested communities. The partnership is made up of community, business, and institutional leaders, as well as educators, service providers and funders working in multiple communities throughout the greater Cincinnati area. The goal of the partnership is to encourage collaboration across sectors to ensure that young people are prepared for school, supported while attending school, successful in their schoolwork, able to enroll in post-secondary education and will graduate and enter a career. The framework promotes early childhood education, teacher and principal excellence, linking community support to student achievement, access to and success in post-secondary learning environments, advocacy and funding alignment, and data-driven, evidence-based decision making. The Strive partnership is now a national network being replicated in communities across the country.

### *Indiana University-Perdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)*

IUPUI began working with local community schools in 1998 with a grant from HUD’s COPC program. Working with multiple community partners, IUPUI re-opened a recently closed high-school as a community school and has since gone on to work in multiple other school partnerships throughout the Near Westside of Indianapolis. These partnerships mostly involve community schools and integrate academics, health and social services, youth and community development, and civic engagement activities. IUPUI also provides financial literacy workshops for adults taught by economic faculty and has opened up the School of Education’s centers on multiculturalism and math and science education for use in local public schools. Additionally, IUPUI’s Community Learning Network works with local community centers to offer continuing education and workforce development. IUPUI continually adapts its local schools programming to fit the needs of the community.

## Resources

Coalition for Community Schools, <http://www.communityschools.org/>

Strive Partnership, <http://www.strivetogether.org/>

The Netter Center for Community Partnerships at the University of Pennsylvania, <https://www.nettercenter.upenn.edu/>

Indiana University-Perdue University, Office of Neighborhood Partnerships, <http://www.ctl.iupui.edu/>