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NEW JERSEY INSTITUTE FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Based at the Center for Human and Social Development

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What California's $4.1 Billion Bet on Community Schools Is Showing Us

In May, the Learning Policy Institute and Stanford's SCALE Initiative released *California Community Schools: Past, Present, and Early Impacts of the California Community Schools Partnership Program* — a deep look at how the state's $4.1 billion investment in the California Community Schools Partnership Program (CCSPP), the largest state-level community schools initiative in the nation, is playing out on the ground.

Using a matched comparison design, the report found that CCSPP schools newly adopting the community schools model saw significantly greater reductions in chronic absence and suspension rates than similar schools without the model, along with meaningful gains in math and English language arts achievement. The biggest gains showed up for Black students, English learners, and socioeconomically disadvantaged students — suggesting community schools may be a particularly effective lever for closing long-standing opportunity gaps.

The report also looked at two mature, pre-CCSPP community school initiatives, finding that their gains accelerated substantially once CCSPP support arrived — offering a real-world look at what sustained investment can do over time.

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The Framework Behind the Results

California didn't leave "community schools" open to interpretation. The state adopted a common framework, known as the "4 × 4," that CCSPP schools build from. It's four sets of four, and each set answers a different question:

- **The Four Pillars** describe what a community school

CCSPP's 4 x 4 Framework

The Four Pillars of Community Schools
1. Integrated student supports
2. Family & community engagement
3. Collaborative leadership & practices
4. Extended learning time & opportunities

The Four Key Conditions for Learning
1. Supportive environment
2. Productive instruction
3. Social-emotional learning
4. System of supports

The Four Cornerstone Commitments
1. Assets-driven and strength-based practice
2. Racially just and restorative school climates
3. Powerful, culturally proficient, & relevant instruction
4. Shared decision-making & participatory practices

The Four Proven Practices
1. Community asset mapping & gap analysis
2. The community school coordinator
3. Site-based & local education agency–based advisory councils
4. Integrating & aligning with relevant programs

The "4 × 4" State-Approved Framework for CCSPP. Source: California Department of Education (2022), California Community Schools Framework, as presented in the LPI/Stanford SCALE report (Table 1).

has: integrated student supports, family and community engagement, collaborative leadership and practices, and extended learning time and opportunities.

- **The Four Key Conditions for Learning** describe what students need in order to thrive: supportive environments, strong instruction, social and emotional learning, and a system of supports that responds to student needs.
- **The Four Cornerstone Commitments** describe the values guiding the work: assets-driven practice, racially just and restorative climates, culturally proficient instruction, and shared decision-making.
- **The Four Proven Practices** describe how schools put it in place: asset mapping, a community school coordinator, advisory councils, and aligning with other programs.

Taken together, the framework gives schools in very different communities a shared language and a clear starting point, and it's the model the results above are measured against.

Institute Insights

New Webinar Series: Community Schools Research Spotlights

We're launching a new webinar series highlighting the latest research on community schools — starting with a look at California's landmark statewide initiative. Additional sessions will be announced with dates soon.

Session 1: Narrowing Opportunity Gaps

How Community Schools Are Strengthening Student Outcomes and Attendance Across California

On July 20, the New Jersey Institute for Community Schools hosted a research webinar featuring Learning Policy Institute (LPI) researchers Anna Maier and Melanie Leung-Gagné, discussing findings from their team's evaluation of the early implementation of California's community schools initiative — the California Community Schools Partnership Program, the largest state-level community school effort in the country, currently serving over 2,500 schools targeting students with the greatest needs.

Watch the recording:

Session 1 YouTube Link: youtu.be/KMKPv7r1TAk

Dig into the research:

- Hernández, Swain, & Maier, "*California Community Schools: Past, Present, and Early Impacts of the California Community Schools Partnership Program,*" LPI & Stanford SCALE, May 2026 — read it here
- Swain, Leung-Gagné, Maier, & Rubinstein, "*Community Schools Impact on Student Outcomes: Evidence from California,*" LPI, September 2025 — read it here

LPI's research shows significant improvement in chronic absence and suspension rates, as well as math and English Language Arts achievement, with the greatest gains among historically underserved student groups. Based on these early results, California's new FY27 state budget includes an ongoing annual allocation of $1 billion in state funds for community schools.

Save the Date

Join Us for Our Upcoming Community of Practice Sessions:

2026

Friday, October 16th
Register Here!

Friday, December 4th

2027

Wednesday, January 20th

Friday, March 12th

Wedensday, May 19th

All CoP meetings will be held at 11:00 AM ET via Zoom.
We encourage *all* coordinators to take part in this collaborative space.

SIGN UP HERE to join the Community of Practice and be part of the conversation.

Student Scoop

Introducing: Student Scoop

Straight From the Students Who Live It

Each issue, we will hand the mic to a student to share a moment from their community school. A favorite afterschool program, a summer program that introduced them to something they are now passionate about, or the extra help that got them through a tough year. This is the real, everyday impact of community schools, in their own words.



Stay Tuned for the First Installment!

Spotlight on Paterson

From Event Planning to Purposeful Practice: Our Summer of Learning

This summer, our Full-Service Community School Coordinators had an opportunity to do something that can be difficult during the pace of the school year: slow down, reflect, learn from one another, and intentionally prepare for the work ahead.

Our summer professional learning sessions were designed around a central idea:

strong Full-Service Community School work is not defined by how many events we host, how much money we spend, or how many activities appear on a calendar. It is defined by the relationships we build, the needs we identify, the partnerships we cultivate, and the impact we create for students and families.



Moving From Events to Programs

A theme woven throughout every session was intention and impact-driven program planning. Coordinators practiced asking deeper questions: What is the purpose? Who are we trying to reach? What conditions will help students and families participate? Who can we partner with? How will we know if it worked?

This shift became an important foundation for the year ahead — coordinators reviewed their school calendars, identified major family engagement opportunities, and began planning collaboratively, including new ideas like Fall into Wellness and a Student/Family Market experience.

Leading With Assets, Not Budgets

Coordinators were reminded that their role is not to purchase every resource themselves, but to assess, bridge, connect, advocate, and build partnerships around the needs of students and families — a message summed up simply: *our budgets do not lead our programming; our planning and preparation do.*

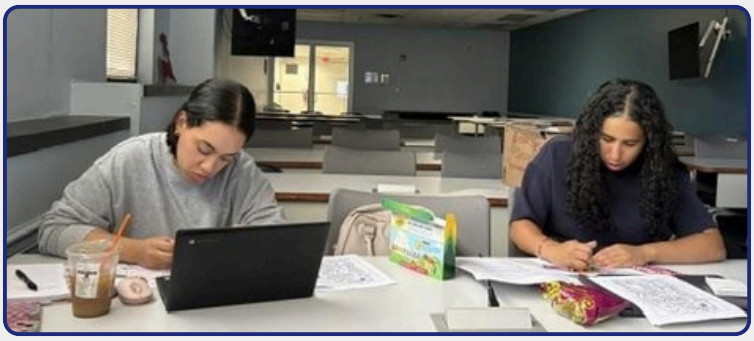
Learning From One Another

Coordinators visited other school environments, exchanged strategies, and learned from colleagues approaching the same role in different ways. One coordinator reflected that a conversation with a school principal helped her understand that "a strong community school is one with a leader that embodies the vision."

Beginning the Year Differently

When asked to complete the sentence, "I'm starting the new school year feeling more _____ because of our time together this summer," coordinators' words included:

prepared | confident | inspired | at ease



Summer learning created dedicated time for coordinators to reflect, plan, share resources, and turn ideas into intentional programs.

As the new school year begins, the goal isn't to do more — it's to be more intentional about what's already being done.

National Moves

Save the Date

University-Assisted Community Schools (UACS) Conference 2026

Democratic Partnerships That Improve Neighborhoods, Schools, and Universities

University-Assisted Community Schools National Network

Netter Center for Community Partnerships University of Pennsylvania

This free, in-person conference — sponsored by Penn's Netter Center for Community Partnerships and its UACS National Network — is open to school, union, university, nonprofit, foundation, neighborhood, and government partners working on University-Assisted Community Schools. Expect interactive panels, facilitated discussions, and breakout sessions. Meals provided; registration required, space limited.

REGISTER TODAY | **CONFERENCE WEBPAGE**

October 26th–27th, 2026 **University of Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, PA**

Join the Community Schools Movement!

Whether you're an educator, policymaker, community partner, or advocate, there's a role for you in strengthening New Jersey's community schools.

To learn more, join our mailing list, or reach out at info@njinstituteforcommunityschools.com.

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