

2023 Legislative Session Issue Brief

Full Service Community Schools

Full-service community schools are the future. Communities from Deer River to Rochester are bringing community services into the school and empowering the people closest to students—parents, educators and neighbors—to transform schools to respond to their needs. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown that schools are truly the hubs of our communities, and our full-service community schools were even better equipped to quickly respond to needs during the pandemic because of the relationships built with their partners.

Education Minnesota supports providing \$90 million a year in state funding to help the state's existing nineteen full-service community schools continue their work and allow other schools to become full-service models as well.

What are full-service community schools?

This concept puts social, medical and before- and after-school academic services and enrichment activities where they are most accessible—on the school campus. Instead of treating a range of educational “problems” as separate issues, community schools work to find ways to unite them and solve them together.

Every school is different based on the needs of the students, families and community. That's why every school does a needs assessment. Here are some examples of programs and services that could be offered:

- Child care, adult education, early childhood education, medical clinics, mental health services, food shelves and family literacy classes.
- Programs that help parents and community members develop deep involvement and leadership in their school.
- High-quality before- and after-school tutoring, college application help and specialized training and professional development for teachers and school staff.
- Services that improve school climate and health. This includes rethinking school discipline and using restorative, trauma-informed practices, training teachers in social and emotional learning, and offering school-based health centers.

Why full-service community schools?


They work. If a child comes to school hungry, sick or struggling with trauma, it's hard to focus on learning. And if a family is hurting financially and has unstable housing, it's more difficult for them to support their child's learning. Community schools across the nation are finding that addressing school culture and non-academic factors can have a significant impact on social emotional health and academic achievement. Brooklyn Center in Minnesota is one of those school districts.

When COVID-19 hit, Brooklyn Center was able to harness the power of its community school partnerships and quickly pivot to help students, families and students weather the pandemic. The district and partner organizations provided more than 1,000 mental health appointments, distributed devices for online learning to every student and offered door-to-door and over-the-phone assistance, delivered meals and book club kits, and more. Following the police killing of Daunte Wright, the school immediately stepped up to help the community. Its Resource Distribution Center—which collected donations and distributed personal hygiene and household items, fresh food, diapers and more—served up to 1,800 individuals a day. As a result of all of this work, graduation rates are up in Brooklyn Center. About 84 percent

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of Brooklyn Center High School seniors graduated in 2020, up from 74 percent in 2010, according to data from the Minnesota Department of Education.

What can the Legislature do to sustain and expand full-service community schools?

We need increased state funding: \$90 million to support existing and new full-service community schools. The funding is used to hire site coordinators, who are key to sustainable, successful community schools. The funding goes to schools in this priority order:

- Existing full-services community schools.
- Schools identified under ESSA as needing assistance, as recommended by the state's School Finance Working Group.
- Any other districts that apply.