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SB 1002: AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Introduction
Good morning, my name is Shital Shah and I am here on behalf of the American Federation of Teachers in Washington, the national affiliate of AFT-Connecticut. We represent 1.5 million members in more than 3,000 local affiliates nationwide. I am an Assistant Director at the AFT. For the past several years I have worked on policy and practice of the community school strategy.

AFT believes that Connecticut, thanks in part to your work on education reform last year, is becoming a leader in creating a public education system that will make a difference in the lives of children. We believe the next step for closing the achievement gap is to find new ways to supplement children's regular coursework by directly addressing those factors, too often related to poverty, that are currently beyond the control of teachers and schools yet have a direct effect on student outcomes. The community school strategy can be a vehicle for addressing these issues.

Issue
In 2011 the poverty rate for persons under age 18 in Connecticut had risen to 14.9 percent (from 11.1 percent before the Great Recession). That means there were 35,000 more children living in poverty in Connecticut in 2011 than in 2007. Too many students come to school with needs that impede their ability to thrive academically.

We simply cannot ignore the stunning impact of income inequality and high child poverty, particularly as those trends appear to be growing. To argue that factors such as poverty, neighborhood conditions, family circumstances and other non-school factors, such as healthcare, social services and parental involvement, do not influence student achievement is wrong, and it blatantly ignores those realities in children's lives that affect their education. Of course poor children can learn and the state should take steps, as you did last year, to improve curriculum and teacher quality. But poor children also deserve and need all of the supports and opportunities and children of wealthy families have available to give them the best chances we can. These supports are even more crucial at a time like the present, when a struggling economy puts even greater pressures on families.

We know Connecticut's achievement gaps on the National Assessment of Educational Progress are among the largest in the nation. We also know those gaps exist before children ever arrive in school. They are one of the more profound manifestations of the impact of poverty on our families. We know that poor children are more likely to come to school not knowing how to count to 20 or know their ABCs. Growing economic inequality contributes in a multitude of ways to a widening gulf between the educational outcomes of rich and poor children. In the early 1970s, the gap between what parents in the top and bottom quintiles spent on enrichment activities such as music lessons, travel and summer camps was approximately $2,700 per year (in 2008 dollars). By 2005-2006, the difference had increased to $7,500. Between birth and age 6, children from high-income families spend an average of 1,300 more hours than children from low-income families in "novel" places — other than at home or school, or in the care of another parent or a day care facility.

Solution – The Community Schools Strategy

We propose transforming some of the schools serving our most vulnerable students, into community schools. Community schools are not a new concept. They have their roots in the earliest, richest traditions of public education. Community schools are not a program, but rather a strategy that leverages, organizes, and coordinates a community's resources to support students' and families' needs. By having programs, such as English language instruction, employment counseling, citizenship programs and GED programs, and social services in schools, parents are encouraged to get more involved in their children's education, and help to stabilize families so they can better support their children's learning. A variety of federal, state and local funding streams could be drawn upon for these services.

Across the country, many such partnerships are already using public and private assets more effectively and achieving measurable results through shared accountability. Without question, Connecticut schools need qualified teachers and strong principals. And like all public institutions, they must be accountable for improving their performance. But research shows that family and community ties are essential in order for schools to educate our children. [1,2]

This bill is an essential first step. It enables schools to build the bridge between them and the community so together they address the barriers and challenges our students and families face on a daily basis.

The Five Essential Principles of Community Schools

1. Community schools have a strong academic curriculum. The school and community work together to ensure that students have a strong and rigorous curriculum that will further student success. The goal of academic success should advance all strategic partnership planning.
2. Community schools are a set of coordinated and purposeful partnerships with the school district that integrate services for students, their families and the community with the common goal of ensuring student success and building strong communities. Many schools offer afterschool tutoring or a series of unconnected programs. Their programs are too often unrelated, disconnected from any academic mission and necessary rigorous curriculum, and lack the support built through partnerships that engender sustainability. A full-service community school provides integrated programs and experiences that enrich learning as well as meet the needs of students and the community.
3. Community school partners may include a variety of providers and funders. They may be community-based, regional or national organizations and may have nonprofit, for-profit or faith-based status, but should provide equal access to all children.
4. Community schools provide more than one type of service to students and the community. These may include: academic services like tutoring, community-based learning and other enrichment activities; medical services like primary, vision, dental and nutritional services; mental health services like counseling and psychiatrists; and a variety of social services.
5. Community schools are based on a comprehensive and strategic plan agreed to in writing (e.g., contracts, memoranda of agreement and memoranda of understanding) between the partner organization(s), including the providers and funders, and the school. Oversight of the school site(s) requires written agreements to avoid problems of governance and operation of community schools. Written agreements also provide planning and a process for creating community school models that can be taken to scale with buy-in by all stakeholders.

Solution Driven Unionism

Across the country, AFT is working to support community schools as part of our philosophy that the union has to work with community to find real solutions. There are several e**xamples of Community Schools that we have learned from.**

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[1] Bryk, Anthony S., Penny Bender Sebring, Elaine Allensworth, Stuart Luppescu, and John Q. Easton. *Organizing Schools for Improvement: Lessons from Chicago*. (2010). Chicago, Illinois: Consortium on Chicago School Research.

[2] Henderson, Anne T. and Karan L. Mapp. (2002). A *New Wave of Evidence: The Impact of School, Family, and Community Connections on Student Achievement.* National Center for Family & Community Connections with Schools. Southwest Educational Development Laboratory.

In particular,

- Cincinnati's Community Learning Center strategy has expanded over the past 13 years. They are a model and an inspiration of what can happen here in Connecticut. Over this time, they have created a network of resources from partners, representing youth development, mental health, academics, etc. **Cincinnati became the first urban district in Ohio to receive an "effective" rating, the highest performing urban district in Ohio (2009-10) and they have raised high school graduation rates have from 51% in 2000 to 83% in 2009.**
- Another state where we are working with elected leaders and community is NY where, Gov. Cuomo has proposed a $15 million program to help targeted schools transform themselves into community schools that would build partnerships with counties, nonprofits and the private sector. The goal is to integrate services and supports needed for student and family success.

Community schools reflect what research and common sense confirm: All young people learn most fully when they are connected in positive ways to their communities; supported by caring relationships and appropriate health and social services in and out of school; and when time for learning is extended and rich in "teachable" moments that build social, emotional, physical and academic competence.

Family and community involvement in school-based and school-linked learning and development significantly expands the resources and supports available to children and their families— particularly the most vulnerable. And it creates the conditions for learning that enable children to do their best work. This participation builds trust and a sense of shared responsibility and investment in our schools and the well being of our children. In turn, the widespread adoption of these conditions leads to measurable improvements in the lives of children and families, schools, districts, and communities. More explicit actions to encourage and sustain the community school strategy make sense for several reasons.

Community schools *work*. An increasing number of community schools are producing impressive results. For example, improved reading and math scores, increased attendance, and increased graduation rates, among others. [3] As the experience of Evansville, IN, Tulsa, OK, Multnomah, OR, and Cincinnati, OH (*see Attachment A*) individual student improvement can add up to whole school and district-wide change when a community schools strategy is broadly implemented. This cross-section of community school initiatives includes improvements in:

- Math and reading achievement scores
- Attendance and behavior
- Graduation and college entry
- Instructional leadership and supervisory practices
- Trust among students, parents and teachers
- District enrollment
- School ratings within districts
- District ratings within states

Second, a community school strategy pays off in dollars and cents. A recent study[4] by the Coalition for Community Schools shows that community schools increase and sustain capacity through diversified financial support. Estimated conservatively, they leverage $3 from private and other sources for every $1 of district funding provided. When serving as the CEO of Chicago Public Schools, Secretary of Education Arne Duncan estimated a return of $5-7 from the community schools initiative in Chicago.

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[3] Jacobson, R. and Pearson, S. *Community Schools Research Brief*. (2009). Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership.

[4] Blank, M, Jacobson, R, Melaville, A, and Pearson, S. *Financing Community Schools: Leveraging Resources to Support Student Success.* (2010). Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership.

Third, there is a strong and growing core of community schools nation-wide and great interest in many other communities in implementing the strategy. From tiny suburban Tukwila, Washington to sprawling Chicago, Illinois; from Tulsa, Oklahoma to the Lehigh Valley of Pennsylvania; and from rural communities to New York City, school and community leaders have seen that the community school strategy pays off and are working to scale up their community school efforts.

The challenge is to align existing services and opportunities that are now present in schools into a coherent strategy to get results. *Many schools have programs and partners – after school, health, social service, adult education; few have the coherent approach that community schools offer. Ad hoc strategies that are not deeply embedded in the school and community are not sufficient in our view.*

Steps in Moving Forward

As a first step toward a community school strategy, I urge you to pass the proposed **CT Bill 1002:** ***AN ACT CONCERNING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS.*** Passing this legislation will send a message throughout the state that everyone – every person, every family, our businesses, arts and cultural institutions, higher education institutions, community-based organizations, churches mosques and synagogues, and the agencies of our city government - has a role to play.

If we organize all of the resources in the school districts and communities across the state to implement the community school strategy, our teachers and principals will have the respect, support and encouragement they need as well as being held accountable; our parents will become more engaged in the education of their children, and most importantly our students will succeed – they will have academic, social and emotional support they need and they will no longer be isolated from the opportunities and the social networks that are common for their high income peers.

In closing, there is no better time than now. More and more families are struggling financially and the number of homeless children in schools is increasing. We must have all of the key stakeholders at the table and move forward with this vision of giving every child a chance to succeed using the strategy of community schools throughout Connecticut. The American Federation of Teachers is ready to help in any way necessary. I thank you for your time.

Coalition for Community Schools

Because Every Child Deserves Every Chance

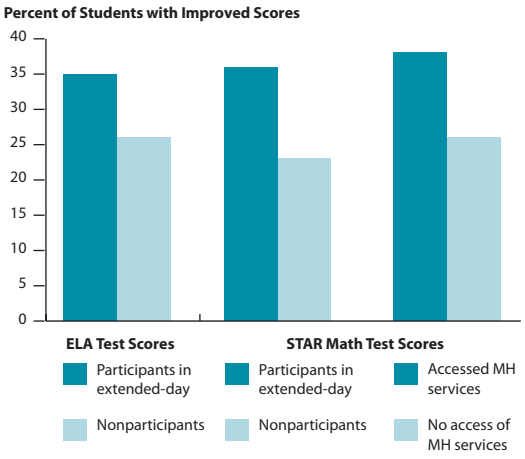
Community Schools RESEARCH BRIEF 09

WHAT ARE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS? WHERE ARE THEY?

In the last decade, community school initiatives have spread to localities in 49 states and the District of Columbia. The concept of community school is growing in part because it represents a vehicle for aligning the assets of students, families, teachers, and the community around a common goal—improving the success of our young people. Community schools purposefully integrate academic, health, and social services; youth and community development; and community engagement—drawing in school partners with resources to improve student and adult learning, strengthen families, and promote healthy communities.

DO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS WORK? WHAT DO WE KNOW?

A growing body of research suggests that fidelity to the community school strategy yields compounding benefits for students, families, and community. Community school students show significant gains in academic achievement and in essential areas of nonacademic development. Families of community school students show increased family stability, communication with teachers, school involvement, and a greater sense of responsibility for their children's learning. Community schools enjoy stronger parent-teacher relationships, increased teacher satisfaction, a more positive school environment, and greater community support. The community school model promotes more efficient use of school buildings and, as a result, neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents.[1] Evaluations demonstrate positive outcomes in a variety of areas.



Results of San Mateo County Community Schools study comparing 2006–07 test scores between students who participated in community school programs and nonparticipants

Improved Academic Performance—Reading and Math

Improvement in student academic performance is significant among community schools. An independent review of the national community school initiative, Communities in Schools, has reported that students in their schools excelled significantly in math and reading scores over students in other schools.[2]

The 150 schools in the Chicago Community School Initiative (CSI) have delivered standardized test results from 2001 to 2007 that show a steady closing of the achievement gap with other CPS schools. Out-of-school time, a key feature of the initiative, is linked to increased reading and math scores.[3]

In New York City, where the Children's Aid Society (CAS) has shepherded their leading community school initiative, students participating in CAS after-school programs from 2004 to 2007 scored significantly higher on their math tests than students in other city schools. In the period from 2006 to 2007, 42.1 percent of students who spent more than half their time in a CAS community school met the Level 3 standard (i.e, proficient) on the state math test. From 1993 to 1995, the number of third-grade students at a CAS community school improved by 25 percentage points in reading proficiency—from 10.4 percent to 35.4 percent—and 33 percentage points in math proficiency—from 23.3 percent to 56 percent—by the fifth grade. From 2004 to 2005, middle-school youth were significantly more likely to achieve proficiency on standardized test scores if they participated regularly in community school after-school programs. Students who participated for two years were even more likely to achieve proficiency. During the 2004–05 school year, seventh- and eighth-grade students who participated in community school after-school programs performed significantly better than non-participants on reading and math tests.[4]

A study of San Mateo County Community Schools found that their most seasoned community schools had students who regularly reached Academic Performance Index standards and achieved advanced scores on the state's English Language Arts (ELA) assessment (STAR). Compared with the previous year, student participation in extended-day activities, student and/or parent participation in mental health services, and parent participation in school programs and activities were associated with higher STAR test scores in 2006–07. Specifically, over one-third (35 percent) of youth who participated in extended-day activities improved their scores on the ELA test, while only 26 percent of non-participants improved. Over 36 percent of participants improved their scores on the STAR math test, while only 23 percent of non-participants improved. Thirty-eight percent of students who accessed mental health services and/or whose families accessed mental health services improved their scores on the STAR math test, while just 26 percent improved if neither accessed services.

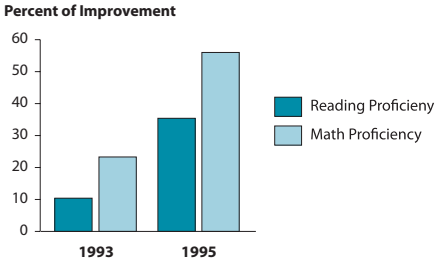
Dropout Rates Reduced—Attendance Improved

Community schools have a significant impact on reducing the dropout rate.

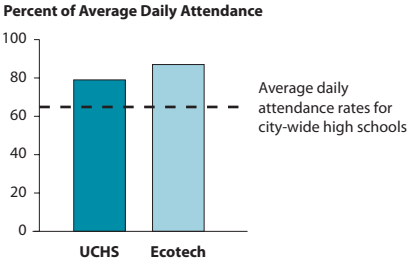
- Compared to dropout prevention programs with scientifically based evidence and listed in the U.S. Department of Education's What Works Clearinghouse, Communities in Schools is one of a small number of programs to prove it keeps students in school and is the only one in the country to prove that it increases graduation rates, graduating students on time with a regular diploma.
- In Tukwila, Washington, Community Schools Collaboration's on-time graduation rate has increased annually since 2001; the rate of absentee and drop-outs for middle and high school students also has dropped.[5]

Higher attendance in community schools contributes to improved achievement. Children in community schools want to come to school and as a result they learn more.

- In 2003–2004, findings for the Los Angeles's BEST After School Enrichment Program showed that higher levels of participation led to better subsequent school attendance, which in turn related to higher academic achievement.[6]
- In New York City, the Children's Aid Society students who participated in after-school programs for three or four years had better school attendance than students who participated for less time or not time at all (statistically significant).
- Nationwide, Communities in Schools found net increases in elementary, middle, and high school attendance for community schools over their matched comparison group.[7]



Early reports from the Children's Aid Society (CAS) community school initiative showed that third-graders improved in both reading and math proficiency by fifth grade.



The Netter Center for Community Partnership's two CCP partner schools—University City High Schools (UCHS) and Echotech—increased average daily attendance rates compared to average citywide high school daily attendance rates.

- In Iowa, the Eisenhower Full-Service Community School model demonstrated a significant reduction in absenses for participants compared to non-participants.
- In the Cincinnati Public Schools' Community Learning Centers (CLCs), eight of nine community school sites reached their benchmark of 93 percent of students who attend daily.
- The Netter Center for Community Partnerships (CCP) at the University of Pennsylvania (Philadelphia) reported that CCP partner schools University City High School (UCHS) and Ecotech had average daily attendance rates of 79 percent and 87 percent respectively compared to the citywide high school average daily attendance of 65 percent.
- In Arkansas, the Schools of the 21st Century model saw a 2.2 percent decrease in absenteeism rates.

Improved Behavior and Youth Development

There are beneficial shifts in the actions, attitudes, interests, motivations, and relationships of children and youth who attend a community school.

- Chicago CSI students have consistently demonstrated significantly lower numbers of serious disciplinary incidents compared to schools with similar demographics.[8]
- Shaw Middle School, which partnered with the University of Pennsylvania, saw suspensions decrease from 464 to 163 from 2000 to 2006.
- A study of the Children's Aid Community Schools found significant increases in self-esteem and career/other aspirations for all surveyed students and decreased reports of problems with communication across all three study years.
- Results demonstrate that the quality of youth-development approaches embedded in the New York City Beacons centers helped youth learn leadership skills; youth reported that they were less likely to intentionally hurt someone physically, damage other people's property, steal money, or get into a fight.[9]

Greater Parent Involvement

When families are supported in their parenting role, involvement in their children's learning increases and student performance is strengthened. Consistent parental involvement—at home and school, at every grade level, and throughout the year—is important for students' sustained academic success.[10]

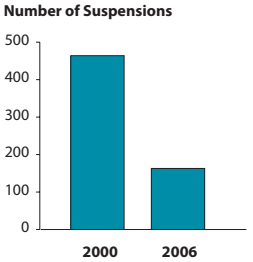
Parents of community school students are more engaged in their children's learning and are more involved in their school. In the San Mateo County Community School study, parent skills and capacities saw statistically significant improvements. Results show that 93 percent of parents attended parent/teacher conferences and a high percentage of parents encouraged their child to complete their homework (95 percent "more frequently" than "occasionally"), talked to their child about school (97 percent "more frequently" than "occasionally"), and used everyday activities to teach their child (87 percent "more frequently" than "occasionally").

Parents who receive services from the community school that their children attend are more likely to be engaged in their children's education. For example, in Carlin Springs Elementary School in Arlington, Virginia, 95 percent of the adults taking ESL classes attended parent-teacher conferences.

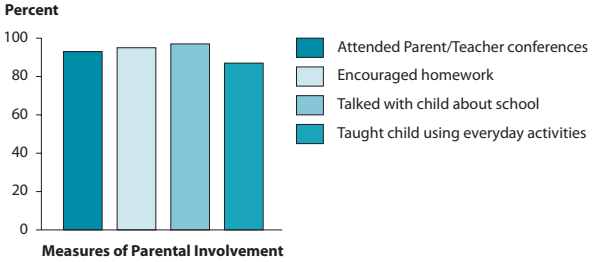
In two other community schools—Sayre High School in Philadelphia and Independence School District in Independence, Missouri—90 percent of Family Fitness Night participants reported that they are eating healthier and exercising more. Family School liaisons conducted 17,170 home visits from 2004 to 2007.

Benefits to the Community

Community schools promote better use of school buildings and neighborhoods enjoy increased security, heightened community pride, and better rapport among students and residents. Benefits to families—such as increased physical, economic, and emotional stability—contribute to the stability of their communities. So do more and better relationships among community agencies, businesses, and civic organizations, accompanied by a greater awareness of the services they offer.[11]



Shaw Middle School partnered with the University of Pennsylvania and saw the number of student suspensions decrease from 464 in 2000 to only 163 in 2006.



San Mateo County Community School results show that 93 percent of parents attended parent/teacher conferences, 95 percent of parents frequently encouraged their child to complete homework, 97 percent of parents frequently talked with their child about school, and 87 percent of parents frequently used everyday activities to teach their child.

Results from the Coalition's community schools national award for excellence in 2006 and 2007 revealed that in the community school initiative of Bedford Township, Michigan, over 1,400 adults participated in more than 250 adult evening-enrichment classes. Also, over 14,000 meals per year were prepared and served at the Senior Center, over 40 adults received their GED diploma, and health vans provided transportation to and from non-emergency medical appointments 365 days per year.

Community schools promote healthy relationships between youth and adults and with youth peers in their community. In SUN Community Schools in Multnomah County, Oregon, 93 percent of students reported having at least one adult they can turn to for help. SUN Community Schools collaborate with 350 business and community partners. In the 2005–06 school year, 2,163 community and business volunteers contributed 33,000 volunteer hours to SUN Community Schools. In that same school year, 16,315 children and youth and 3,142 adults were served through SUN classes and activities. In Lincoln Community Learning Centers in Lincoln, Nebraska, the Lincoln Chamber of Commerce passed a resolution recognizing the importance of the CLC initiative to economic development.[12]

Next Steps—An Evaluation Toolkit

Evidence is mounting in support of the community school strategy as being one of the best ways to improve outcomes for children, families, schools, and communities. Over 20 community school initiatives are conducting formative and summative evaluations to monitor their progress. In an effort to build the field, both in quantity and quality, the Coalition for Community Schools is partnering with the John Gardner Center at Stanford in 2008–09 to develop a toolkit for individual community school practitioners and community school initiatives for evaluating and modifying their practice as they continue to develop more and more effective community schools.

ENDNOTES

1 Blank, M., Melaville, A., & Shah, B. (2003). *Making the difference: Research and practice in community schools*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership.

2 A study of Communities in Schools, a national community school model found: net increases of +6.0% in grade 8 math and +5.1% in grade 8 reading scores for high-implementing community schools over their matched comparison group. Net increases in math scores for all grades over their comparison groups (+2.5% urban, +3.3% rural). Net increases in math for schools predominantly serving traditionally-low performing populations.

3 For example, gains were recorded on the state achievement test in 2005–06 school year; "In 2001, the average CSI school had 12% fewer students meeting or exceeding expectations in reading while in 2007 CSI schools averaged only 6.9% fewer students, representing a reduction of 43% not meeting reading expectations."; "In 2001, the average CSI school had half as many students meeting or exceeding math expectations as non-CSI schools (14% versus 28%), while in 2007 the difference was only 5.1 percentage points (64.2% versus 69.3%)."

4 Summary of the *Children's Aid Society community schools: Results to date*; Referenced from *21st Century Community Learning Centers at six New York City middle schools: Year one findings,* prepared by K. Krenichyn, H. Clark, N. Schaefer-McDaniel, & L. Benitez of Actknowlege, September 2005. See also *Summary of Fordham University research findings 1992–99,* prepared by Actknowledge.

5 Results from the Community Schools National Award Winners for Excellence, 2006 & 2007, Coalition for Community Schools.

6 Blank, M., Melaville, A., & Shah, B. (2003). *Making the difference: Research and practice in community schools*. Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership.

7 Communities in Schools found net increases of +0.2% in elementary, +0.1% in middle, and +0.3% in high school for high-implementing community schools over their matched comparison group.

8 The average number of serious disciplinary incidents is consistently lower by 5 to 10 incidents annually as reported from 2002 to 2006. Chicago Public Schools, Community Schools Initiative, Office of Extended Learning Opportunities, 2008.

9 Blank, M., Melaville, A., & Shah, B. (2003). *Making the difference: Research and practice in community schools.* Washington, DC: Coalition for Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid.

12 Results from the Community Schools National Award Winners for Excellence, 2006 & 2007, Coalition for Community Schools.

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