

February 21, 2022



Dear House Education Finance Members:

Minnesota School Boards Association (MSBA) is a statewide organization that represents all 333 public school boards. As a leading advocate for public education, we support, promote, and strengthen the work of Minnesota school boards.

Every student should have access to schools with the resources, opportunities, and supports that make academic success possible and create strong ties among families, students, schools, and communities. Doing so will provide more equitable opportunities and prepare students for success in life and as citizens. That's what full service community schools offer. They are a powerful, evidence-based strategy for creating excellent schools for students, regardless of their race, family income level, or the zip code in which they live.

Community schools are public schools that partner with families and community organizations to provide well-rounded educational opportunities and supports for students' school success. What makes community schools unique is the combination of four key pillars that together create the conditions necessary for students to thrive, they are:

1. Integrated supports - Coordinating critical supports at the school site, community schools ensure the needs of students and families are met with minimal disruption to the school day by coordinating critical supports at the school site. This enables teachers to focus on instruction, knowing that there are other professionals attending to the nonacademic needs of their students. Primary health and dental care, mental health counseling services, juvenile crime prevention and rehabilitation, housing and homelessness prevention, childcare services, family education, and career counseling are common examples of integrated student supports.
2. Expanded and enriched learning time - Local and cultural experts collaborate with community schools to provide enriched learning experiences both in classrooms during the school day, and through added learning time before and after school, on weekends, and during summer vacation both at school and in the community. Such opportunities include community-based and culturally relevant lessons and activities that address real-world experiences and issues. These lessons provide students with engaging opportunities for personal and community development.
3. Active family, student and community engagement - Community schools build trust and partnership by actively attending to relationships with families, students and community leaders. These authentic relationships lead to active family engagement, which is essential to helping families be more involved in the decisions about their children's education. Through active family engagement, the school can better understand and respond to persistent barriers and identify family and community assets. Students do better academically and socially when their parents and educators are working in partnership.
4. Collaborative leadership driven by continuous improvement - A shared commitment to create opportunities for deeper, more trusting relationships between families and school staff and

between teachers and administrators. These relationships strengthen the school's ability to work with family and community members to create meaningful learning opportunities for students by bringing the local knowledge of the community into the school. These relationships also can help make sure that the supports and services address local needs.

Minnesota currently has a handful of schools and programs that are effectively implementing the full-service community schools model and seeing results. Students of color and under-resourced students in these schools are "beating the odds," attaining educational outcomes more in line with their more privileged peers. We believe that any school district that would like to be a full service community school, should have the option to do so.

The full-service community schools framework offers Minnesota an opportunity to promote educational equity centered on the unique needs and strengths of each school community, and to address a wide range of factors that affect educational achievement. Dedicated youth and community organizations and individuals across the state already work hard to provide many services that can help students and families thrive. Community schools allow us to better coordinate that patchwork of effort, while also ensuring our schools continuously monitor and improve the ways they can support student learning.

In December 2021, the MSBA Delegate Assembly passed the following resolution:

**BE IT RESOLVED, THAT MSBA URGES THE LEGISLATURE TO EXPAND FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FUNDING TO MINNESOTA SCHOOLS THAT WISH TO PARTICIPATE.**

Taking a holistic approach to the well-being of our students is critical to improving their performance in school and beyond. Full-service community schools work to ensure students come to school ready to learn and succeed by locating educational and social service programs in one place, facilitated through partnerships with school districts and community organizations. They are especially critical for children attending high-poverty schools who face greater barriers to learning.

Respectfully,

Minnesota School Boards Association