

Great Lakes Center for Education and Practice: Community schools are strongly supported by research evidence, as required by ESSA

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EAST LANSING, Mich. (Jun. 5, 2017) - A new policy brief, co-produced by the [National Education Policy Center \(NEPC\)](#) and the [Learning Policy Institute \(LPI\)](#), explores the research on community schools. Community schools represent a partnership and school improvement strategy to integrate resources provided by community agencies and local government for improved student learning, stronger families, and healthier communities.

Common pillars of community schools include: (1) integrated student supports; (2) expanded learning time and opportunities; (3) family and community engagement; and (4) collaborative leadership and practices.

The brief, ***Community Schools: An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement***, authored by [Jeanie Oakes](#), [Anna Maier](#), and [Julia Daniel](#), investigated whether well-designed community schools could be harnessed under the Every Student Succeeds Act (ESSA) to meet the needs of low-achieving students in high-poverty schools. The brief also provides support to school, district, and state leaders as they consider, propose, or implement a community school intervention.

Community Schools was made possible in part by support provided to NEPC by the [Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice](#). The research underlying the brief was supported in part by grants to LPI from the Ford Foundation and the Sandler Foundation. The policy brief draws from a larger research brief from LPI of 125 peer-reviewed studies, program evaluations, and published research reviews.

The authors found that community schools are strongly supported by research, and can be a particularly important strategy for transforming high-poverty schools. Moreover, the authors say: “Sufficient evidence meeting ESSA’s criteria for ‘evidence-based’ approaches exists to justify including community schools as part of targeted and comprehensive interventions in high-poverty schools.” Broader use of the approach is recommended.

Other considerations for future work include:

- Taking a comprehensive approach;
- Recognizing that successful community schools do not all look alike;
- Collaboration between schools, service providers, parents, and staff is key;
- Local community members, parents, and young people need to be part of a needs assessment, design, planning, and implementation process;
- Evaluation strategies need to provide useful information about implementation and exposure to services; and
- Data should be used for continuous improvement.

The authors also encouraged further research on community schools for a stronger understanding of their effectiveness. They note that more information is needed on the conditions needed for these efforts to work.

Find this brief on the web:

<http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

You can also find the brief on the NEPC website:

<http://nepc.colorado.edu>

The Learning Policy Institute’s website is:

<https://learningpolicyinstitute.or>