



**Community Schools Initiative  
Program Overview & Grant Implementation Plan  
August 2013**

The demands on schools in distressed communities are far greater than those in less challenged areas, and they span a variety of disciplines that include but are not limited to academics. Communities in distress need to be able to rely on their schools to not only provide a quality education to every child, but also to serve as the hub for varied support services for children and their families. These critical services address needs from health care to counseling, from nutrition to job preparation. We must all work together to support these schools as neighborhood solutions, many of which are the primary point of contact between at-risk families and critical service providers.

The Community Schools initiative proposed by Governor Cuomo in his 2013 State of the State agenda and 2013-14 Executive Budget builds on the evidence of promising practices from successful community schools across the state and nation. This program reflects the recommendations of the *New NY Education Reform Commission* and is consistent with the New York State Board of Regents' advocacy for establishing programs for students and families that provide academic enrichment activities along with a broad array of student and family development opportunities within their communities. Fundamentally, Community Schools coordinate and maximize public, non-profit and private resources to deliver critical services to students and their families, thereby increasing student achievement and generating other positive outcomes.

The NYS Council on Children & Families, in coordination with the NY State Education Department, has developed the following Program Overview and Grant Implementation Plan to describe how New York State's Community Schools initiative will be implemented.

**The Community Schools Strategy**

Community Schools are public schools that emphasize family engagement and are characterized by strong partnerships and additional supports for students and families designed to counter environmental factors that impede student achievement. While some of the characteristics of Community Schools vary based on the needs of the specific community, all Community Schools share three essential elements:

- A **rigorous academic program** with strong supports to prepare all students for college, careers and citizenship, and that supplements quality curriculum with expanded learning opportunities that keep students engaged, coupled with high levels of accountability for results;
- A full range of school-based and school-linked **programs and services** that, based on a needs assessment of the community, address the comprehensive needs of students and their families and that work with families as essential partners in student success; and
- **Partnerships that demonstrate collaboration with the local community**, including by engaging families and other community stakeholders, drawing on a broad set of resources, and incorporating local and State government agencies, non-profit service providers, institutions of higher education, and the philanthropic and business communities in order to extend the impact and depth of services and programs.

It is important to emphasize that Community Schools do not seek to duplicate effective services that already exist in their communities; rather, through partnerships, these schools leverage existing high-quality programs and assets by linking them to the school and providing robust services to students and their families.

### **At the State Level**

The State will be a full partner in the Community Schools initiative, making government work better by targeting key resources and programs to support Community Schools and their public, private, and non-profit sector partners. To advance this effort, Community Schools and their partners will receive preference in Executive agency grant-making and other funding decisions for related services and programs.

Where a Community School has identified a priority or need, the State will work to assist it through existing programs, examples of which may include the following:

- Offering School Breakfast, summer feeding, snack and supper programs during an expanded school programming schedule;
- Improving school nutrition by making food better and healthier, and introducing more physical activity, through including Community Schools in the Health Schools New York and/or Creating Healthy Places to Live, Work & Play programs;
- Increasing access to primary and preventative health, mental health and dental health services by partnering with hospitals or community health centers to establish or enhance school-based health clinics within Community Schools;
- Requiring organizations that enroll low-income adults and children in health insurance programs under the federal healthcare reform law to work with and in Community Schools;
- Partnering with adolescent pregnancy prevention programs;

- Offering support programs for teen and young adult parents structured to increase academic achievement and college and career readiness, including maternal, infant and early childhood home visiting programs in the community;
- Assisting with the implementation of positive discipline strategies as alternatives to suspensions, where appropriate;
- Providing housing counseling, services, and support;
- Establishing Department of Labor satellite One-Stop Career Centers in Community Schools to help community members find job training and work and to help older students prepare for careers;
- Creating a college and career plan for middle and high school students by training school staff and working with parents, using the State’s online CareerZone tool;
- Developing conflict resolution programs; and/or
- Creating culturally-based intergenerational programs linking youth, teens, adults and seniors.

### **At the Community Level**

Community School grant recipients are expected to build local partnerships and coordinate multiple funding streams to maximize the availability and effectiveness of services that students and their families can access within the school. The \$15 million Community Schools initiative in the 2013-14 Enacted Budget will provide support for these partnerships. As described above, these grants will complement – not supplant – existing federal, State, local, private and non-profit resources allocated for service delivery in targeted communities; grantees are expected to seek (and will receive technical assistance as needed to pursue) other available reimbursements for relevant services, such as Medicaid, third-party health insurance and federal nutrition funding. This document describes how applicants can craft a strong community-level strategy to support their proposed program.

As directed in the 2013-14 Enacted Budget, Community School grants will be awarded based on factors including, but not limited to, the following:

- Measures of school district need;
- Measures of the need of students to be served by each of the school districts;
- The school district’s proposal to target the highest need schools and students;
- The sustainability of the proposed community schools program; and
- Proposal quality.

The Enacted Budget further directs that proposal quality shall take into account factors including, but not limited to, the following:

- The extent to which the school district’s proposal would provide such community services through partnerships with local governments and non-profit organizations;
- The extent to which the proposal would provide for delivery of such services directly in school buildings;

- The extent to which the proposal articulates how such services would facilitate measurable improvement in student and family outcomes;
- The extent to which the proposal articulates and identifies how existing funding streams and programs would be used to provide such community services; and
- The extent to which the proposal ensures the safety of all students, staff and community members in school buildings used as community hubs.

### **Community Schools Grant Eligibility**

Community School grants will be awarded through a competitive Request for Proposals process.

Eligibility is determined as follows:

- Any school district may apply as long as the school district is 1) a high-need school district, or 2) an average-need school district with a minimum Extraordinary Needs percentage of 50% as most recently calculated by the State Education Department.
  - A school district may apply to support all or some of the schools in the district. If a portion of schools within the district will be receiving supports, then those schools must be identified as part of the grant application process.
- A consortium of school districts may apply as long as all school districts in the consortium are 1) high-need school districts, or 2) average-need school districts with a minimum Extraordinary Needs percentage of 50%.
- In New York City only, non-profit organizations (including non-profit community-based organizations) that collaborate with the school district may apply on behalf of the New York City school district with approval of the Chancellor of the school district.
- All school district applicants must demonstrate that they have fully implemented the standards and procedures for conducting annual professional performance reviews (APPR) of classroom teachers and building principals in accordance with the requirements of section 3012-c of the education law and with the Commissioner of Education’s regulations.

BOCES and public charter schools are not eligible for grants under this initiative.

Lists of high- and average-need school districts and Extraordinary Needs percentages are available on the State Education Department website at [this link](#).

### **Program Characteristics**

Successful applicants will craft the Community School’s role as part of a strategy to meet the needs of high-needs students and their families by demonstrating the following elements in their proposal:

- **Targeting Resources (School and Community Need):** Community Schools are designed to address the needs of distressed communities and to serve low-income students and families.

Within eligible school districts, Community Schools should target the students and schools with the greatest needs.

- **Program Quality (Design, Organization & Implementation Plan):** Community Schools ensure that students and their families have access to a comprehensive suite of programs and services that include academic enhancement, family engagement, health promotion and healthcare (including physical, dental and mental health), nutrition, counseling, legal, parenting skills and supports, housing, workforce training and related job search assistance. Each Community School's focus should be based on a needs assessment of the specific community. Funds must go toward providing additional school-based or school-linked services that are not already being funded in the community, bringing community services into the school, technical assistance, extending the school's hours of operation so that services can be located there during nights/evenings, weekends and summer (with appropriate measures to ensure the safety of all students, staff and community members), etc. Applicants are expected to describe a governance structure that enables successful program implementation. In addition, Community Schools should consider operating within a consortium in order to maximize technical assistance, evidence-based practices and economies of scale.
- **Partnerships:** Community Schools collaborate with non-profit providers, community-based organizations, the business community, institutions of higher education, and city and/or county government agencies as active participants for planning, technical support and provision of direct services to students and their families. While eligibility to directly apply for the Community Schools grant is limited to the description in the preceding Eligibility section, the program may be administered by a partner, such as a non-profit agency, selected by the school district, in order to allow for local flexibility. In addition, school districts should consider working with established Community School models that have a record of proven success. An MOU or letter of intent stipulating roles and responsibilities of each partner is required of all partnerships.
- **Focus on Performance/Outcomes (Program Evaluation and Goals Fulfillment):** Community Schools adopt performance benchmarks that allow ongoing measurement of improvement in student and family well-being based on the programs and services that the Community School is providing. Appropriate benchmarks include quantitative measures of improved student performance (e.g., improvement in student achievement levels, decrease in absenteeism, increase in graduation rates); increase in the linkage and delivery of need-aligned social services (e.g., increased usage of school breakfast, increased immunization rates, minimum number of early childhood home visits); and increase in access to essential services (e.g., counseling services made available, health clinic established at a school, housing counseling services made available). Performance metrics must include the following: (1) growth in student academic achievement (including State assessments, where available); (2) graduation and attendance rates; (3) evidence of improvement in areas of school culture and climate (including attendance

and behavioral incidents); and (4) evidence of improvement in student health and socio-emotional well-being. By September 1 of each year, the State Education Department, in consultation with appropriate Council on Children & Families member agencies and each grantee, will establish minimum performance benchmarks required for continued funding for the subsequent project year.

- **Budget & Sustainability:** Community School proposals should demonstrate how they will leverage existing funding streams and sustain performance and service provision after the conclusion of the grant award.

### **Grant Process**

Implementation of the Community Schools initiative will begin in the 2013-14 school year.

The process will proceed on the following timeline:

- August 2013: The Council on Children & Families, in coordination with the State Education Department, issues the Program Overview & Grant Implementation Plan.
- August 9, 2013: The State Education Department issues the Request for Proposals. The Request for Proposals can be found at [this link](#).
- September 18, 2013: All proposals are due.
- September 2013: Grant winners announced.

### **Budget Considerations**

Up to \$15 million from the State FY2013-14 Enacted Budget will be available for grant awards supporting the Community Schools initiative. Each eligible applicant may apply for a maximum allocation of \$500,000 per Community School site to be distributed over 3 years. In determining the amount of the award, the State Education Department will consider factors including but not limited to the review of the proposed budget, the number of students to be served and the scope of services to be provided. Funding may cover planning and implementation, and all grantees are expected to begin providing enhanced social and health services during the 2013-14 school year.

Applicants will be required to submit a proposed payment schedule such that the total amount awarded will be paid out in set percentages in installments based on successful implementation of each phase of the applicant's approved proposal. The quantitative measures used to determine success in each phase will be based on attainment of process milestones and services rendered (e.g., number of children served in a health clinic, number of weekend job training sessions). These measures are subject to the

approval of the State Education Department, in consultation with each grantee, and established in advance of the beginning of each project year.

No single school district may be awarded more than 40% of the total amount of Community Schools grant awards.