



The Growth and Impact of Community Schools: 2014

It was another good year for the community schools movement. This "top ten" list of achievements summarizes some of the most compelling developments in 2014. Heading into 2015, we are focused on implementing our 2015-2020 strategic plan that seeks to double the number of places implementing community schools to 200, and significantly increase the impact of community schools. We intend to keep our eyes sharply focused on the equity issues that our nation and our schools face, using our [equity framework](#) and [website](#) to guide our work. We will continue to argue that community schools are an essential vehicle for attaining equity. We are excited to move into 2015 with the momentum, partnerships, networks, and diligent work on the ground to achieve our mission to unite school, community and family for young people's success.

Expansion

- 1) *More places:* We now count 95 places operating networks of community schools. This is an increase from 88 in 2013 and triple the number of places we counted in 2007 at 33. Newer additions include Zion and Evanston, IL, Meriden, CT and Milwaukee, WI. Community schools are now in 33 states and in urban, suburban and rural areas. The momentum continues to grow.
- 2) *Major expansion in New York City:* Mayor Bill de Blasio has made clear his commitment to dramatically expand community schools in the nation's largest school district. First, he repurposed \$52 million in state funds to launch 40 community schools over the next three years with funding allocated for attendance improvement and dropout prevention. Most recently, he [invested \\$150 million](#) over the next three years to transform the city's 94 lowest-performing schools into community schools. This is a historic commitment to community schools in the nation's largest school district and a model for other big cities seeking an effective school improvement strategy.
- 3) *A National Movement:* More than 1,400 people from across the country and abroad convened at our [April 2014 National Forum](#) in Cincinnati. This Forum boasted unprecedented diversity of attendees ranging from superintendents and community-based organizations to teachers, parents, community organizers, union officials, and health and youth development leaders. The attendance at the Forum displayed both our reach and our inclusiveness as a movement, and the energy and passion revealed a long term commitment to our vision

Impact

- 4) *More Evidence to support community schools:* In 2014 we saw more compelling evidence released that the community school strategy moves indicators on student outcomes. A [2014 Child Trends study](#) on integrated student supports (ISS), a central component of community schools, confirms that ISS leads to a decrease in grade retention and dropout and increases in attendance, math achievement, reading and ELA achievement, and overall GPA. A 2014 [study on City Connects](#), a Boston-based program leveraging the community school strategy, found that City Connects students demonstrated higher report card scores than comparisons and scored higher on middle school English language arts and mathematics tests. Other recent studies on chronic absence, toxic stress, and other factors confirm the need for the comprehensive school improvement strategy that community schools offer.

Visibility

- 5) *Increased media coverage:* Community schools have received coverage in major national publications, foremost among them the [New York Times](#) and [Wall Street Journal](#). Other prominent outlets that covered community schools in 2014 include the [Washington Post](#), [Education Week](#), and [Real Clear Education](#). The Coalition has been [proactive](#) in our communications with the media to clarify and highlight the impact of community schools. Check out our [News page](#) on the website to see other media pieces about community schools.

Policy

- 6) *Bipartisan federal bill:* In July 2014, House Minority Whip and longtime community schools champion Steny Hoyer (D-MD) and Rep. Aaron Schock (R-IL) introduced the bipartisan [Full Service Community Schools Act \(HR 5168\)](#). In a time when bipartisan bills in Congress are rare, this bill proved the support community schools can garner on both sides of the aisle as a comprehensive strategy for school improvement.
- 7) *More federal funding:* In FY 2014, Congress brought back funding for the [Full Service Community Schools Program](#), allocating \$10 million. The last new investment occurred in FY 2010. \$10 million, while still relatively small, is a signal of the strong Congressional champions that community schools have as well as consensus that this is a good investment. [Nine new grantees](#) are now implementing full-service community schools across the country, including in two rural areas. Near the end of 2014, Congress included another \$10 million for Full Service Community Schools for FY 2015 in the CRomnibus, signifying the value Congressional champions place on expanding the community school strategy in an extremely lean budget when many other programs were cut. We anticipate a new competition in the spring/summer of 2015

- 8) *Continued state momentum*: 2014 saw more states approve legislation or funding supporting community schools to build on the state policy momentum of 2013. The Washington, D.C. City Council approved another \$1 million to continue the [community schools pilot grant](#), and New York sustained its \$15M investment; Governor Haslam of Tennessee signed into law the [Tennessee Community Schools Act](#), which authorizes and encourages districts and community partners to establish community schools; and in July 2014, the West Virginia Board of Education approved a [policy framework](#) endorsing community schools for statewide implementation. And in October, teams from 8 states came together to advance their emerging work towards developing state networks to support community schools.

Partnerships and Networks

- 9) *More and Stronger partnerships*: The Coalition deepened existing partnerships and added new ones to increase our reach and impact. At our National Forum, several national partners participated in mini-plenaries and workshops and conducted affinity group meetings. We co-wrote [publications](#) with partners including the Opportunity to Learn Campaign and National School Boards Association, co-hosted [webinars](#) and spoke at partners' stakeholders meetings to strengthen our common interests. We also welcomed new national partners in 2014, including: Trust for America's Health; Education Facilities Clearinghouse; and Healthy Schools Campaign.
- 10) *Deeper Relationships with Equity and Organizing Groups*: New networks of allies joined forces with the Coalition this year who add important voices to our work. National education organizing groups convened by the Journey for Justice, the Center for Popular Democracy and the Alliance to Reclaim Our Schools are advocating 'college and career ready' community schools as their vision for public education. A site visit to Oakland organized by the American Youth Policy Forum and the Campaign for High School Equity brought even closer ties with civil rights organizations like the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights, the National Urban League and the National Council of La Raza. The Coalition is also participating in the equity work of Partners for Each and Every Child, [a new group that is pursuing the goals of the Secretary's Commission on Educational Excellence and Equity](#).