

**A SCAN OF COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODELS ACROSS NEW JERSEY'S PUBLIC SCHOOLS:
PROMOTING AN EQUITY AGENDA WHILE BETTER SERVING THE EDUCATIONAL,
PHYSICAL, AND MENTAL HEALTH NEEDS OF STUDENTS AND FAMILIES**

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**New Jersey Community Schools Coalition brings together people & organizations from across our state to increase and strengthen the use of community school models for the benefit of public school students and their families.*

“Community schools offer another alternative for achieving the goals of the equity framework.”

--Susan DeJarnatt and Barbara Ferman, 2017¹

Purpose

This report builds upon “The State of Community Schools in New Jersey: A Growing Education and Health Reform Strategy,” a December 2015 white paper supported by the New Jersey Health Initiatives Program.² It includes references to new literature and resources that have become available over the past two years. More broadly, it expands our understanding of the current community school policy environment in New Jersey by examining data from a 2017 survey of public school districts across the state. The report supplements this data with in-depth interviews with a subset of superintendents and organizational leaders who are spearheading cross-sector efforts to coordinate in-school services for New Jersey students. The report’s ultimate purpose is to serve as a roadmap for ways to scale existing community school models and efforts in New Jersey, in order to use this powerful and flexible strategy to improve the lives of students, families, and other community residents.

We find that, since 2015, additional school districts in New Jersey are identifying themselves as pursuing community school models via partnerships with outside service providers. However, the majority of reporting districts, while not labeling themselves as community schools, also report that they are actively pursuing, or already undertaking, partnerships with outside providers. Our follow-up interviews indicate that districts developed these community school-like approaches in an organic, bottom-up manner to help ameliorate the loss of services due to funding cutbacks at the state level. Many of the districts also reported adopting this approach to better meet the challenges posed by student populations with more diverse needs, and those coming from families who are increasingly poor and non-native English-speaking.

While the conventional understanding is that these are challenges confronted by New Jersey school districts located in urban areas, our survey results and follow-up interviews find that many suburban and rural districts are facing similar conditions. These concerns were articulated by superintendents from Newton, in Sussex County in the rural northwest corner of New Jersey, which once served as a regional center of industry but subsequently saw its job base

¹ Susan DeJarnatt and Barbara Ferman, “Preserving Education as a Collective Good,” in *The Fight for America’s Schools: Grassroots Organizing in Education*, edited by Barbara Ferman, Cambridge, Ma: Harvard Education Press, 2017, p. 144.

² Reuben Jacobson, “The State of Community Schools in New Jersey: A Growing Education and Health Reform Strategy,” Coalition for Community Schools, at the Institute for Educational Leadership, December 2015.

erode; Princeton, a wealthy suburban community in central Mercer County; and Red Bank, a historic community near the Shore in Monmouth County with a rapidly increasing low-income Latino population. In effect, New Jersey, considered the most suburban state in the nation, serves as a microcosm of the problems experienced by the national trends surrounding the “suburbanization” of U.S. poverty.³

Our research finds that New Jersey schools are seeking partners to help them provide their students with a host of needed services, including academic, physical health, and mental health. Our survey results and follow-up interviews reveal that many superintendents see the lack of mental health services as one of their most pressing needs, at a time when the opioid crisis has resulted in New Jersey’s teen overdose death rate more than doubling since 2000, to the sixth-highest level in the U.S. for the 2011-13 period.⁴ Moreover, data indicate that increasing numbers of New Jersey students are seeking mental help, being hospitalized for mental health concerns, and attempting to or dying by suicide.⁵ We feel that the community school model is a powerful strategy for allowing educational and community leaders to better meet such needs.

Defining the Community School Model

Community schools are public schools that explicitly identify themselves as critical “hubs” for their surrounding neighborhoods. They leverage the centrality of a physical school building in a specific neighborhood with the resources of nonprofit agencies, foundations, local businesses and other community partners to provide needed services in a holistic fashion to students and their families. The services provided reflect the specific needs identified by each community’s residents, including pre-care; after-care; adult education and job training; supplemental nutrition; physical and mental health; and dental and vision clinics.⁶

³ The Brookings Institution has focused academic attention on such trends. For a good summary of the research, see Elizabeth Kneebone, “The Changing Geography of US Poverty,” testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee, Subcommittee on Human Resources, February 15, 2017. Available at:

<https://www.brookings.edu/testimonies/the-changing-geography-of-us-poverty/>

⁴ Trust for America’s Health, “Reducing Teen Substance Misuse: What Really Works, 2015,” November, 2015, pp. 23-24. Available at: <http://healthyamericans.org/assets/files/TFAH-2015-TeenSubstAbuse-FnlRv.pdf>

⁵ See, for example, the December 13, 2017, “Mercer County Superintendents’ Joint Call to Action,” signed by all district superintendents, stating that “We are in the middle of an alarming trend regarding teenage mental health concerns.” The statement goes on to say that “Partnerships in raising awareness and providing systems of support and care are critical.” This joint statement was precipitated by the fact that Mercer County had 7 cases of students dying by suicide over the preceding 20 months, but rates have been increasing in counties across the state, and have seen a sharp uptick nationally. See

http://www.princetonk12.org/?plugin=RWD&Templates=RWD&object=http://www.princetonk12.org/PPS_News/S05C1CA08-05C1D167&info_bar=no

⁶ See Jacobson, p. 1. For an effective schematic of the Community Schools logic model, please see Figure 1, p. 2.

Ability of Community School Models to Holistically Address Specific Needs of Students and Neighborhoods

Community school models have been used for decades in the U.S. and have experienced a resurgence of popularity since the 1990s.⁷ One reason they are effective strategies is their inherent *flexibility* and *responsiveness*. They reflect an increased awareness of the need to provide services for a wide array of students' needs, whether academic, physical, or mental. Such an awareness is explicit, for example, in the following recent academic description of the community school model:

*While there are many different models, and implementation varies by location, [community schools] embrace certain fundamental principles, including: a focus on the healthy development and academic achievement of all children, strong engagement with families, and holistic education combined with wraparound services that address the social emotional and physical well-being of students. Placed at the center of the community, community schools develop strategic networks of partners and programs that address the needs of the students and families in ways that complement the overall objectives of the school. The significant flexibility within the schools allows them to be responsive to the particular needs of the student body and the larger community.*⁸

There is a large and growing body of research documenting the benefits of community schools.⁹ Recently, the national community school organizations highlighted that this approach can be utilized by schools and districts to meet the new federal requirement for “evidence-based interventions for high-poverty schools.”¹⁰

The community school models' emphasis on addressing the totality of needs for all students is consistent with New Jersey's current education policy environment.¹¹ Furthermore, as

⁷ Jacobson, 2015, p. 1.

⁸ DeJarnatt and Ferman, 2017, p. 144.

⁹ Jeannie Oakes, Anna Maier, and Julia Daniel, “Community Schools: An Evidence-Based Strategy for Equitable School Improvement,” Boulder, CO: National Education Policy Center, June 2017. Report and accompanying research compendium available at: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-equitable-improvement-brief>

¹⁰ See Learning Policy Institute, “Community Schools Show Promise as School Improvement Strategy: Community Schools Strategy Can Be an Important Part of Systemic School Reform Under the Every Student Succeeds Act,” Press Release, June 5, 2017. Available at: <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/press-release/community-schools-show-promise-school-improvement-strategy>

¹¹ As just one example, see New Jersey School Boards Association, “Final Report: The Task Force on Student Achievement: Advancing Education for All Children,” Trenton, NJ, March 2017, especially Chapter 9, “Social Emotional Learning.” Available: <https://www.njsba.org/news-information/research/projects/student-achievement/>

described in more detail later in this report, there are partner organizations already working with New Jersey public schools that would be able to provide guidance, technical assistance, and needs assessments for an expansion in the number of schools explicitly utilizing community school models.

New Jersey Survey and Interview Findings

This report draws on survey data gathered from school districts across New Jersey to show how community school models are being utilized extensively in our state, whether explicitly in holistic, fully-functioning partnerships, or in a more organic, ad hoc fashion in which districts and schools respond to specific needs and opportunities (Please see Appendix A for detailed survey findings). The report also incorporates the results of interviews with selected superintendents and representatives of organizations that already are providing services to many schools in this state. This section summarizes the common themes that emerged from both the survey and interviews.

➤ School districts' current reliance on partnerships

One of the most striking themes that emerged from this research is the extent to which districts already rely on partnerships with outside providers. Forty-nine of the 51 districts answering our survey reported relying on such partnerships, with the majority stating that their schools relied on three or more such partnerships. While only 14 of these districts label themselves community schools, most districts have organically reached out to outside resources and partners. As the superintendent of the Newton Public Schools told us, his district could not afford the additional services he felt his student population needed, so, by necessity, the district was forced to reach out for services elsewhere. The problem, in his mind, was that this approach was not efficient or sustainable, since it by necessity devolved into a process of “reaching out for random, unconnected services.” That is why he instead decided to follow the more formal model of community schools that was implemented in Bethlehem and the Lehigh Valley, in Pennsylvania.

➤ Financial pressure on districts

A second common theme was the financial pressure districts are facing. According to estimates from the Education Law Center, school districts have seen a cumulative state underfunding of \$9 billion since 2010, as compared to what they were supposed to receive under the State’s own school funding formula.¹² Further damage has been done by cuts in State funding for other institutions and services. For example, in 2011, the State eliminated all funding for New Jersey After 3, the public-private partnership that had been providing after-school services for up to 15,000 mostly low-income New Jersey students.¹³

Our survey results provide evidence of the financial burden that districts are facing, with almost 40% of reporting districts stating that “lack of funding available to create a program in-house” was a factor in their creating a partnership with outside providers. However, as the Newton superintendent noted, this underfunding also prevents districts from successfully implementing and sustaining many of those partnerships. Responding districts identified “lack of funding” as the single biggest obstacle that they faced in creating *sustainable* partnerships. Other respondents reiterated this obstacle in their written comments at the end of the survey, with one writing that the community school model has “great potential to support communities; funding is lacking,” while another noted that “Community Schools is a wonderful concept that we are already very active with, but what holds us back is lack of funding.”

➤ Costs associated with changing demographics and increasing poverty among students

A related theme that was highlighted by many of the interviews was the increased costs associated with meeting the needs of a range of students, including those from poor or non-native-English speaking families. Recently-released census data provide evidence that this state is becoming increasingly diverse, with 18 of the 21 counties seeing a larger percentage of their residents speaking a language other than English at home over the 2012-16 period as compared to the 2007-11 period.¹⁴

¹² Education Law Center, “NJ’s School Funding Reform Act State Summary,” available at: <http://edlawcenter.org/research/school-funding-data.html>

¹³ Associated Press, “Budget Cuts Force Closure of N.J. Non-Profit that Funded After School Programs, October 26, 2011.

¹⁴ Carla Astudillo and Disha Raychaudhuri, “See the Rise of Non-English Speaking Residents in Your Town,” NJ Advance Media for NJ.com, December 8, 2017. Available at: www.nj.com/data/2017/12/compare-how-many-non-english-speakers-at-home-are.html

Superintendents across the state emphasized the increased needs that their districts were being forced to meet because of their communities' changing demographics. For example, the Red Bank Borough Schools superintendent noted that more than 80% of his students qualify for Free- and Reduced- Price Lunch; more than 70% speak Spanish as their native language at home; and, last year, more than 60% of his primary school students were Limited English Proficient. For Newton, an influx of younger Latino families has meant that the student body has shifted from 30% Free- and Reduced-Price Lunch eligible to 50% over the nine-year tenure of the superintendent. And the superintendent of Princeton Public Schools pointed to the added complexity of having to care for a subset of his student body that is undocumented.

The Princeton district identified partnerships with multiple agencies as being "particularly successful in addressing the needs and concerns of many of our undocumented families." The nonprofit provider Mercer Street Friends has established the same partnership to provide eligible Princeton students with weekend and summer meals as it has with the two Trenton community schools, illustrating that schools in districts that are considered wealthy are facing similar issues, although at a smaller scale, as urban and rural districts that are more typically associated with issues of poverty.

➤ Districts' desire for stronger services for their special needs students

The survey results also identified another group of students who benefit from stronger partnerships -- students with special needs. Three districts indicated that they had partnerships with outside providers solely to help their special needs student populations. One respondent specifically mentioned the services provided by that district's "affiliation with Seton Hall University (SHU) and our secondary age students with autism. SHU provides our students with job sampling opportunities..."

➤ Districts' wide range of other needs met through partnerships, including health concerns

Districts also listed a wide variety of services being provided by partner organizations, with afterschool programming mentioned by 30 of the 51 districts. Health issues also were frequently mentioned -- 15 districts formed partnerships for nutritional programs, and 14 targeted "health and access to care" needs, with one district representative noting "We need a more broad-based community health program along with a family/parenting program." Other districts highlighted partnerships that offer dental clinics and flu shot clinics, while another district mentioned that "Through our partnerships with various health organizations we are able to host family health fairs where we offer health screenings and wellness services."

➤ Identification of mental health issues as a core need

Unfortunately, when we designed the survey, we failed to single out mental health services as a stand-alone category for the question “What do the partnership(s) provide?” This makes the fact that mental health concerns were repeatedly highlighted by respondents even more significant. Five districts specifically wrote about their partnership programs involving mental health services and counseling, with one respondent noting that, “There is simply an unmet need for wrap around mental health services.” In our interviews, the Princeton superintendent indicated that greater access to mental health services for students was one of his highest priorities, with a lack of available professionals resulting in a waiting period for services after a student is identified as requiring help. In Newton, middle and high school students identified anger management, stress management, and mental health services as priority issues. A core issue provided by the community school coordinator and lead agency for students in Rivera Community School in Trenton is mental health services, with the school principal giving the lead agency four rooms in the basement to allow mental health professionals and university mental health students to maintain a constant presence in that school.

➤ Difficulty for districts to undertake a needs assessment

A key component for any formal community school structure, and a critical management tool for district leadership teams more generally, is a needs assessment designed to prioritize issues that are most critical to a specific school, its student body, teachers and staff, and families. Unfortunately, in an era of resource scarcity, many districts do not have the time or capacity to carry out such assessments. In response to the survey question, “Have you or anyone in your district undertaken a formal ‘needs assessment’ in your school community,” only 43% of districts indicated that they had, even though most respondents have partnerships with outside providers. Without a needs assessment, partnerships become, in the words of the Newton superintendent, a process of “reaching out for random, unconnected services.”

A second obstacle to being able to implement a formal needs assessment is lack of in-house capacity. The Red Bank superintendent told us that, when he first arrived in the district, one-half of his managing team also was new. Therefore, no one had the time or the focus to do longer-term planning. This finding supports our proposal, discussed more fully in the sections that follow, that a critical need to scale community school models in New Jersey is to fund experts who can provide districts with already-established needs assessment tools, to streamline the process and to signal how important such long-term planning is for districts.

Needs assessment is difficult and time-consuming to do well. The community school coordinator from Mercer Street Friends spent a year working from an office in the basement of the Rivera Community School in Trenton to get a better understanding of the school's and community's needs before the principal of the school formally began the community school program.

National and Statewide Organizations and Coalitions That Can Help Bring Community School Models to Scale in New Jersey

In New Jersey, we already have organizations with the capacity to help districts undertake needs assessments, and otherwise guide districts in implementing community schools.

For example, one successful model is the School Culture and Climate Initiative (SCCI), a partnership between the United Way of Northern New Jersey and the College of Saint Elizabeth. The initiative is focused on school culture and mental health needs, with the foundation grant targeted at using this approach to respond to the trauma that many students and families experienced after Superstorm Sandy. So far, the SCCI partnership has worked with over 80 schools in northern New Jersey. As the co-directors of the initiative acknowledged to us, their assessment tools and approach, grounded in a focus on students' social emotional learning and using the approach of experts such as Rutgers University professor Maurice Elias, fits well with the approach and goals of community schools.¹⁵ The SCCI model emphasizes the importance of listening to stakeholder voices including, very importantly, the assessment of needs as articulated by students themselves. A co-director of the SCCI also chairs the New Jersey School Health and Climate Coalition, which brings together organizations and districts throughout the state that are focused on strengthening social emotional learning among students.

Another community schools resource is the Center for Supportive Schools (CSS), which was an original member of the New Jersey School Health and Climate Coalition. Besides the work it does on school climate and culture, CSS serves as the lead community school coordinating agency in 11 New York City community schools; provides services to over 100 other NYC schools; and is now serving as the lead community school coordinating agency for a recently-designated community school in Jersey City. As is the case with SCCI, CSS also believes in the

¹⁵ Dr. Elias also helped guide the New Jersey School Board's 2017 Task Force on Student Achievement, helping further influence the educational policy environment in New Jersey to take better account of the importance of social emotional learning for students in the state's schools. See NJSBA, "Final Report: The Task Force on Student Achievement," March 2017, as cited earlier.

importance of including student voices in needs assessments, as a prelude to the process of converting a school into a community school.

Universities also can be mobilized to support community schools. In their written comments, some of the districts that responded to the survey mentioned a variety of services provided to them by Seton Hall and Rutgers universities. An example of an even deeper partnership is the university-assisted community school initiative between Montclair State University and two elementary schools in Orange.¹⁶ Such a model can leverage the talents of Montclair State University faculty, staff, and students, and more easily organize resources, including students looking for Service Learning experience and credit, and AmeriCorps volunteers willing to be deployed into school environments.

These are just three examples of the types of local and regional partners available to school districts in New Jersey. There also are national organizations who are experienced in helping to implement community school models. Two prominent ones are the National Center for Community Schools at the Children's Aid Society, which has guided community school efforts in Orange and Paterson, and the national Coalition for Community Schools, to which the NJ Community Schools Coalition belongs.

Using Community School Models to Leverage Organic and Already-Existing Cross-Sector Efforts

Our research supports that community school models are powerful vehicles to promote equity, especially in a state that currently faces chronic school underfunding; large-scale demographic changes; an opioid epidemic; and a growing mental health crisis impacting high school and middle school students and their families.

Models exist for how to implement effective community schools. To move forward, New Jersey school districts and service providers need information about community school options, assistance with putting those options into place, and funding to support this work. We recommend combining public and private philanthropic resources to enable the expansion of sustainable community school models across New Jersey.

¹⁶ For additional information, see Jacobson, 2015, pp 11-12.

Public Sector Resources

The largest community school initiatives in New Jersey are those operating in Orange, Paterson, and Trenton, with funding from the US Department of Education. We do not anticipate ongoing dedicated federal funding for community schools. Therefore, we focus our recommendations at the state level.

In New Jersey, community school approaches have political support from both Governor-Elect Phil Murphy¹⁷ and prominent education committee members in the State Senate and Assembly.¹⁸ However, New Jersey faces budgetary challenges that make a large-scale community schools initiative politically unlikely at this time. In light of those budgetary challenges, the NJ Community Schools Coalition is recommending a more modest amount of state funding to be implemented as a pilot. The total cost of the pilot would be \$26 million, phased in over five years. The NJ Community Schools Coalition is working with sponsors in both legislative chambers to draft and introduce this community schools legislation during the first quarter of 2018.

The proposed legislation would authorize state funding to support:

- Hiring, training and ongoing employment of fifty dedicated community school coordinators, over the course of five years.
- Ongoing training and support for the community school coordinators, including opportunities to share knowledge and interact with each other and with service providers across the state.
- Training of district teachers and other relevant staff to familiarize them with community school approaches and help facilitate a school culture supportive of community schools.
- An awareness-building campaign to inform school districts, charter schools, and service providers across the state about community school models.
- An independent evaluation of the pilot's impact.

The goal would be to roll out the community schools initiative to the entire state at the end of the five-year pilot.

We believe that this approach is both politically feasible and sustainable. Despite the relatively modest price tag, this legislation would provide a critical component necessary to implement

¹⁷ Elana Knopp, "Murphy, Oliver Address Concerns at AFT Educator Roundtable," Tap Into Newark, August 29, 2017.

¹⁸ The then chairs of the NJ Senate and Assembly Education Committees and other Assembly Education Committee members expressed strong support for legislation to expand community schools in New Jersey, during a panel at a NJ Community Schools Coalition Convening held on October 20, 2017.

community schools -- trained, dedicated personnel to spearhead school-level community school initiatives.

This approach also would:

- minimize costs by centralizing the hiring, and the initial and ongoing training, of community school coordinators;
- eliminate the start-up costs for individual districts and charter schools of researching community school approaches, identifying potential service providers, and educating those providers about community schools;
- maximize efficiency in service provision and help to break down silos between service providers by centralizing outreach to providers across the state, educating providers about community schools, and facilitating connections among providers and between providers and school districts and charter schools.

Most importantly, this approach incorporates these efficiencies while still allowing individual districts and charter schools to build bottom up community school models that meet their specific needs.

Although the state would fund most of the key components of a statewide community schools initiative, we do not anticipate the state being able to provide all the resources necessary to implement community schools. That is where private philanthropic funders could play a critical role.

Private Philanthropic Resources

We believe there is a need for a coalition of private philanthropic funders to support nonprofit organizations in conducting needs assessments of public schools and providing services to those schools as part of a community schools initiative. As previously discussed, needs assessments are important for ensuring that community schools are addressing a community's most pressing challenges. Statewide and local nonprofits have the capacity to conduct such assessments but would need resources to support this work.

New Jersey nonprofit organizations also need financial support to enable them to provide services to district students. This support is particularly critical right now as many of our state's nonprofits are struggling after eight years of funding reductions by the Christie Administration. The financial stability of New Jersey nonprofits is likely to be undermined further by the recently-adopted federal tax legislation. The tax legislation is expected to shrink individual contributions to 501c3 nonprofits by reducing the number of households that itemize and increasing the income threshold for those impacted by the estate tax. The tax legislation's cap

on state and local tax deductions also may lead to a reduction in New Jersey state revenues, potentially further limiting state funding for nonprofit organizations.¹⁹

An additional concern is the federal tax legislation's elimination of the Affordable Care Act's individual mandate, a change that the Congressional Budget Office projects will increase health care premium costs and may result in up to 13 million fewer people having health insurance coverage by 2027.²⁰ This would increase the need for school-based health services even as funding to support those services would become further constrained.

We anticipate the needs for private philanthropic funding to be greatest up front. Once the service providers are identified, informed and connected to the districts, there will continue to be a need to enable them to provide the services, but the cost should decrease after the transition phase is completed.

Conclusion

Community schools are an effective means of addressing the myriad of challenges facing New Jersey public schools and of advancing equity among our students. This report lays out a strategy for expanding community schools in New Jersey by utilizing both public and private philanthropic support. With a Governor-Elect and legislative leadership supportive of community schools, this is an opportune time to marshal public sector resources. But the public sector cannot do it alone. The private philanthropic community also has an important role to play in expanding community schools. Doing so will have the additional benefit of strengthening nonprofit organizations across our state at a time of great vulnerability for that sector.

¹⁹ Linda M. Czipo, "For NJ Charities, Tax-Reform Bills Offer Little to Be Thankful For," *NJ Spotlight*, November 21, 2017.

²⁰ Congressional Budget Office, "Repealing the Individual Health Insurance Mandate: An Updated Estimate," November 8, 2017, Available at: <https://www.cbo.gov/publication/53300>

APPENDIX A: Survey Results

Introduction to the Survey

In September 2017, the New Jersey Community Schools Coalition, along with the New Jersey Association of School Administrators (NJASA) and the New Jersey Principals and Supervisors Association (NJPSA), sent a survey to 550 New Jersey school districts. The responses, from 51 districts, represent communities from across the state (please see the map below). Responding districts included rural, urban, and suburban communities and spanned the entire range of socio-economic status, using the State’s District Factor Group rankings of least- to most-wealthy communities. As we have noted, districts have been hard hit by lack of funding increases over the last eight years, along with a subset of districts that are facing growing school populations and changing demographics. As a result, students throughout New Jersey need many types of “extra” services in order to successfully access their education. The responses to this survey provide a snapshot of what those services are and how they are being delivered.

Red tags are districts that identify themselves as having community schools.

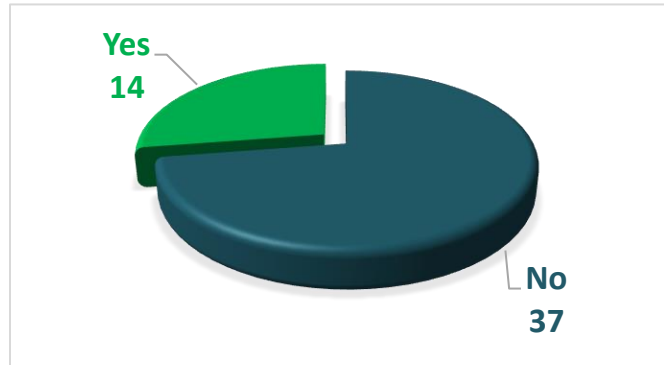
Blue tags are districts that do not self-identify as community schools, but are doing some component of community school work.

Green tags are districts that do not self-identify as community schools, but are doing community school work only to address special education needs.



Is any school in your district a Community School?

These are districts that either identify themselves as community schools or are specifically named as such.



Yes:

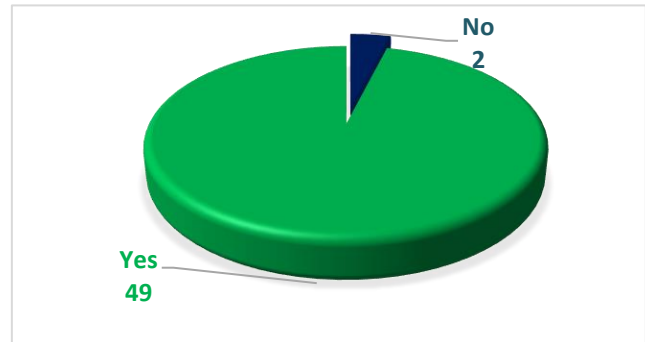
Carlstadt, East Rutherford School District, Piscataway Township, Little Egg Harbor, Egg Harbor City, Morris-Union Jointure Commission, Glen Ridge, Freehold Borough (K-8), Wildwood City, Newton Public Schools, Avalon/Stone Harbor, Easthampton Township School District, Greenwich Township in Warren Co., Woodbine

No:

Garwood, Scotch Plains-Fanwood, Green Brook, Roselle Park, Guttenberg, Union County Educational Services Commission, Chatham, Kingsway Regional, Kenilworth, Mine Hill, Roselle, Dumont, Brigantine, Rahway Public Schools, Princeton Public Schools, Oxford Township, Sussex-Wantage Regional, Kearny, Westfield, Saddle Brook, Keyport, Hammonton, Hoboken, Mount Laurel, Somerset County Vocational and Technical Schools, Warren Township, Passaic Valley Regional High School, Metuchen, Margate, Hainesport, Long Branch Public Schools, Woodbine, River Dell Regional, Manchester Township, North Bergen, Berkeley Township, Kittatinny Regional SD and Hampton Township SD, Galloway, North Plainfield

Do any schools in your district have partnerships with any organizations to provide services or educational opportunities to your students or their families?

Note that a high number of reporting districts, even those not identifying as “community schools,” have relationships with outside organizations and community members to meet the needs of their students.



Yes:

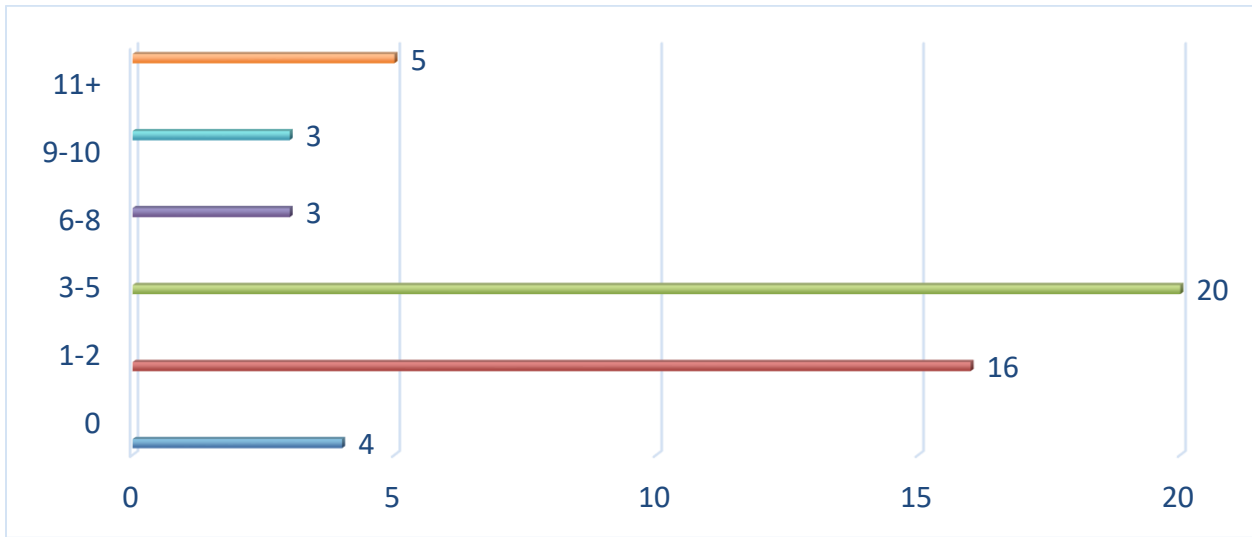
Carlstadt, East Rutherford School District, Piscataway Township, Little Egg Harbor, Egg Harbor City, Morris-Union Jointure Commission, Glen Ridge, Freehold Borough (K-8), Wildwood City, Newton Public Schools, Avalon/Stone Harbor, Easthampton Township School District, Greenwich Township in Warren Co., Woodbine, Scotch Plains-Fanwood, Green Brook, Roselle Park, Union County Educational Services Commission, Chatham, Kingsway Regional, Kenilworth, Mine Hill, Roselle, Dumont, Brigantine, Rahway Public Schools, Princeton Public Schools, Oxford Township, Sussex-Wantage Regional, Kearny, Westfield, Saddle Brook, Keyport, Hammonton, Hoboken, Mount Laurel, Somerset County Vocational and Technical Schools, Warren Township, Passaic Valley Regional High School, Metuchen, Margate, Hainesport, Long Branch Public Schools, Woodbine, River Dell Regional, Manchester Township, North Bergen, Berkeley Township, Kittatinny Regional SD and Hampton Township SD, Galloway, North Plainfield

No²:

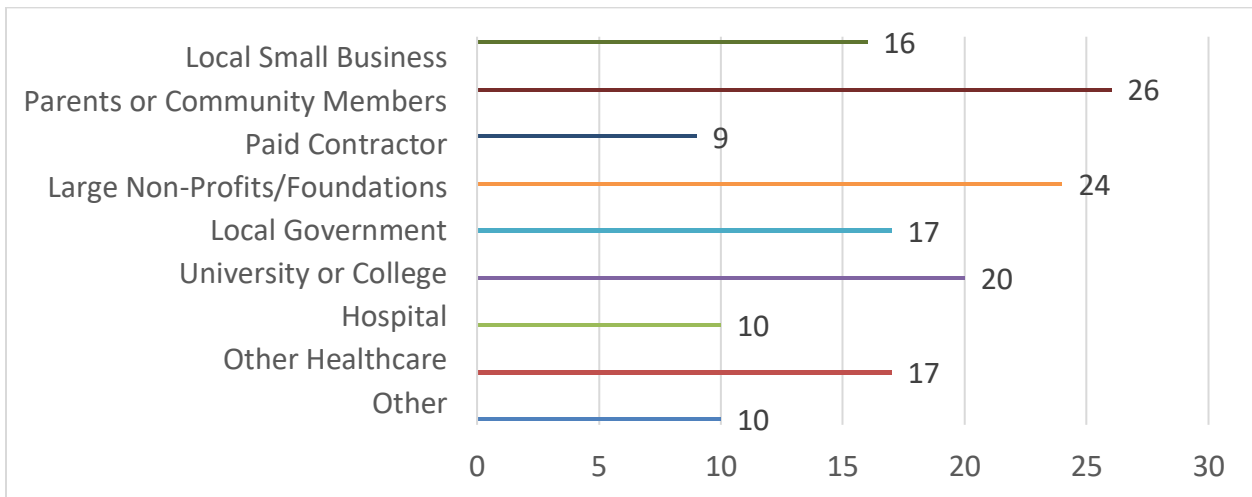
Garwood, Guttenberg

²In the original survey, six respondents answered “no” to this question, however, in the follow-up question, four of those listed organizations with whom they have partnerships. Only two of the six answered no in the original question and identified no partnerships. However, in the following question, four answered none.

Approximately, how many organizations have partnerships with schools in your district?



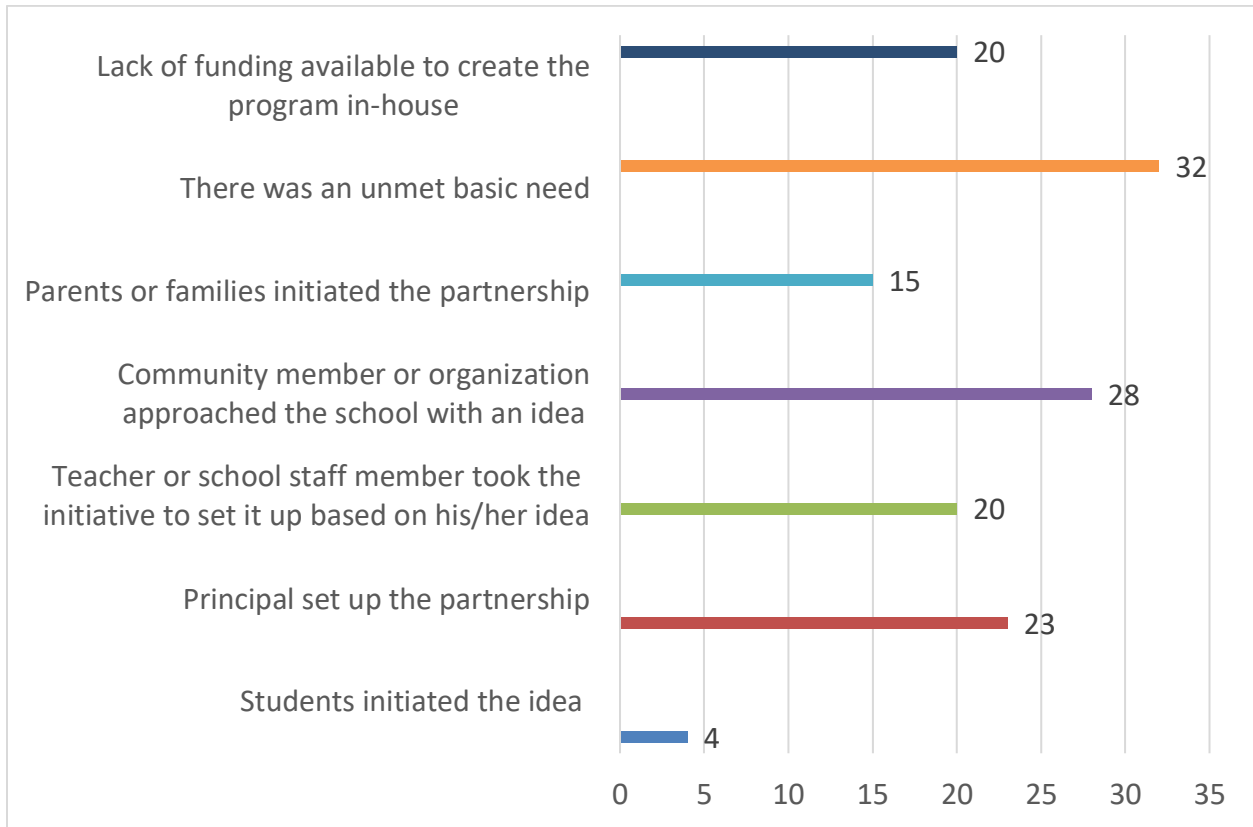
Who are your partnerships with? (Select all that apply)



Written comments:

Small local nonprofit
Small nonprofits
Margate Recreation Department
Wetlands Institute
Regional High School

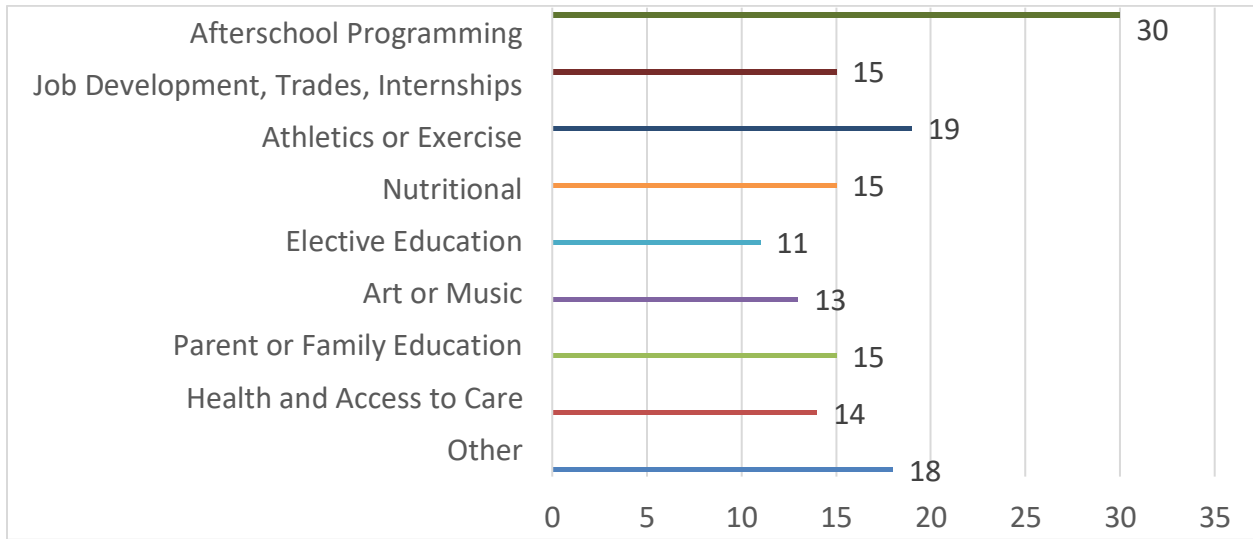
What factors contributed to the creation of your district’s partnerships? (Select all that apply)



Written comments:

At the district level, we have a partnership with the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA.
Superintendent set-up partnership and program
Directors set up affiliation agreements with local higher education institutions to provide consultations, school psychologist/ school social worker graduate interns.
County entities work well together to share resources. "Shared services" existed in our county before it was required.
The town's Recreation Department offers some cocurricular programs after school and during the summer.
Local government partnered with the school to construct a gym, classrooms, school and county library branch.

What do the partnership(s) provide?



Written comments:

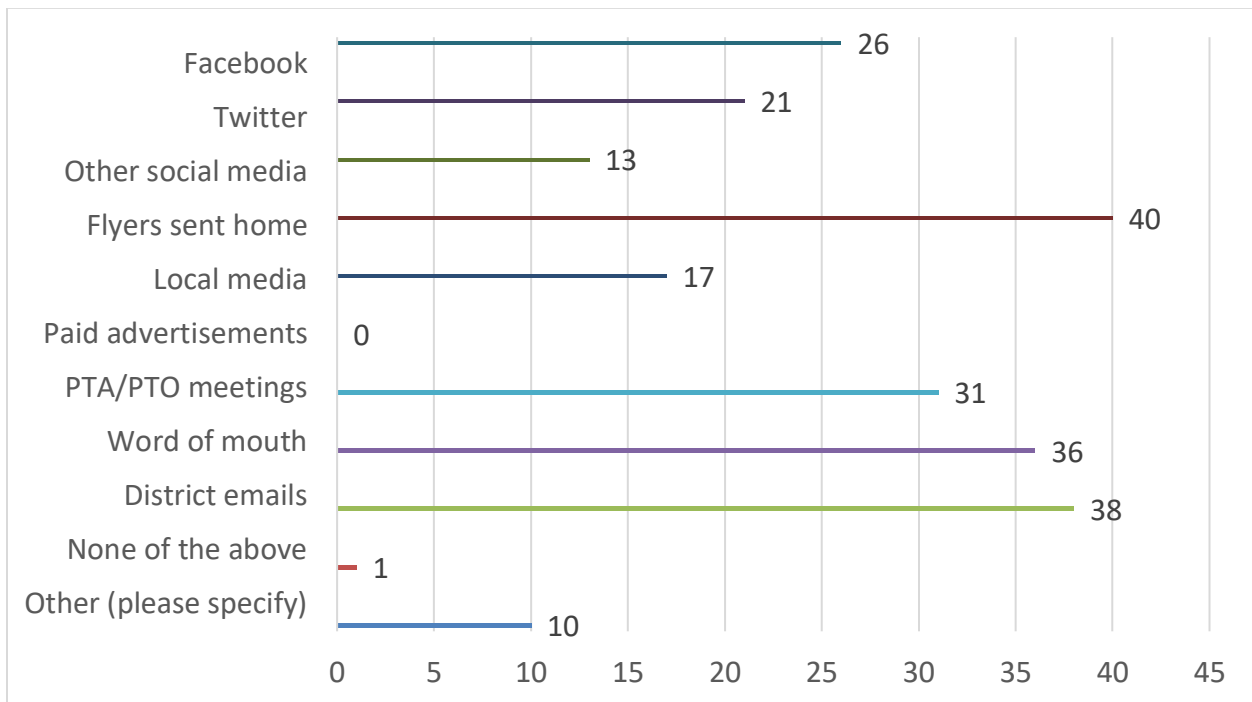
At the district level, we have a partnership with the Fanwood-Scotch Plains YMCA.
STEM/STEAM Opportunities to K-8 students.
Community sponsored events
Counseling center for students and their families
Mental health and substance use counseling.
Provided parent training in shared reading strategies at home to pre-K parents
Anti-Bullying programming (Olweus), Anti-Drug programming (LEAD)
Various services for children with special needs. They also offer services for support for the parents of students with special needs.
Mentoring
Counseling, recreation, mental health services. College courses, industry training and educational professional development
Planned parenthood and college information
Gifted education, family capacity building, drug prevention education, character education, community service opportunities, preschool coordination,
Summer STEAM program
Science/Wetlands Partnership, AtlanticCare Healthy Schools
Mental health services
Before and after child care
School supplies for students
Superintendent set-up partnership and program
Directors set up affiliation agreements with local higher education institutions to provide consultations, school psychologist/school social worker graduate interns.

County entities work well together to share resources. "Shared services" existed in our county before it was required.

The town's Recreation Department offers some cocurricular programs after school and during the summer.

Local government partnered with the school to construct a gym, classrooms, school and county library branch.

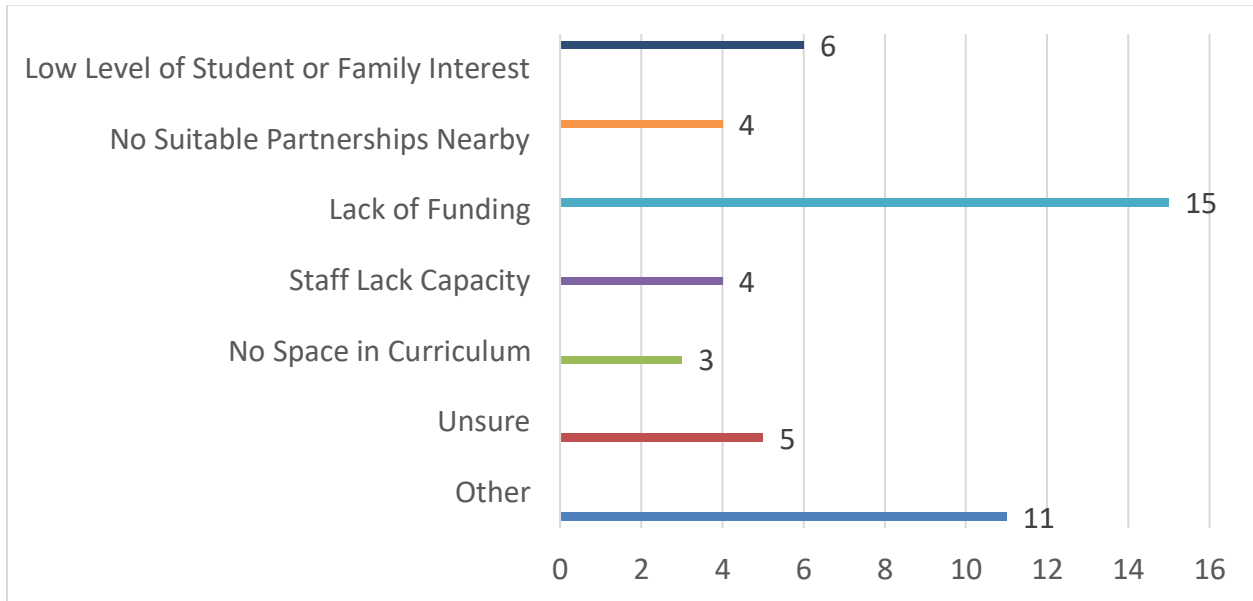
How did you get the word out about the services or partnerships available at your school?



Written comments:

Website and referrals by our staff members.
Newsletter, website
District and school websites.
District Website
Back to school nights
District all calls
Website
Website
District website
auto-call system

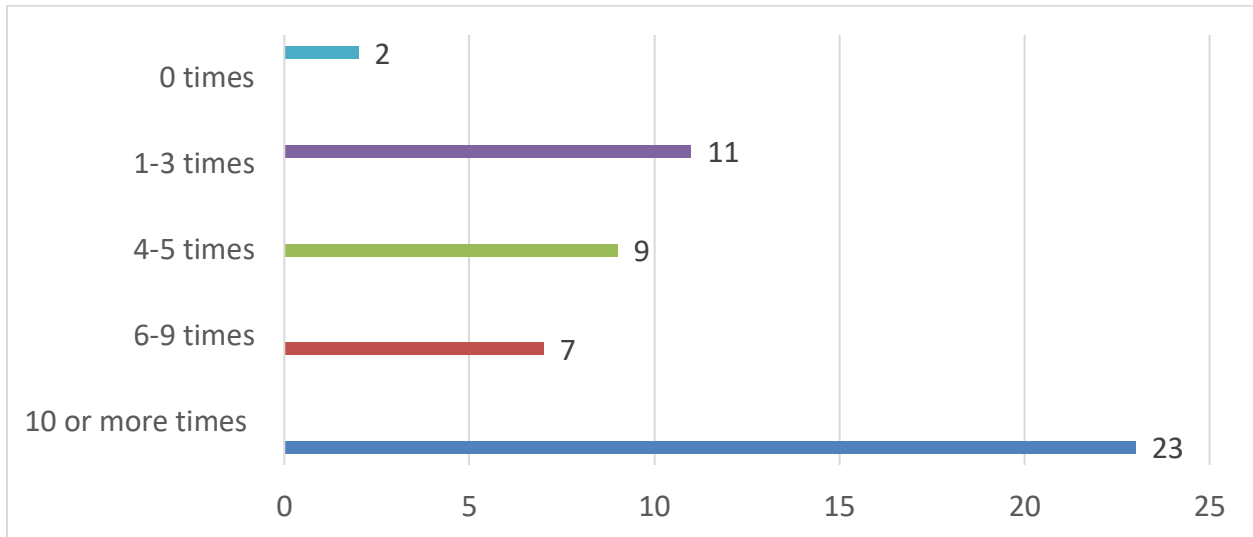
What is the biggest obstacle to creating sustainable partnerships in your district/school?



Written comments:

As a small district there is a lack of staff to create these partnerships.
No obstacles
With multiple partnerships, we do not have enough staff to oversee and optimize the good work being done.
Often it is assumed that everyone in our district is wealthy and does not require assistance. Luckily, our community is generous.
Don't really have any obstacles
Developing and maintaining relationships is time consuming.
Meeting academic priorities of reform take precedent right now
No obstacles
A stable source of funding
Time, extent of need across the county
Often, exploration is required to find partners - time investment

Not including Board of Education meetings, how many times over the past school year did district leadership engage with community members (i.e. parents, local organizations, student groups) regarding partnerships or other important school matters?



Please list 1-2 examples of your District’s active engagement with community members around partnerships or decision-making.

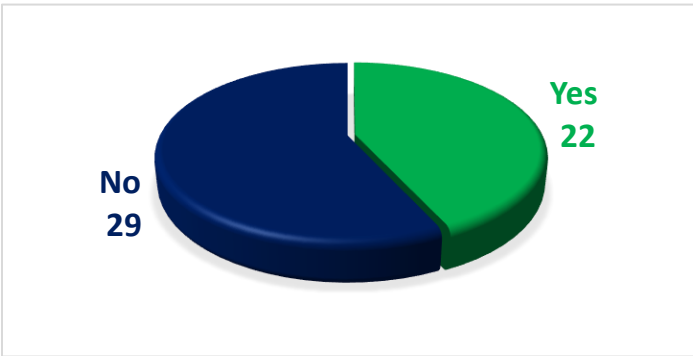
Healthy Schools Initiatives, School Gardens
"Green Brook 2020" monthly meetings on the status of the district and brainstorming opportunities for the years to come.
Attendance at Town Council meetings where open discussions took place.
Technology Plan Bond Referendum
We work closely with the town to provide students with additional opportunities.
Street fairs, memorial ceremonies, holiday town tree lighting
The Student Wellness Committee includes parents, teachers, student, nurses and administrators and supports and monitors wellness activities across the district. The before and after school care program interfaces with district administrators, parents and staff members to best serve our students.
Our CBI programs provide opportunities for engagement with a multitude of local businesses and corporations as well as other county and state agencies
Meetings with community members involved in the partnership.
Education Foundation to fund the upstart of several programs; Community Education Program to run SAT Prep and Summer Enrichment;
Strategic Planning; Community Council

Parent Forums
1. Regular attendance at planning meetings. 2. Reaching out to parents to elicit support
Special education parent advisory council; key communicators meetings with parents /building principals; local library representation to ensure collaboration
Parental involvement meetings
Parent/Student Engagement Committee; Strategic Planning
Our district participates in Coalition for Safe Communities which includes numerous stakeholders in its activities. This is just one example.
Monthly 'Coffee with the Superintendent' community meetings. District strategic planning.
We established a Diversity Council that, in addition to teachers and administrators, includes representatives from the YMCA, the Human Services Commission, Corner House, and a family counseling organization. We met multiple times in the past year, and we have been particularly successful in addressing the needs and concerns of many of our undocumented families.
Affiliation with Seton Hall University (SHU) and our secondary age students with autism. SHU provides our students with job sampling opportunities and our staff meet with the administration at SHU during the year. This is an outstanding, locally grown, partnership. Our students participate in Operation Shoebox, where students package at our school or the business location food or toiletries for our troops overseas. This is outstanding!
Attending all PTA meetings and events, attending all Education Foundation meetings and events, attending Chamber of Conference meetings
Superintendent Advisory Council Parent Involvement Nights in Math, ELA, Science and ESL
Bond Referendum Meetings (presentations, social media, surveys). After School Programs (meetings, flyers, emails)
Members of the staff serve on parent and community groups. Our staff tends to commit to our town. Our turnover is low and we know members of the community and local organizations.
Meetings with Booster Club organizations to work in collaboration with the school. Meetings with Mayor and Council look and finding ways for community groups and school groups can work together.
Education Foundation, Bayshore Success Center, Public Library
Outlining the establishment of an advanced practice nurse. Use of high school students in a heritage Chinese school to teach Chinese yoyo skills to elementary students in an after-school program.
Superintendent's Walk in the Park Engagement Series; Hoboken High School Parent Engagement Days at Housing Authority
Community wide emergency drill. Monthly district-wide PTO meetings.
Partnerships with Mid-Atlantic Center for the Arts for free after school programming; SPAN partnership; Dental clinic; flu shot clinic
Engagement with County business partnership and chamber of commerce, rotary or local businesses.
Survey regarding before-after school opportunities
Community forums, parent night financial aid workshops
SEPAG, Chinese school, Food Bank,
Creation of design team of community partners to provide guidance and support at the macro-level to the district's community schools model, and engage in partnerships at the micro-level that employ organizational strengths and provide mutual benefits.
Parent Curriculum Forums; Special Education Parents Advisory Council; Educational Foundation
Community Connections annual event, collaboration with other island district schools, other community events

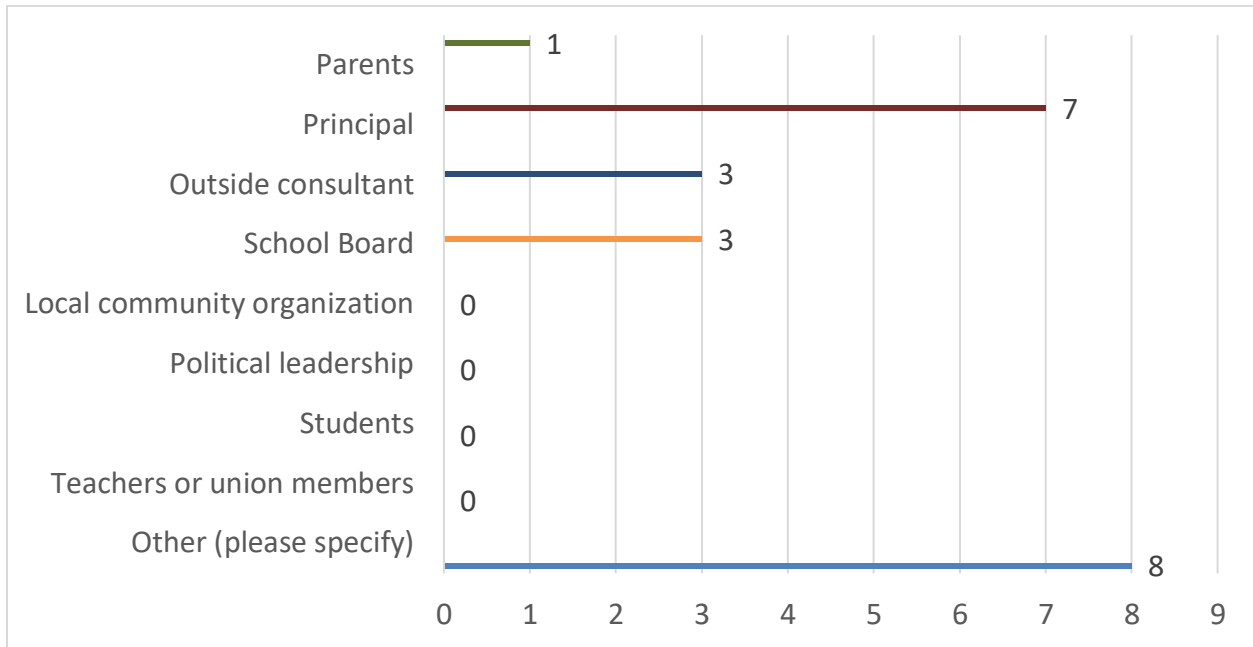
Highly active PTO. Strong relationship with sending regional HS Partnership with Township Committee
Our school gardens allow students to grow crops and donate a portion of the harvest to food pantries right here in our community. Through our partnerships with various health organizations we are able to host family health fairs where we offer health screenings and wellness services.
Looking into partnering with Stockton U. as a professional development school.
We utilize the PTO and the Special Education Parent Advisory Board as sounding boards.
Superintendent's Advisory Committee; Cooperation with Police on opioid instructional programs
Health night
We invite them to a stakeholder meeting.
We are working with a local child care agency for aftercare that is needed in our region. We also offer a community based pool program for children and adults. Lastly, we run a night school with a plethora of options for all ages.
Serve as members of a county group that plans for needs (led by United Way). Help plan fundraisers that support partnership between and among Cooper Levensen Law firm, the Food Bank of Southern NJ, and several Atlantic County school districts
Five parent forums held in mornings, evenings, Saturdays. Additional meetings with parents of students with disabilities, parents of ELL students, parents part of school safety committee, PTA presidents' meetings three times yearly.
Joint BOE and Township Meetings. Hosting statewide security summit

Have you or anyone in your district undertaken a formal “needs assessment” in your school community? (i.e. survey to parents, stakeholder focus groups, door-to-door interviews, etc.)

It is interesting to note that fewer than half of the respondents have done a formal needs assessment, even as they are providing services and engaging in partnerships.



Who in your district conducted the formal “needs assessment?”



Written comments:

Superintendent
Directors/ principals
Superintendent
Our Strategic Plan for 2018-2023 is currently being developed, which requires multiple surveys of various constituents.
Completed as part of Strategic Planning. District administration and Board worked together to develop and implement survey.
School Climate Survey
Did not complete
Superintendent, Principals, Teachers, Community Organizations

If you have thoughts, concerns, or further comments about Community Schools, school/organization partnerships, community engagement or the potential of these partnerships, please feel free to expand below.

These survey questions have given me food for thought and I plan to have a meeting and create a needs assessment survey to give to our parents.
List of current (successful) community schools?
Great potential to support communities; funding is lacking.
Having affiliation agreements with higher education institutions allow a school district to provide mental health services/ parent training for no cost
Community Schools is a wonderful concept that we are already very active with, but what holds us back is lack of funding.
The work of educating children and providing for their physical and emotional needs goes well beyond 8:00 - 3:00 and the traditional scope of the public schools. The Princeton Public Schools welcome the support of our community partners and would be excited about working with them to create true community schools that provide a broader network of resources for our students and families.
It would be great to learn about other district partnerships so we can all learn about new opportunities we might explore.
This is an excellent topic to share with districts all over our state. I also feel NJASA and groups such as NJSBA could scan the landscape outside of NJ to see how other states provide these opportunities.
Community partnerships take time to form. Schools and districts need to have continuity of committed staff members.
We would like to expand our community partnerships and opportunities to serve our students and their families as a true community school.
We have a shared service relationship with Stone Harbor School; our Avalon school building is used throughout the year by borough, recreation dept. and community library.
I think there is room to increase the number of partnerships. We do also partner with the local MAC for programs and assemblies, as well as counseling organization. Recently Boy Scouts have expressed an interest, too.
There is simply an unmet need for wrap around mental health services.
We need a more broad-based community health program along with a family/parenting program.

Individuals Interviewed for this Report

- Steve Cochrane, Superintendent of Schools, Princeton Public Schools, NJ
- G. Kennedy Greene, Superintendent, Newton Public Schools, NJ
- Patricia Heindel, Co-Director of the School Culture and Climate Initiative; Director, Center for Human and Social Development, College of Saint Elizabeth, NJ
- Catherine Nti, Executive Director New Jersey, Center for Supportive Schools
- Jared J. Ramage, Superintendent, Red Bank Borough Public Schools, NJ
- Liz Warner, Co-Director of the School Culture and Climate Initiative; Chair, New Jersey School Health and Climate Coalition; Associate Director, United Way of Northern New Jersey
- Site visit to Rivera Community Middle School, Trenton, NJ, with Principal Bernadette Trapp and Anniesha Walker, Community School Director and Mercer Street Friends Associate Director, during the November 2, 2017 Trenton Community School Mini-Conference

Author Biographies

Julie Larrea Borst is Co-Coordinator for the NJ Community Schools Coalition. Julie also is a volunteer organizer for Save Our Schools NJ; a Special Education Parent Advocate; and an education blogger who writes about special education, public education funding, and education policy. She serves as an Advisory Board member for the Public Education Defense Fund and on the Special Education Steering Committee for BATs. Julie regularly provides testimony to the NJ Senate and Assembly Education Committees, and to the NJ State Board of Education. She holds degrees in Applied Sciences and International Marketing Management from Pace University.

Gregory Stankiewicz serves as Co-Coordinator for the NJ Community Schools Coalition. Greg's previous policy experience includes working at the Office of Budget Operations and Review at the New York City Board of Education; for the State of New Jersey's Office of Management and Budget; and as Chief Operating Officer for the nonprofit New Jersey Community Capital, the largest community development financial institution in the state. Greg is an adjunct lecturer currently teaching a graduate course in community economic development for the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy, Rutgers University, New Brunswick. His research and writing focus on state and local fiscal issues, community development, urban politics, and public education. He holds a PhD in Public Policy and an MPA from the Woodrow Wilson School, Princeton University; master's and bachelor's degrees from Harvard University; and a graduate diploma with honors in International Law from the Australian National University.