Introduction

The community school model, while not new, has gained momentum nationally as an education reform strategy with the potential to address the effects of poverty and other factors *beyond* instruction that contribute to disparities in student achievement.[1] Community schools have gained traction as a way to address these persistent inequalities. For instance, a 2017 *Phi Delta Kappan* poll found increased backing for schools' provision of wraparound services for children otherwise lacking access to them—most especially afterschool programs and mental health services.[2] Twenty-five years ago, only a handful of community schools existed; today, more than seventy-five hundred community schools serve children and their families across the country.

Community schools may be viewed as one strategy along the long and winding road of school reform efforts, from pushes for smaller schools to more centralized (or decentralized) authority to many other reforms.[3] For some, the community school approach reflects a fundamental conclusion that the traditional school model itself is insufficient to overcome the role of poverty in equitable access to learning opportunities and resources, and that improving student achievement requires addressing the needs of the whole child. Viewed this way, the community school model represents an expanded vision of what schools are, who they include, and what they are responsible for, by leveraging community resources both to address student

barriers to learning and to shift relationships between schools, families, and community.[4]

Community schools operate in a public school building. They welcome students and their families before and after school, often seven days a week, all year long. A community school program reflects a partnership between the school and one or more community agencies and serves as a community center. All community schools take up three broad approaches:

- Provide expanded learning opportunities that are motivating and engaging during the school day, after school, and in the summer.
- Offer essential health and social supports and services.
- Engage families and communities as assets in the lives of their children and youth.[5]

Community school proponents see community partnerships as integral to an effective response to these wide-ranging, beyond-the-classroom issues. Proponents frequently stress that there is no cookie-cutter approach to creating a community school. Every community school should reflect the unique aspects of the neighborhood and families and youth it serves, and draw on the community resources available to it.

EARLY COMMUNITY SCHOOL CHAMPIONS

Early twentieth-century essayist Reverend Samuel Crowther underscored the continuing appeal of community schools: "The present movement for using the schoolhouse of a city for the promoting of neighborhood life is one that has a long history—as long as democracy."[6] Rooted in the ideas of education philosopher John Dewey and social reformer Jane Addams, community schools aim to be "the hub of the neighborhood, uniting educators, community partners, and families to provide all students with opportunities to succeed in school and life."[7] In Dewey's view, placing schools at the heart of the community and engaging community members in the operation

of their schools advances democracy. Like Addams's Chicago Hull House, community schools provide expanded school-based services to students and their families through partnerships with community social and health providers. In 1934, in the heart of the Great Depression, Italian immigrant Leonard Covello established Benjamin Franklin High School in East Harlem. Covello's "community-centered" school represented one of the first attempts to make the public school the coordinator of social services and position the community as the starting point for learning.[8]

The Charles Stewart Mott foundation in Flint, Michigan, made one of the earliest, if not the first, investments in public community schools. In 1935, C.S. Mott and Flint educator Frank J. Manley, motivated like Covello by the Great Depression, initiated a "lighted schoolhouse" model that provided afterschool educational and recreational programs for youth, their families, and neighborhood residents. The foundation invested significantly in bringing the model to all thirty-six Flint schools by 1953. To publicize the community school model broadly, it launched the National Center for Community Education in 1962. NCCE provided training to thousands of Michigan educators, business and community members, and eventually to leaders throughout the country.[9]

The 1982 *A Nation at Risk* report provoked new interest in a community schools model, most especially in high-poverty urban areas.[10] One educator said, "With the publication of that report, people realized, 'Oh my god, it's a war zone out there [in poor neighborhoods]. Kids don't have the supports and services—they need nurses, social workers, things to do after school" . . . there was a lot of finger pointing when that report came out. Who is responsible for what? And at that time, schools were being stripped of non-academic services because of budget problems . . . "

Responding to these concerns, the Children's Aid Society (CAS) in New York City became an early champion of school-based non-academic services for low-income urban schools; in 1992, it opened the first of its "settlement house in the school" models in the Washington

Heights area.[11] CAS expanded beyond the usual "add-on" approach to health and social services found in many community schools at that time: "The CAS approach was aimed at school transformation and reform, the creation of a full-fledged community school."[12] To structure their work, CAS created a Developmental Triangle for Community Schools (figure I.1).[13]

Credit for the term *full-service community schools* goes to Joy Dryfoos. Her 1994 book, *Full-Service Schools*, elaborated the interrelationships of such problem behaviors as school failure and dropout, mental and physical health, drug use, and early pregnancy to argue that schools enrolling young people at risk needed to provide comprehensive, long-term, and full supports.[14] In contrast to schools that targeted specific needs such as vision, dental care, or early pregnancy, Dryfoos argued that they must be *full-service community schools* (FSCS) in order to engage the multiple challenges to poor students' school success and positive development.[15] The FSCS approach differs from a one-shot approach that focuses on a single factor—such as family supports, recreational opportunities, and nutrition—as opposed

Figure I.1 *Children's Aid Society's community schools developmental triangle*
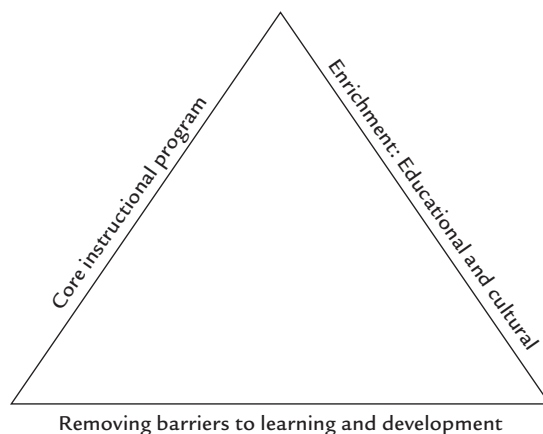
Source: Joy G. Dryfoos, Jane Quinn, and Carol Barkin, *Community Schools in Action: Lessons from a Decade of Practice* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005), vii.

to multiple and cumulative elements that shape a child's life.[16] The community school model articulated by Dryfoos and others in the 1980s and 1990s also stood in stark contrast to the "no excuses" approach to school that dominated federal and many state education policies (and many funders' agendas) at that time. The "no excuses" position held that schools should be able to push students to academic success, no matter their background or life context.[17]

However, others disagreed with those taking this tough perspective and continued to explore strategies that addressed the needs of the child beyond academics. Former Boston Public School superintendent Thomas Payzant was not alone in pointing out the philosophical disagreement inherent in these two coexisting reform approaches.[18] Community school advocates argued that paying attention to the whole child and engaging the community did not mean deprioritizing instruction or students' school success. Not surprisingly, however, spikes of interest in community schools came and went, depending on urban crises, and many community school initiatives functioned more as add-ons rather than the cohesive full-service initiatives Dryfoos promoted.[19]

INSTITUTIONAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Contemporary community schools usually operate as single or multiple sites within a host district; many have little formal connection to the district system in which they reside. Instead, a non-school entity often takes the lead in supporting and overseeing the community school. For instance, Akron's *I Promise School* or *Strive Cincinnati* provide many new resources but function relatively disconnected from their host districts. Albuquerque's community school efforts are led by community-based organizations (CBOs). In instances such as these, the lead partners tend to be CBOs, health agencies, or universities.

Lead partners assume advocacy, brokering, and coordinating roles and responsibility as fiscal agent and resource developer; and they often employ or supervise on-site community school coordinators.

For example, CAS organized a technical assistance center in New York City to serve its twenty-one community schools. The United Way sponsors Indianapolis's Bridges to Success community school program and brings an array of services into schools through its agency consortium. In instances of district-led community school initiatives, often a community schools approach is not integrated into the district's policy system. In Tulsa and Nashville's community schools initiatives, for instance, the district operates more as a sup-portive intermediary.

Mayor Bill de Blasio launched New York City's ambitious commu-nity schools initiative in 2014.[20] City Hall plays the lead role in align-ing city resources, partnerships, and policies in support of community schools. City collaborators include the Department of Education's new Office of Community Schools, the NYC Children's' Cabinet, and the Community Schools Advisory Board. New York's initiative now includes more than 215 schools (out of the fourteen hundred–plus schools served by the system) and continues to expand.

Funders play a role in these institutional arrangements because they have tended to focus on individual schools or a school-based model and shy away from district or system level proposals. In the last twenty years or so, in large urban areas, established community anchors such as the United Way or universities have sold "ideal" community school models to philanthropy, along with clear lines of support and oversight.[21]

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS?

Broad agreement exists among community school advocates, policy makers, and researchers that evaluation of community schools has a long way to go. Evaluation and measurement issues are challeng-ing because community school models are complex and multifac-eted, heavily process dependent, and not "projects" or "programs" with clear and consistent parameters. The challenges to evaluation and research about community schools are challenging to concep-tualize and carry out for many reasons. As long-time community

schools promoter Jane Quinn, formerly of the Children's Aid Society, acknowledged with a sigh: "We are where we are." (See "Lessons for community school research and evaluation" in the book appendix.)

An expanding body of research examines the relationship between community schools (and integrated school-based services more broadly) and student outcomes.[22] Dryfoos and Maguire's 2002 review of community school evaluations throughout the country reports mixed outcomes, and finds generally positive results on one more or more outcome measures.[23] A 2014 review of existing research found that integrated student supports models could improve academic outcomes (although findings are mixed).[24] A recent study of community schools in Redwood City, California, found increases in attendance when students and their families accessed available services, as well as English proficiency gains for English language learners whose parents consistently participated in family engagement opportunities.[25] A study of community schools in Baltimore indicated that schools that had been implementing community school practices for five or more years had statistically significant higher rates of attendance and lower rates of chronic absence when compared with non-community schools.[26]

Some research has looked at factors influencing the implementation of the community school model. In early work on community schools, for instance, Lawson and Briar-Lawson found that services often were add-ons to school sites without intentional efforts to integrate them within the school, and that co-locating service providers did not necessarily lead to better quality of services.[27] In a 2013 study of community schools in New York City, Rao finds evidence of "organizational hybridity" by which schools and partner CBOs shift from an approach where responsibilities are divided as each organization works toward its own goals, to one in which each knows its role as all work collectively toward a shared goal.[28]

Other evaluations examine the operation of community school components. Richardson outlines a model of highly effective community schools that focuses on principal leadership, community

partnerships, and organizational development (consisting of re-
sources and staff available for programming as well as capacity for
managing resources related to community school implementation).[29]
Based on research that applies Richardson's framework in exploring
components of effectiveness in three full-service community schools
in an urban school district, Sanders highlights several necessary
conditions if FSCSs are to be transformative learning environments
for socially and economically disadvantaged children and youth.[30]
Sanders notes that principals must possess a comprehensive under-
standing of leadership in order to administer community schools ef-
fectively, that community partnerships are at the core of FSCSs, and
that community school coordinators are critical for the development
of these partnerships. Anna Maier, Julia Daniel, Jeannie Oakes, and
Livia Lam developed four "pillars" common to effective community
schools: (1) integrated student supports; (2) expanded learning time
and opportunities; (3) family and community engagement; and (4)
collaborative leadership and practice. Their review examines evidence
to support the effectiveness of each pillar and contribution to com-
munity school goals.[31] However, they do not consider how these pil-
lars operate together in a FSCS, noting the general lack of research on
comprehensive community school implementation and outcomes.

While research suggests that *elements* of community schools can
play a role in supporting improved student outcomes, evaluations of
community schools' outcomes and research considering their imple-
mentation and effectiveness remain limited.[32] In addition, even less
research exists that examines the district role in supporting com-
munity schools practically, institutionally, or politically as a systemic
(rather than one-off) school reform strategy. For instance, none of
the seven community schools initiatives featured by the Coalition of
Community schools as national models is district-led.[33]

PURPOSE AND ORGANIZATION OF THIS BOOK

Oakland's more than nine years of experience as a full-service com-
munity school district provides a valuable opportunity to address

these gaps in knowledge about community schools. Taking OUSD's 2011 strategic initiative, *Community Schools, Thriving Students*, as a case of system change, this book examines community schools' functioning and consequences for students, families, and educators and considers how their institutional and social contexts influence their operations and outcomes. In addition to illuminating community school efforts in Oakland, the book contributes to discussions in the broader field about the organizational capacities that a district and a community school must develop in order to facilitate the successful execution of its new role and responsibilities.

Part 1 takes up the initiative's social, economic, and political context and the challenges faced by Tony Smith, a new superintendent determined to bring about whole-child-focused system change and a new way of "doing school" in Oakland. It describes the comprehensive planning process that created the 2011 strategic plan, the backbone of the effort.

Part 2 focuses on central office implementation and the diverse tools employed to bring about district system change, and presents examples of the system changes associated with them. It examines sources of the strategic plan's remarkable stability over the course of significant leadership transitions, fiscal crises, and staff turnover.

Part 3 considers site-level implementation and outcomes of implementing the plan. These chapters describe school-level responses to the strategic plan, and the elements most critical to positive implementation.

Part 4 recaps Oakland's almost ten years' implementation of the FSCS initiative and outcomes associated with it. The final chapter summarizes Oakland's lessons for the field. It is followed by a short afterword in which Tony Smith shares his reflections on Oakland's FSCS initiative.