

PAT Resolution for Community Schools

WHEREAS, a central goal of the Portland SD1J District is to develop the holistic capacities of young people so that they emerge from their Pre-K through transition schooling creative, critical, and community-minded, and;

WHEREAS, Portland youth should have access to an array of curricular and extra-curricular learning opportunities that promote their full development, and;

WHEREAS, Portland youth and families should have access to an array of health and social supports that enable such development, and;

WHEREAS, Portland youth should understand that they are valued members of communities and that they have a role to play in improving and contributing to their communities, and;

WHEREAS, Portland youth can develop analytic skills and civic commitments by studying the strengths and challenges of their communities and developing evidence-based plans for community improvement, and;

WHEREAS, Portland youth should develop the skills and commitments to negotiate differences through non-violent dialogue and build community across differences, and;

WHEREAS, the holistic development of Portland students must be a shared effort of educators, community partners, and families, and;

WHEREAS, Portland educators can play a vital role in such work when they have time, support, and training to forge meaningful connections with students, families, and community partners, and;

WHEREAS, there is a long history of community schooling (spanning well more than a century) that has promoted these very goals, and;

WHEREAS, Portland schools face a set of challenges today that make community schooling more important than ever, and;

WHEREAS, Portland experiences among the highest levels of economic inequality in the U.S. and the U.S. has among the highest levels of economic inequality among industrialized nations, and;

WHEREAS, economic and social inequality has powerful negative effects on the well-being of Portland children and youth, and;

WHEREAS, these effects include unmet health, mental health, and social welfare needs, and;

WHEREAS, these effects also include inadequate and unequal access to enriching curricula and after-school experiences that support holistic development, and;

WHEREAS, these effects are exacerbated by educational reform strategies that focus narrowly on competition and hence erode the relationships and understanding that promote a sense of community, and;

WHEREAS, the following six strategies have been identified as the hallmarks of a successfully implemented community school program:

1. Curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging. Schools offer a robust selection of classes and after-school programs in the arts, languages, and ethnic studies to promote the holistic development of all students, including preparation for college, career, and civic participation. Instructional strategies and support services make this curriculum accessible to all students, including English Learners and students with special needs. Pedagogy is student-centered.
2. An emphasis on high-quality teaching, not on high-stakes testing. Schools will foster professional learning communities to build the capacity for such teaching. Teachers will learn from one another and use assessments to better understand and respond to students' needs. Professional development programs will link educators with families and community partners and provide educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to support community-based curriculum and school-community partnerships;
3. Wrap-around supports and opportunities such as health care, vision care, and social and emotional services that support academics. These services are available before, during, and after school, and are provided year-round to the full community. Community partners are accountable and culturally competent. The supports are aligned to the classroom using thorough and continuous data collection, analysis, and reflection. Space for these services is allocated within the building or within walking distance.
4. Positive discipline practices, such as restorative justice and social and emotional learning supports, are stressed so that students can grow and contribute to the school community and beyond. School safety and positive school climate are achieved through these mechanisms. Suspensions and harsh punishments are eliminated or greatly reduced.
5. Authentic family and community engagement. The full community actively participates in planning and decision-making at each school site. This process recognizes the link between the success of the school and the development of the community as a whole.
6. Inclusive school leadership who are committed to making the Community School strategy integral to the school's mandate and functioning. They ensure that the Community School Coordinator is a part of the leadership team and that a Community School Committee—which includes families, community partners, school staff, youth, and other education partners that are representatives of the school's various constituencies—has a voice in the planning and implementation of the strategy, and;

WHEREAS, Portland Association of Teachers further defines a Community School as a school that achieves success by implementing the above strategies through the following mechanisms:

1. An annual asset and needs assessment of and by both school and community, and;

2. A strategic plan that results in the creation of various problem solving teams dedicated to continuous improvement; these teams will define how educators and community partners will use all available assets to meet specific student needs and get better results, and;
3. The engagement of partners who bring assets and expertise to help implement the building blocks of Community Schools, and;
4. A dedicated senior staff member at the community school site whose primary job is to facilitate the problem solving teams. The dedicated staff member, in consultation with the school level leadership team, will assemble the relevant education partners to solve specific problems identified in the needs/asset assessment process. The problem solving teams should utilize key tools and lessons from improvement Science in continuous improvement process, and;

WHEREAS, many school sites throughout Portland Public Schools have already incorporated some of these strategies and mechanisms into their approaches to teaching and community engagement, and;

WHEREAS, the Portland Association of Teachers endorses Community Schooling as an evidence-based strategy for school improvement and community development which expands access to:

- A. Enriching curricular and extracurricular experiences that support the holistic development of youth;
- B. School-based health, mental health, and social services that offer essential supports for students and their families;
- C. Community-centered curriculum that engages youth in social inquiry and civic action;
- D. Restorative justice programs that build a non-violent, respectful, and justice-enhancing community;
- E. Professional development programs that link educators with families and community partners and provide educators with the knowledge and skills necessary to support community-based curriculum and school-community partnerships;
- F. Inclusive and democratic leadership structures that engage family members and community partners alongside educators as vital members of community school teams;

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED, that PAT educate community members, educators, and parents about community schools and advocate for an implementation procedure by which a school site, having expressed the desire to become a community school, may proceed systematically through a community school transformation process, and;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the PAT will also develop a proposal for:

Collaborative leadership with PPS, PAT, & Community Partners through a steering committee that shall develop proposals for;

- 1) the optimal number of school sites for an initial cohort that shall be allowed to undergo a community school transformation;
- 2) the selection criteria for this initial cohort of community schools;
- 3) a proposal to responsibly scale the number of community schools throughout PPS; and

4) a transition timeline & recommendations for schools currently identified as “Communities In Schools”