



Nine Elements of Effective School Community Partnerships to Address Student Mental Health, Physical Health, and Overall Wellness

In order to have the most positive impact on the academic and wellness outcomes of students, it is imperative that schools and communities work together through a collaborative and comprehensive approach. Community partners can help schools prepare students for college, career, and citizenship by offering additional opportunities, supports, and enrichment for young people. Strong school–community partnerships are essential for a world-class, 21st century education, and more and more communities across the country are creating such partnerships—from Oakland, CA, to Evansville, IN, to Hartford, CT. The Coalition for Community Schools and the National Association of School Psychologists outline nine key elements necessary for creating and sustaining effective partnerships to improve student mental health, physical health, and overall wellness.

- 1. A leadership team comprised of school and community stakeholders.** It is critical to engage the school principal, specialized instructional support personnel, parents, families, students, and community leaders in the planning, implementation, and evaluation of school–community partnerships.
- 2. Assets and needs assessment to address student health and wellness, and a framework for results.** Community partnerships should enhance existing school-based service delivery models and help fill in the resource and service gaps based on the needs of the school. Schools and community partners should then mutually establish a framework for results with specific short- and long-term goals based on the needs identified in the assessment.
- 3. A designated person located at the school to lead the coordination of school–community partnerships.** Coordinators help maintain partnerships with community agencies and facilitate effective communication and collaboration among the leadership team, specialized instructional support personnel, service providers, school personnel, parents, families, and members of the community.
- 4. Clear expectations and shared accountability for the school and community partners.** Delineation of roles and responsibilities for school personnel and community providers enhances efficiency and effectiveness of service delivery while ensuring that the needs of the school are being met.
- 5. High-quality health and wellness services that leverage school and community resources.** Specialized instructional support personnel and community service providers each have knowledge and skills critical to improving student and school outcomes. Leveraging the resources already available in the school and community settings improves effectiveness of school–community partnerships.
- 6. Ongoing comprehensive professional development for all school leaders, staff, and community partners.** Continuous, high-quality professional development is important to ensure effective partnerships. Regular meetings with all stakeholders participating (school staff and community partners) should occur to ensure that they continue to build relationships and trust, develop a common vocabulary, and learn the same content and best practices around school–community partnerships.
- 7. A detailed plan for long-term sustainability.** Successful partnerships plan for sustainability from the beginning. Develop a plan to maintain your community partnerships across multiple school and fiscal years. Try to create a diversified funding stream to support service delivery work from multiple funders.
- 8. Regular evaluation of effectiveness through a variety of measures.** Partners are chosen based on data that highlight their fit with the current needs of the school and community. It is equally important that appropriate data are used to evaluate the effectiveness of the partnership.
- 9. Communication plan to share progress and challenges.** It is important to share the successes and challenges of each school–community partnership to highlight what is working and ways to overcome challenges to educate others hoping to improve school community partnerships.

