

Newton Public Schools

Community Schools Overview - Fall 2018

What are community schools?

Community schools (CS) have transformed traditional American education for over a century. They are both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources that have an integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth development, and community engagement. They have been proven to lead to increased school attendance, decreased disciplinary incidents, stronger families, healthier and safer communities, and improved academic outcomes.

What demographic data reflect needs in our community?

School Performance Report (2016-17 data)	<u>Newton HS</u>	<u>Halsted MS</u>	<u>Merriam ES</u>
School Enrollment	745	336	491
Economically Disadvantaged	20%	46%	50%
Students with Disabilities	14%	19%	23%
English Language Learners	2%	2%	4%

United Way ALICE Report (2014 data)	<u>Town of Newton</u>	<u>Sussex County</u>
Population	7,999	144,909
Households	3,170	54,174
Poverty	15%	6%
ALICE (Asset Limited, Income Constrained, Employed)	40%	27%

What specific student and family needs have we identified?

1. District and school level CS teams conducted needs assessments and developed a model that was published in January 2017. In the spring, a Design Team with representatives from regional nonprofits, government agencies, corporate entities, parents, and the school district was created and performed a broader needs assessment as part of a national grant opportunity. In November 2017, the Design Team analyzed existing community needs assessments conducted by their organizations.
2. Merriam Avenue School identified a need to improve early literacy and childhood wellness. Research literature on early literacy and childhood wellness is supported by analysis of our current preschool program, where 78% of kindergarten students who attended our preschool met the early literacy benchmarks in DIBELS, 89% met the benchmarks in our Early Screening Inventory, and parents have reported increased wellness on the part of their children.
3. Halsted Middle School and Newton High School identified a need for greater access to mental health and behavioral services dealing with topics such as management of grief, anxiety, anger, and substance use. 34% of Grade 5-8 students are identified as needing such services that cannot now be met beyond crisis intervention. 54% of Grade 9-12 students identified stress, anger, generalized anxiety, and school phobia as significant issues for themselves and/or their peers.

4. The assessments also identified a district-wide need for coordination of existing community services of which there are 113 established initiatives involving 71 community organizations.

What are our big goals?

1. By September 2019, we will provide greater access to on-site wellness services for children and families (*baseline = no dedicated space, minimal on-site services*).
2. By September 2020, full-day preschool for 4 year old children will be free and available to all residents (*baseline = half day, tuition-based, limited availability*).
3. By June 2021, the percentage of middle and high school students identified as needing counseling and behavioral services will be reduced by 50% (*baseline = 34% of middle school students identified and 54% of high school students self-identified as in need*).
4. By Spring 2026, 68% of 4th grade students will demonstrate proficiency in English Language Arts as measured by New Jersey state assessments (*baseline = 51% proficiency*).

What partnering initiatives are underway?

1. We open our school sites to the [Center for Prevention & Counseling](#), [Youth Advocate Programs](#), and [Zufall Health Center-Newton](#) to provide on-site wellness and mental & behavioral health services.
2. We engage [Pass It Along](#), [ThorLabs](#), [Newton Medical Center](#), and the [DreamGirls Initiative](#) to offer wellness-based pathways to mental & behavioral health through student self-discovery, leadership, and volunteerism.
3. We are partnering with [Project Self-Sufficiency](#) and [First Impressions](#) with support from [NORWESCAP Head Start](#) and [United Way of Northern NJ](#) to provide free, full-day preschool education to Newton 3- and 4-year olds as of January 2019.
4. We successfully applied for a five-year 21st Century Community Learning Center grant (2018-2023) to open *Choose 2 Connect (C2C)*: our STEAM-themed, afterschool program for grades 3-8. A dozen local organizations are collaborating with us on C2C: [Greater Newton Chamber of Commerce](#), [Sussex County 4-H](#), [Sussex County Department of Health & Human Services](#), [Sojihuggles Children's Foundation](#), [Town of Newton](#), [YMCA of Sussex County](#), [Project Self-Sufficiency](#), [Center for Prevention & Counseling](#), [Thorlabs](#), [Newton Medical Center](#), [Pass It Along](#), and [United Way of Northern NJ](#).
5. Our School Coordinators have inventoried existing initiatives for areas of synergy and collaboration. They are planning a Community Connections Event in March 2019 to develop more purposeful, mutually beneficial connections between our parents and local organizations.
6. Our Design Team of committed community organizations meets regularly 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 toward mutual benefits.