

Expanding Full-Service Community Schools in Minnesota

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March 2023

Issue Statement

While many students across Minnesota (MN) receive an excellent education, too often disenfranchised children and children from under-resourced families do not obtain the same educational benefits and outcomes as their peers. Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) offer a better path to equity and excellence by welcoming community agencies as partners in school improvement by bringing community services into the school and empowering the people closest to students to examine disparities and target racial and economic opportunity gaps. Building on the success of the FSCS model, Minnesota legislators are proposing a \$90,000,000 allocation to support and expand FSCS throughout the state. With the proposed allocation of funds, and support from Governor Tim Walz, Minnesota would be well on its way to providing a holistic education approach across multiple districts in the state.

Explanation of the Need

The need for FSCS exists in all areas of MN. Schools across the state are significantly under-resourced. Districts that are high poverty, rural, and identified as Title I schools experience poor educational outcomes. Expanding the FSCS model would help these districts. Without continuity of support from local social service agencies, these schools and communities may be unable to cultivate the necessary conditions to overcome the negative effects of poverty and other injustices that impact students' academic achievement¹. Lack of available community practitioners or resources, lack of family involvement, and overall lack of financial stability, lead to poor educational outcomes for students and their families. FSCS is an effective evidence-based intervention that responds to these needs.

FSCS leverages community assets to address the comprehensive needs of students and families and level the playing field for success. This is a critical part of an [equity strategy](#) to invest in communities that have been marginalized by historic disinvestment. Public policy action needs to be taken to expand the amount of community schools to improve the well-being of students and families. The MN Student Survey released in 2022 provides [staggering data](#) regarding the health and well-being of students pre-COVID-19 versus the implications from COVID-19. Unprecedented amounts of long-term mental health, behavioral, and emotional health concerns have risen to 29% as compared to 23% in 2019. Fifth, eighth, ninth, and 11th graders continue to show trends consistent with a growing need to establish long-term support for all students. MN has seen positive impacts in FSCS but there is a need for more.

¹ Anderson, J. A., Chen, M.-E., Min, M., & Watkins, L. L. (2017). Successes, challenges, and future directions for an Urban Full Service Community schools initiative. *Education and Urban Society*, 51(7), 894–921. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0013124517747032>

Current Approaches and Efforts

- This effort targets high poverty, rural, and identified Title 1 schools. Support and resources for students within a FSCS model aim to address non-academic concerns from a systemic perspective. For more than a decade, advocates and public officials have attempted to change this by emphasizing [No Child Left Behind](#); This Act has fallen short in providing necessary support and has ultimately failed to produce any widespread improvement. The FSCS model addresses multiple areas of deficit as seen through the “four pillars” used within this model. [Figure 1](#) highlights key components of the four pillars and how each of the pillars apply in terms of executing the FSCS model.
- In 2015, [the MN legislature](#) initially appropriated \$250,000 per year for fiscal years 2016 and 2017 funding 4 school sites for both years, and the 2016 Legislature approved another \$1,000,000 in fiscal year 2017 for grants to 9 additional FSCS. In 2022, the state of MN allocated \$5,000,000 in funding, from the Federal American Rescue Plan towards FSCS, in an attempt to, “expand systemic support for students, families, and communities across MN”.²
- [Schools that have switched](#) to the FSCS model yield positive results. [MDE](#) reported a 10% increase in graduation rates at Brooklyn Center High School after utilizing the power of community school partnerships.

Policy Position Statement

Expanding FSCS will allow for improvements in academic achievement, closing the educational gap, and addressing other external barriers families and individuals may have. MDE states integrating support for students as well as their families creates an environment where families can build relational connections within their community to enrich support systems for and around their students. Funding from the federal level could provide developmental opportunities for current schools that have switched to FSCS and community members in the state of MN could have universal access to resources to help bridge and link families to much needed resources that are essential to individual well-being and promote the reduction to the educational achievement gap³.

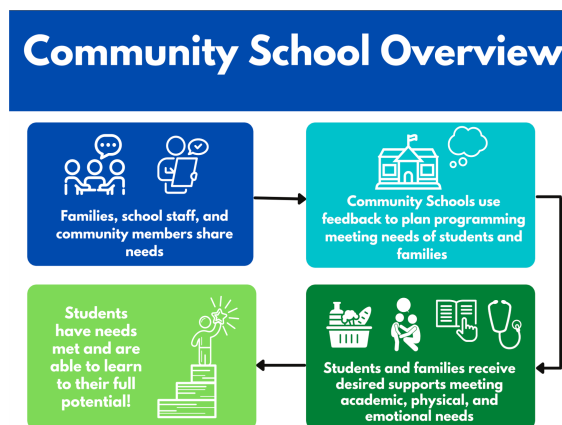


Figure 1. Graphic developed by Little Rock Community School District.

Recommendation

- Support the proposed [legislation](#) (SF0020 / HF0021) to expand funding for Full-Service Community Schools.

Link to digital copy of this policy brief



² Minnesota Department of Education. (2021). *Funding Community Schools*. Funding community schools- MDE. Retrieved February 24, 2023, from <https://education.mn.gov/MDE/dse/fullserve/fcs/>

³ Vang. (2023). Full-service community schools. MN House Research. Retrieved From https://www.house.leg.state.mn.us/comm/docs/-9vH515ouk_KwaCKFszPhQ.pdf