



DC SCHOLARS Community Schools

We transform schools so that every child has the knowledge and character to pursue the path to college and opportunities beyond.

Dear Councilmember Grosso,

We, a coalition of like-minded organizations that participate in or partner with community schools, write to urge you to expand support from 8 to 12 community schools in the District of Columbia.

Created under the Community Schools Incentive Act of 2012, the 8 community schools currently receiving this grant funding through the Office of the State Superintendent of Education go above and beyond the typical support afforded by schools across the district. Highlights from some of our community schools showcase the amazing work that has taken place in the first three years of this grant:

- **E.L. Haynes' (Ward 4) in collaboration with Mary's Center** reduced absenteeism at its elementary and middle school campuses from over 12.5% to 5.5% and 5.6% respectively in its first year as a community school. Prior to the community schools partnership with Mary's Center, E.L. Haynes students used Mary's Center services at a rate of about 100-250 visits per quarter from January 2010 until September 2013. As a result of the partnership, E.L. Haynes students are now using Mary's Center services at a growing rate of over 500 visits per quarter. Specifically, the use of mental health services has increased from approximately 50 visits per quarter to over 200 since the last quarter of 2014.
- **Stanton Elementary (Ward 8), in collaboration with DC Scholars Community Schools**, provided weekly backpacks of food to prevent weekend hunger to 170 students; increased mental health support capacity to serve over 200 students, an increase from 25 students in 2014; introduced a monthly food market with Martha's Table that sent home 12 lbs of food per student to 200+ students each month; reached the school attendance goal (93% ISA) for the first time in the school's history in 2015-16; became the first elementary school to exit Priority status on ESEA rankings and has risen to Developing status; won the Standing Ovation Excellence in Family Engagement Award; and completed 477 home visits in the 2016-17 school year.
- **Amidon-Bowen Elementary School and Jefferson Middle School Academy (Ward 6), in collaboration with the Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative**, expanded Parent Resource Centers at Jefferson Academy and Amidon-Bowen; installed washer and dryer units at both schools to alleviate barriers to student attendance and increase parental connection to the schools; increased the number of community and program partners to 29 who have provided monetary donations to support school activities and operated student enrichment activities inside the school; reduced truancy rates at both schools and received approximately 225 student referrals from Jefferson and 249 student referrals from Amidon-Bowen for students who have accumulated five days of unexcused absences.
- **Mount Pleasant Community Schools Consortium (Ward 1), comprised of Briya PCS, Bancroft ES and Mary's Center**, has linked over 1,000 families at Briya PCS and Bancroft Elementary to needed services. In just three years of the grant, families have increased utilization of: medical care by 107%, mental health care by 1,200%, dental care by 158%, and support services like WIC, home visiting, and early intervention for infants and toddlers with disabilities, by 178%.
- **Latin American Youth Center (LAYC) Community Schools Consortium, comprised of Youthbuild PCS, Next Step PCS, LAYC Career Academy PCS and LAYC**, has been able to greatly expand support services for the schools' opportunity youth population. The program offers bi-lingual individual and group mental health counseling; free on-site health services, including health insurance enrollment clinics, dental cleanings, flu shots, vision screenings and free glasses, STD/HIV testing and birth control; cooking classes with a focus on eating nutritiously on a budget; bus and metro fare for students over 21 to travel to-and-from school; diapers, wipes, formula and baby clothes for parenting students; easy access to free toiletries for the high proportion of homeless youth; daily breakfast and lunch food; Know-Your-Rights workshops; winter coat distribution; and college and career events.
- **Theodore Roosevelt High School (Ward 4) in collaboration with the Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative**, has helped 229 students complete graduation-required community service hours at various sites



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We are so grateful for the support you have shown community schools in your tenure, and your continued support is critical, with funding for 6 of the 8 schools expiring at the end of FY17. At the same time, the needs of families and students across the district go far beyond the 8 schools currently being served. The resources and support afforded through dedicated community schools work are a nexus for transformation in some of our neediest neighborhoods.

We believe that community schools are the future of public schooling in the District, and we strongly recommend that funding for the Community Schools Incentive Act be doubled in 2018; to increase the number of grantees to 12 from the original 6. This would mean hundreds or even thousands of additional students in DC receiving services that they cannot access under the current system – i.e. critical health care, afterschool programs, career connections, access to needed supplies, and stronger academic support from their parents at home.

Councilmember Grosso, as part of Mayor Bowser's education platform, she made a commitment to doubling the number of community schools during her Mayoral term, and we know you share that vision. We are grateful for the part you played in adding two more schools and funding for technical assistance, and we are hopeful you will continue to push Mayor Bowser on her promised expansion in FY18. The students and families of the District of Columbia are counting on you.

Signed,

DC Scholars Community Schools, the OSSE Community Schools Incentive Grantees and their Partners

PARTNER SIGNATURES:

Cheryl Christmas
Project Director, UPO Foster Grandparent Program

Rachel Willis
Founder & CEO, Elevating Equity

Ellen Selby
Manager of Recruitment, Higher Achievement

Travis Spencer, M.A.
Behavioral Health Counselor, Life Sangha

Linda Kuzmack
Longtime Stanton Volunteer, Girl Scouts of McLean

Robert Crosby
Senior Director of Elementary Program Design, Flamboyant Foundation

David Pickens
Executive Director, DC School Reform Now!

5601 East Capitol Street SE
Washington, DC 20019

202-559-6138
202-740-6779

communityschools@dcscholars.org



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Dillon Babington
Joyful Food Market Leader, Martha's Table

Marshall Pollard
Director, The Boys Institute @ Stanton Elementary School

Grant Elliott
Program Director, Kid Power, Inc.

Ankoo Y. Shah, MD MPH FAAP & Marcee' White, MD FAAP
Vice-President & President of D.C. Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (DC AAP)
On behalf of the DC AAP

Hilary Darilek
Chief Executive Officer, E.L. Haynes Public Charter School

Sharon Crytzer
Deputy Director, The Edgewood/Brookland Family Support Collaborative

Katrina Branch
Site Director at Stanton Elementary, People Animals Love

Paula Thompson
Executive Director, Voices for a Second Chance

Katherine Avery
Senior Director of Facilitation & Training, Flamboyant Foundation

Arthur Mola
Principal, Bancroft Elementary School

Lauren Shweder Biel
Executive Director, DC Greens

Marisa Parrella, LICSW, LCSW-C
Senior Clinical Manager
School Based Mental Health Program
Mary's Center

Amelia Missieledies, MSW, LICSW
Executive Director, The Person Center Inc.

Rena Johnson
Principal, DC Scholars Stanton Elementary School

Rebecca Crouch and Tanesha Dixon
Principals, DC Scholars Public Charter School

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Washington, DC 20019

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Karen Feinstein, LICSW
Executive Director, Georgia Avenue Family Support Collaborative

Andrew Touchette
Head of School, YouthBuild Public Charter School

Nicole Hanrahan
Executive Director, LAYC Career Academy PCS