



THE POWER OF STUDENT SUCCESS **COACHES IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS**



A Playbook for Leveraging Partnerships to Integrate Social, Emotional, and Academic Development in Schools

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ABOUT CITY YEAR

City Year is a trailblazing, youth-powered organization with a dual mission: expanding educational equity for students furthest from opportunity and developing diverse leaders through national service. Research shows the more time a student spends with a City Year AmeriCorps member serving as a student success coach, the better the student outcomes—academically, socially, and emotionally. A public-private partnership, City Year is a proud member of AmeriCorps, operating in 29 U.S. cities with international affiliates in the U.K. and South Africa. Today, 40,000 alums continue to lead and serve where they live and work. Learn more about City Year's six areas of impact: www.cityyear.org, [Facebook](#), [X](#) and [LinkedIn](#).

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The purpose of this playbook is to provide community school and district leaders, directors and managers of student success coaches (SSCs), and advocates with the knowledge, tools, and recommendations for successfully integrating SSCs into community schools to expand and deepen holistic, integrated student supports. City Year is hopeful that the contents of this playbook will elevate opportunities for collaboration to help address the needs of all students.

“Having student success coaches in classrooms and working with schools brings an extra set of hands and an extra person who can build a trusting relationship with a student and keep them connected to school and to their education. This work is vital.”

Dr. Pedro Noguera, dean of USC Rossier School of Education



INTRODUCTION

A growing body of research on student preferences and how students learn and develop shows that integrating holistic supports - services and practices that address students' social, emotional, and academic development - provides the best path for students to graduate from high school prepared for success in college, career, and life.^{1,2} Efforts by the National Commission on Social, Emotional and Academic Development and the SoLD Alliance, among others, confirm that social, emotional and academic skill development (SEAD) are inextricably linked, and that social and emotional factors, including secure, trusting relationships, interact with neural processes to shape learning experiences and outcomes. When holistic supports are prioritized in schools, particularly those impacted by historic and ongoing structural social, political, and economic inequities, all students can thrive.

Unfortunately, in many schools across the U.S., students do not receive the holistic support they need, want, and deserve. Based on historic and ongoing structural inequities

and racism, schools that serve predominantly Black, Latinx, and low-income students receive fewer resources, often resulting in unequal education outcomes and opportunities. These inequities manifest in everything from school funding to segregated school demographics, to a lack of access to quality coursework and experienced teachers. The COVID-19 pandemic both highlighted and exacerbated these issues, further increasing the need for multi-layered support in schools. A transformative approach that draws on additional capacity in schools can help address the variability of student learning and provide students with the additional social, emotional, and academic supports need to create welcoming and safe learning environments that will help all students acquire critical skills and engage more deeply with their learning.

Providing this additional capacity is City Year's goal. Working in 29 cities across the United States, City Year partners with 250 public schools to help students and schools succeed

by delivering holistic support to students, classrooms, and schools. City Year recruits, trains and prepares diverse teams of AmeriCorps members, ages 18-25, to serve full-time in schools as student success coaches (SSCs), where they cultivate students' social, emotional, and academic skills. Supported and supervised by full-time, on-site City Year staff called impact managers, SSCs become integrated into the fabric of the school community. They collaborate with school staff and partners to deliver data-driven interventions and support that help the school achieve its vision for educational excellence for all students. Student success coaches' near-peer status—mature enough to offer guidance, yet young enough to relate to students' perspectives—uniquely positions them to form developmental relationships with students, improving both student readiness to learn and school-wide conditions for learning.

City Year's decades of experience serving in schools and communities, along with the research and background detailed in the following pages, provides strong evidence and support for the benefit of SSCs for community schools and students. Studies show that schools that partner with City Year are up to two to three times more likely to improve in English and math assessments, and students with the lowest attendance rates, grades or test scores, and those with the lowest social-emotional skills, benefit the most from receiving one-on-one support from a student success coach.^{3,4}

With a belief in the power and potential of SSCs to provide additional capacity for schools focused on a community-driven approach, City Year, with support from the LEGO Foundation and other partners, sought to explore how we might expand opportunities for student success coaches in schools by focusing on the question:

What conditions create barriers and opportunities to advance and sustain holistic, people-powered supports, like student success coaches, in systemically under-resourced schools?

To address this question, City Year explored how community schools in particular are creating opportunities and reducing barriers, and how SSC integration is enhancing their whole school, whole child, whole community approach.

Community schools and SSCs both take holistic, asset-based approaches that integrate social, emotional, and academic learning, while providing additional capacity to meet students' and families' needs in and outside of school. When combined, community schools can leverage the additional people-powered capacity of SSCs and SSCs can do their best work by integrating into a school system that supports the whole child and community.

The Coalition for Community Schools defines a community school as a public school that serves as “the hub of its neighborhood, uniting families, educators and community partners as an evidence-based strategy to promote equity and educational excellence for each and every child, and an approach that strengthens families and community.”⁵

This report, *Student Success Coaches in Community Schools: A Playbook for Integrating Student Success Coaches and Providing Holistic Social, Emotional and Academic Supports*, culminates more than a year of research, site visits and focus group discussions with community school leaders, community based-organizations (CBOs) that operate schools, and other practitioners in the community school space.

In this guide, we aim to outline our learnings from SSC programs in community schools by elevating key and recurring themes around school leadership, partnerships, and community engagement, among other opportunities. We are hopeful that this playbook will provide valuable insight, examples, and specific guidance and recommendations for schools and districts seeking to harness an integrated social-emotional and academic approach to supporting student learning.

The following sections lay out how community schools and SSCs can be integrated to reinforce an approach to education in our most systemically under-resourced districts that enables students and families to achieve their tremendous potential. It begins with an overview of SSCs. We then lay out how SSCs and community schools reinforce each other, using a new research-based set of key principles that leading researchers and experts from the Community Schools Forward initiative developed to maximize the impact of community schools. We offer considerations on establishing a successful SSC program and end with key practice and policy considerations to enhance the success of an integrated SSC – community school model. Throughout, we include examples from communities across the country of how SSCs and community schools can be integrated to address inequities in our education system and support the success of our families, students, and communities nationwide.



WHAT IS A STUDENT SUCCESS COACH?

Over the past decade, we have learned from the developmental and learning sciences that all children can reach their potential if provided access to adequate support, experiences, and contexts in and outside of school. All children need access to a positive web of relationships and environments of safety and belonging to develop the skills and mindsets of successful learners and discover their full capabilities.⁶ If we build these elements into all environments in which children learn and develop, we will pave a path toward authentic equity, where all children have opportunities to thrive in school and beyond.

“When I think about an effective relationship, I really start thinking about trust. If a corps member has established trust with a student, and that trust translates into, whether that be academic supports, or whether that be social and emotional supports . . . I see that trust being the foundation from where they build on.

CITY YEAR AMERICORPS MEMBER SERVING AS A STUDENT SUCCESS COACH

We must help schools bridge the implementation gap between the research-based, personalized supports and relationships that students need to flourish and what schools have traditionally been designed and resourced to provide.⁷ Teachers and paraprofessionals often find themselves needing another trained practitioner to lead small groups, personalize learning, and support holistic skill-building in the classroom. Additionally, most schools could benefit from added capacity to create positive learning environments, extend learning opportunities, and connect students to valuable additional services to address physical, mental health and other needs that impact student readiness to engage in learning.

“I became a student success coach because I wanted our students to know that there’s someone out there that believes in them, cares about them, and wants to see them succeed.

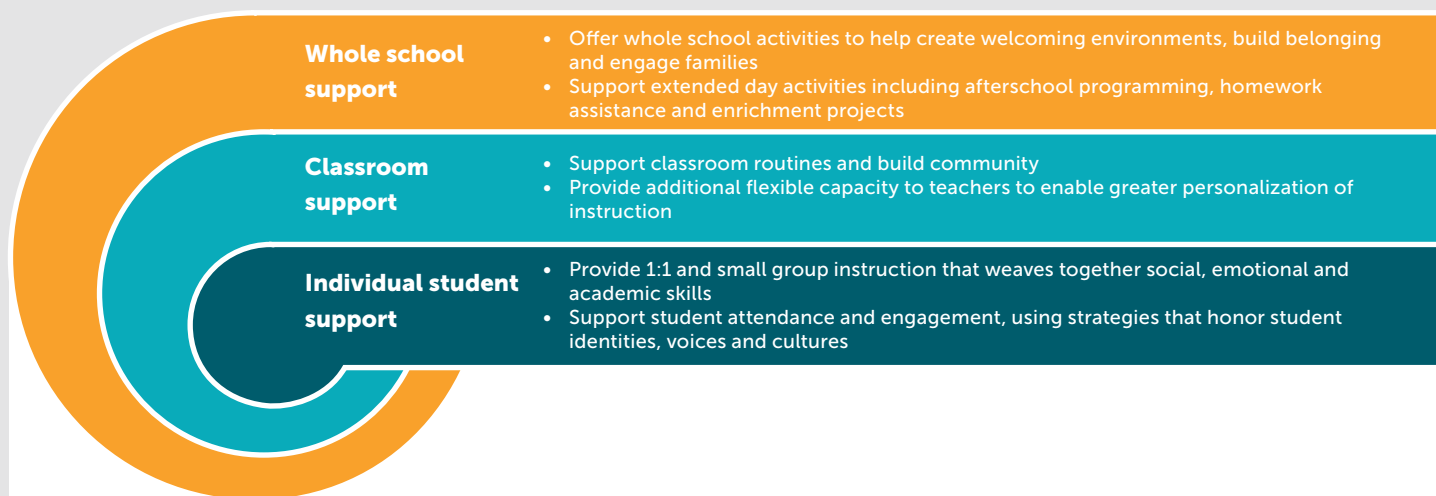
CITY YEAR AMERICORPS MEMBER SERVING AS A STUDENT SUCCESS COACH

Student success coaches (SSCs) can help build relationships and provide individualized supports and adaptive capacity to bridge this implementation gap, particularly in our most systemically under-resourced schools. SSCs are young people—often full-time AmeriCorps members—who serve on diverse teams, building relationships and partnering with educators to provide near-peer, evidence-based social emotional and academic supports to students. Managed by a school-based SSC program staff member (referred to by City Year as an impact manager), student success coaches have a whole school impact on the learning environments and cultures of schools—conditions that help everyone in the school community to feel a sense of belonging. Impact managers help foster partnerships with administrators, classroom teachers, and extended learning providers so SSC teams can have the greatest impact from year to year.

SSCs also serve as a valuable opportunity to widen, diversify, and deepen the educator pipeline. SSCs typically serve for one or two years in systemically under-resourced schools, building experience, skills, and knowledge that enables them to make informed decisions about entering teaching or another education-related role. SSCs develop key classroom skills, including how to build relationships, provide targeted academic and social-emotional support, and effectively engage students that makes them even more prepared to enter pre-service and professional educator programs. As of the latest City Year alumni survey, 48% of City Year alums currently work in the education field, including in classrooms, schools, and nonprofits.⁸

WHAT DOES THIS LOOK LIKE IN PRACTICE?

With a focus on relationships and on data-driven support, student success coaches deliver holistic, integrated student services at the individual, classroom and whole school levels.



Student success coaches are...

Proximate

In terms of age, backgrounds, and daily interactions as near-peer tutors, mentors, and role models—SSCs are uniquely positioned to connect with students and relate to their perspectives.

Adaptable “people-power”

Talented young people who can respond to the unique and changing needs and conditions of the school community through direct social, emotional and academic instruction, classroom supports, and activities that build whole school environments of joy and belonging.

Interwoven into the fabric of schools

Enabling the conditions that allow other proven interventions to be successful.

A workforce pipeline

Representing a critical category of talent to build a more robust, diverse pipeline of future educators with understanding of the need for taking a holistic approach to student development and experience confronting systemic inequity.

A step toward educational equity

An intentional counter to inequality, institutionalized prejudice, and systemic deficits, and an intentional promotion of thriving across multiple domains for young people who experience inequity and injustice. This intentionality is reflected by where SSCs serve (i.e., systemically under-resourced schools), the diversity of teams of SSCs, and their asset-based approach.

IMPACT OF SSCS

SSCs enable conditions for equitable, personalized, holistic student development aligned to what the science of learning and development has demonstrated all young people need to thrive:

Positive developmental relationships

As near-peers wise enough to offer guidance, yet young enough to relate to students' perspectives, student success coaches provide necessary capacity to surround students with a web of relationships that serves as a buffer against adversity and trauma and promotes positive development.

Environments filled with safety and belonging

SSCs enhance classroom and whole school climate through developmental strategies that create joyful environments of safety and belonging. SSCs connect with families and help bridge students' lives and their school experience. They reinforce classroom expectations and can attend to individual student needs in a way that enables teachers to better focus on the entire classroom environment.

Rich learning experiences and knowledge development

SSCs partner with teachers and leverage positive relationships to provide evidence-based, intensified academic, social, and emotional supports for individuals and small groups of students identified through quantitative and qualitative data. SSCs use asset-based, collaborative, and culturally-affirming approaches that can support and enable students' identity development and agency.

Development of skills, habits, and mindsets

SSCs focus on enhancing students' social and emotional skills and habits and mindsets of successful learners. This includes building higher-order 21st century skills (e.g., problem-solving, analytic skills at different developmental stages) through explicit instruction as well as integrating these skills, mindsets,

and habits into daily academic instruction. They elevate student voice through surveys and conversations to identify how students feel about their own learning environments and partner alongside other educators to inform and improve students' learning experience.

Integrated support systems

SSCs are "woven into" the fabric of a school and play a key role in implementing effective integrated student support by enabling a whole child approach to integrated social, emotional, and academic student development. SSCs provide supportive, more intensive supports to small groups of students to enhance their holistic skills. SSCs' near-peer relationships with students also enable them to serve as connectors to more intensive, well-being supports available through the school and community partners.

Numerous studies over the years have demonstrated the positive impact of student success coaches in schools:

Academics: Schools that partner with City Year's student success coaches are up to two to three times more likely to improve in English and math assessments.⁹

Holistic Skills: The more time students spend with SSCs, the more likely they are to improve on social, emotional and academic skills and on attendance, with students who are furthest behind benefiting the most.¹⁰

On-Track to Graduation: There's evidence that student success coaches have an impact on increasing the number of students who are on track to high school graduation.¹¹

Student Perceptions: A 2021 student survey found that 84% of students feel that their City Year SSCs teach them how to self-advocate and ask for help when they need it, which are critical skills for life and workforce success.¹²



SIX DRIVERS OF AN EFFECTIVE

STUDENT SUCCESS COACH PROGRAM

In 2021, City Year partnered with Intentional Futures (iF) to identify the key components of a K-12 Student Success Coach model and develop a [Target Program Profile](#) (TPP) - a working hypothesis informed by research and stakeholder voices about what makes the model effective. Research from iF revealed six drivers key to implementing an effective, sustainable SSC program.



Authentic coach/ student relationship

As near-peers, SSCs develop an authentic relationship with each of their students, which grounds their work and motivates the coach to complete their year of service.



Data-informed programming

SSCs and site-based staff leverage quantitative and qualitative data to identify students for services, monitor progress for interventions, and improve programming.



Diverse group of skilled coaches

A thoughtful, data-informed recruitment process is employed by program staff to attract a diverse cohort of SSCs who are adaptable, reflective, and committed to students. These SSCs often reflect the racial and socioeconomic diversity of the communities they serve.



Intentional school integration and holistic support

SSCs collaborate with teachers by attending meetings and aligning efforts with school-wide programs and curricula. This integration is driven by a site-based staff member, who works with the broader school staff to ensure an effective synergy between the SSCs and the school community.



Ongoing Learning and Development

SSCs begin their year with pre-service training and continue through a year-long scope and sequence of professional learning.



Supportive program structure

The program is grounded in an understanding of positive youth development, which informs how program staff support SSCs as well as how SSCs support students.

It's important to note that the design and implementation of a responsive SSC model requires a scaffolded, iterative learning approach to advance practices outlined in the drivers. School structure, approach, and orientation all impact the effectiveness of SSCs.

“I think the words we use at City Year, which are very accurate, are “in service.” There is very little we do in any given workday that is not in service of student, teacher, school, or City Year [...]”

CITY YEAR AMERICORPS MEMBER SERVING AS A STUDENT SUCCESS COACH

Schools that orient towards an asset-based, integrated, holistic, and relationship-driven approach are ideally positioned to leverage SSCs. Community schools take such an approach, and therefore provide an ideal structure in which SSCs can thrive. Similarly, based on the unique role they play, SSCs can dramatically enhance the effectiveness of community schools.

HOW ARE SSCS RECRUITED?

Recruiting qualified and diverse SSC teams requires a robust and persistent process of outreach and engagement. They are often recruited through touchpoints with a variety of different institutions and through strategic partnerships such as:

- High Schools & Higher Education: High schools, community colleges, colleges & universities, via on-campus outreach, job fairs, etc.
- Like-minded youth organizations: Boys & Girls Clubs, Girls Scouts, community centers, local education organizations, etc.
- Direct influencers: Family members, friends, teachers, coaches
- Media influencers: Social media, high-profile individuals
- Post-service workforce partners: corporate partners, graduate-degree programs, teacher colleges

Regardless of where recruiting efforts are happening, there are five qualities that City Year staff have found make a potential SSC qualified and prepared to serve in schools:

- Have a commitment to service
- Have a growth mindset (especially, an openness to coaching/feedback)
- Take responsibility for their responsibilities and actions
- Persist through challenges
- Be flexible and adaptable



HOW STUDENT SUCCESS COACHES ENHANCE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

THE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS APPROACH

Additional services focused on our most systemically under-resourced schools are critical for an equitable, effective school system. The question then is: how do we integrate student supports into schools in a comprehensive, equitable way that provides timely, relevant support to those who need them most? Individuals and organizations have been working to answer that question for decades. We know that when communities and families are engaged and well-served, children benefit the most. So, how do we ensure access to these services? A growing solution: community schools.

Though every community school looks different, there are key elements they all have in common. Those familiar with community schools often refer to the “Four Pillars” when defining the Community School model. The Community School Pillars emerged from the [Learning Policy Institute’s 2017 research review](#) in their research of evidence-based interventions in community schools. They identified four commonalities among community schools that improve educational practices and support students’ social and emotional growth and physical health. The Four Pillars have become widely adopted, including by the [U.S. Department of Education](#).

The Four Pillars of Community Schools

1. Integrated Student Supports
2. Active Family and Community Engagement
3. Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities
4. Collaborative Leadership and Practices

Since then, as part of the [Community Schools Forward project](#), the Center for Universal Education at the Brookings Institution (CUE), the Children’s Aid National Center for Community Schools (NCCS), the Coalition for Community Schools (CCS) at the Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL), and the Learning Policy Institute (LPI) have collaborated to help answer the question: What is a community school and what makes them work?

Based on research, practitioner engagement, and new evidence from SoLD, the Community Schools Forward task force identified the [Essentials for Community School Transformation](#). The Essentials expand and deepen how we think and talk about community schools. Building upon and enhancing the Four Pillars, the Community Schools Forward project established six key practices.

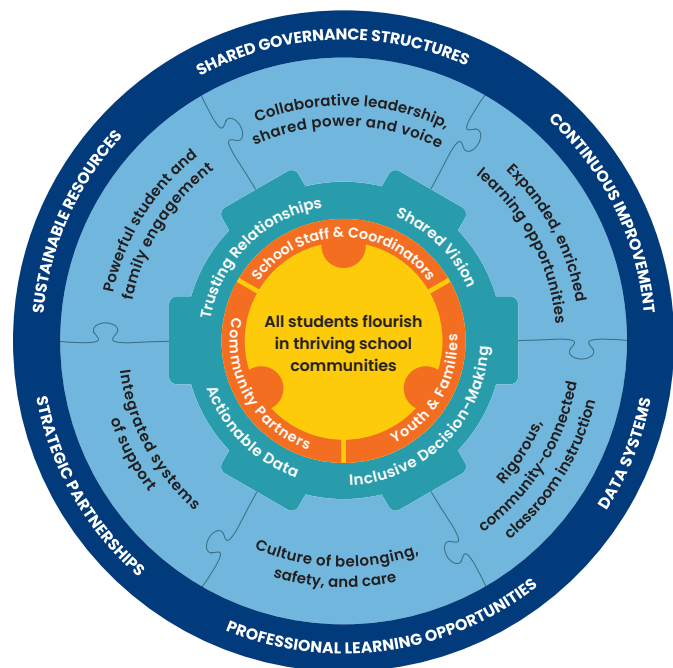
Six Key Practices of Community Schools

1. Integrated systems of support
2. Powerful student and family engagement
3. Expanded, enriched learning opportunities
4. Collaborative leadership, shared power and voice
5. Rigorous, community-connected classroom instruction
6. Culture of belonging, safety, and care

Essentials for Community Schools Transformation

In addition to the key practices, the new framework acknowledges the responsibility shared by school staff and coordinators, youth and families, and community partners. It also highlights the structural support needed for successful implementation and the internal conditions that enable students to flourish.

The four enabling conditions – trusting relationships, shared vision, inclusive decision-making, and actionable data – align with the conditions needed for student success coaches to best support student growth. In the next section, we outline how SSCs enhance the six key practices of community schools detailed in the Essentials for Community School Transformation.



LEGEND

- Why we do this work
- Who drives this work
- Enabling conditions
- Key practices
- Supportive infrastructure

Source: Community Schools Forward. (2023). Framework: Essentials for community school transformation.



STUDENT SUCCESS COACHES IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

As the largest SSC operator in the country, City Year has partnered with communities, school districts, teachers, administrators, and community partners for 35 years. These partnerships exemplify how, given their shared purpose of supporting students and their communities, SSCs and community schools are stronger together.

Below you will find the ways SSCs augment each of the six key practices of community schools and details about the role of SSCs alongside school staff and other community partners to bolster student success.

KEY PRACTICE 1

Collaborative leadership, shared power, and voice

Effective community schools build a shared sense of ownership, responsibility and collaborative decision-making across families, students, and school staff through formal structures, such as cross-departmental leadership teams, and informal structures, such as through hallway discussions or ongoing communications. SSCs help build relationships of trust and support individual student-, classroom-, and school-wide decision making in several ways.

SSCs' near-peer status and proximate relationships with students allow them to listen, understand, and elevate student voice and choice. SSCs learn about students' perspectives on their learning and lives, which can inform approaches to supporting their growth and building their engagement. Teachers and administrators can look to SSCs to offer insights into contextual factors to enhance classroom and school environments and learning.

To support collaborative leadership, school leadership and the SSC team manager connect regularly. The SSC manager participates in formal school leadership meetings to bring information about students and families into discussions and decisions ranging from curriculum to scheduling to new program development. Collaborative leadership enables consistent communication and decision-making in how SSCs are leveraged across the school and where they can add the most value.

SSCs also provide a critical adaptive capacity that is needed to make shifts and adjustments to respond to school needs and goals. SSCs can focus on important initiatives that traditional school staff do not have the capacity to focus on, for instance leading an attendance initiative or targeting additional support to certain classrooms. In this way, SSCs help create shared power, while providing the capacity needed to take a continuous improvement approach to decision-making and improvement throughout the year.

Finally, to build shared power and voice, SSCs serve as a critical conduit to engage families in school events, decision-making, and collaboration. SSCs organize before-, during-, and after-school events for families and students. They build relationships and help inform families of what students are learning and how they can support each other.

HOW SSCS AUGMENT THIS KEY PRACTICE:

- Elevate student voice to inform classroom and school-wide decisions
- SSC managers & school leadership collaborate to align efforts
- Provide adaptive capacity to address shifting school priorities and goals
- Help connect families to a shared, aligned vision for success

EXAMPLES

School leadership invites SSC managers to attend school leadership meetings to inform decisions and provide ideas about how the capacity of SSCs can best be leveraged to enhance school goals.

SSCs support informal school spaces, such as hallways, lunchrooms, and outdoor spaces to build relationships, reinforce school expectations, and build a sense of shared responsibility and leadership.

SSCs contribute their own assessment data to inform classroom and school-wide initiatives through social-emotional tools such as the Holistic Student Assessment (HSA), a self-report tool from the PEAR institute, or the DESSA, an observational tool from Aperture Education.

Teachers schedule check-ins with SSCs to discuss information from hallway conversations, individual student support sessions, and knowledge of student interests and needs to inform curriculum, classroom structure, and individual student supports.

SSCs connect families into the school through positive calls home and events such as coffee and donut meet and greets, orientations, field trips and learning sessions to help family members to support learning at home.



KEY PRACTICE 2

Expanded, enriched learning opportunities

A unique aspect of community schools is expanding learning opportunities through a variety of before- and afterschool, weekend, and summer programs that provide enhanced academic instruction and opportunities for students to explore their skills, passions, and strengths. SSCs enhance expanded learning by leading enrichment programming or supporting other community school partners in enrichment experiences. Because SSCs are engaged with students during the day, they can use their relationships and understanding of student interests to form and recruit students to enrichment experiences aligned to these passions.

Through their leadership in enrichment activities and presence during the day, SSCs also create continuity for students before, during, and after school by tying out-of-school experiences to in-school content. SSCs can modify tasks based on their knowledge of student academic needs and frame enrichment experiences in ways that personalize the learning experience and increase student motivation.

During expanded learning experiences, SSCs can spend time explaining the “why” behind learning. They provide students the opportunity to explore their interests and find ways in which school connects to students’ career goals and life outside of school.

HOW SSCS AUGMENT THIS KEY PRACTICE:

- Support and lead before and after-school enrichment experiences
- Provide continuity before, during, and after school
- Help students explore how their passions connect to their schoolwork

EXAMPLES

SSCs can lead a STEAM Day at their school where regular instruction is paused and instead students and staff participate in STEAM-related activities such as construction design challenges.

SSCs can use their knowledge of student interests to form or suggest clubs and before- or after-school student experiences.

SSCs can connect with students before, during, and after school to ask questions and help students reflect on what they have learned throughout the day.

Community school partners can collaborate closely with SSCs to plan and offer enrichment programming that aligns with school content and focus.

KEY PRACTICE 3

Rigorous, community-connected classroom instruction

Successful community schools provide rigorous, inquiry-based learning experiences that are connected to students' local community and their unique identities and culture to make school meaningful and engaging. SSCs can enhance rigorous, community-connected classroom instruction through the added capacity they provide.

SSCs leverage their relationships and knowledge of students' stories to partner with teachers and school staff to create school environments and classroom content that connects with students' identities, experiences, and culture. SSCs bring their own lived experiences of school and often share the identities of the students they work with to contribute to content and a sense of connection.

SSCs also provide individualized student instruction. SSCs provide individualized "keep up" support during class time by reinforcing and scaffolding a teacher's lesson, while finding the right balance of challenge and support. During "catch up" time, SSCs can support small groups or individuals with tutoring focused on key academic skills.

EXAMPLES

SSCs provide individualized "keep up" and "catch up" support through pull-out or push-in tutoring and small group support to help students focus on key academic skills.

SSCs lead real-world and service-learning opportunities that engage the community, ranging from solving specific problems in the community to leveraging community member expertise in the classroom.

HOW SSCS AUGMENT THIS KEY PRACTICE:

- Personalize content to students' identities, experiences, and culture
- Provide "catch-up" and "keep-up" supports for individuals and small groups
- Expand capacity to engage the local community in student learning

SSCs collaborate with teachers to create units and classroom content connected to students' identities and real-world events—including exploring social change in their own community or celebrating different ethnicities and geographies.

SSCs in Washington, DC Connected Schools:

In Washington, DC, the District of Columbia Public School's Connected Schools build on the full-service community school model and currently serve over half of D.C. Public School (DCPS) students. City Year AmeriCorps members, who serve as student success coaches, worked in five DCPS Connected Schools during the 2022-2023 school year.

Every DCPS Connected School has a manager who partners with the school principal and community partners, including the City Year impact manager, to identify student needs and coordinate services. City Year DC staff shared that partnerships in DCPS Connected Schools have generally been stronger because the manager can be the main point of contact instead of the principal, who is typically busy juggling other responsibilities. This structure has resulted in SSC teams having greater knowledge of comprehensive school plan goals which allows for better program alignment.

KEY PRACTICE 4

Culture of belonging, safety, and care

Community schools focus on creating welcoming, trusting environments in which every school member feels safe, cared for, and valued for their unique identity. SSCs—as additional caring adults in the building—help foster a culture of belonging, trust, and safety by building positive developmental relationships with students. Research shows that positive developmental relationships serve as a buffer against the potential negative effects of adversity and trauma.¹³ The relationships SSCs build with students increases student engagement and learning, while enhancing a positive school climate and culture.

SSCs serve a unique role in schools as near-peer mentors, tutors, and role models. They are experienced enough to offer perspective and guidance, while they are also close enough in

HOW SSCS AUGMENT THIS KEY PRACTICE:

- Build positive developmental relationships with students
- Serve as near-peer mentors, tutors, and role models to students
- Take a restorative approach to supporting students
- Guide students through meta-cognitive skills like goal setting and reflection

age to relate to students' perspectives. Based on their near-peer status, students may be more willing and open to sharing their true feelings and life events with SSCs in ways they might not share with other school personnel who they view as authority figures.

SSCs also provide additional needed capacity to have individual conversations with students who may be struggling or to hold restorative conversations that are critical for development but can be time-consuming and challenging for traditional school personnel at maximum capacity.

SSCs focus on meta-cognition skills, such as helping students set goals, track their own progress on academic and social-emotional skills, and select the learning strategies that work best for them.

EXAMPLES

SSCs lead “Morning Greeting” during which they energetically greet students in front of the school every morning so they start the day feeling welcome, engaged, and ready to learn.

SSCs provide individualized supports, such as “Check-in, Check-out” which is a widely-used strategy through

which adults check-in, and later check-out with selected students throughout the week to provide one-on-one coaching, and discuss issues affecting student behavior, leadership, and social skills.

SSCs connect with students individually during the school day in classrooms and hallways to build relationships and offer support to those who may be struggling to build a sense of care and safety.

SSCs deliver social-emotional lessons and skills, and provide capacity to hold restorative conversations for students.

KEY PRACTICE 5

Integrated systems of support

Community schools enable growth, learning, and development by offering a multi-tiered system of support. They leverage an integrated team of school staff and community partners who coordinate services for families and provide universal and individualized, data-driven academic and social-emotional support tailored to student needs.

SSCs add capacity to this integrated system of support by providing whole school, community, and individual and small-group supports. These include running food pantries, offering small-group academic interventions and one-on-one social-emotional check-ins, and adding capacity to other school and community initiatives. As a sort of connective tissues in schools, SSCs learn about student needs and can connect them to additional supports, whether through a school’s behavioral health system or through additional community school partners.

SSCs are trained in a developmental framework that emphasizes the importance of inquiry and reflection for effective learning and development. This allows them to learn about student needs and act as a referral source to other community partners who can provide more intensive support to meet students’ needs. School improvement efforts are accelerated when SSCs join data-driven team meetings to share their learnings and stay aligned with school goals.

HOW SSCS AUGMENT THIS KEY PRACTICE:

- Additional capacity in a multi-tiered student support model
- Provide personalized feedback to students
- Help students develop integrated social, emotional, and academic skills
- Trained in a developmental framework

EXAMPLES

SSCs can support a school’s food pantry by distributing items to students and their families before and after school.

School leadership and partner teachers can prioritize scheduling that maximizes SSC individualized academic support time, including time for collaboration to personalize student interventions, enabling them to keep up with the classroom pace and content.

SSCs can engage in student assessment and progress monitoring by leveraging available data on students’ academic skills as well as formative assessments (such as DESSA) of students’ social emotional skills to drive student supports.

SSCs can learn about student needs and collaborate with school support staff, such as social workers, counselors, and psychologists to refer them to the needed supports and resources.

KEY PRACTICE 6

Powerful student and family engagement

Community schools actively engage families and students as key partners in creating the school's environment, priorities, and partnerships and offer learning and developmental opportunities for family members, in addition to students.

SSCs help engage families in the school environment by planning and executing school-wide or grade specific events that build family knowledge, skills, and motivation in supporting students, while building students' literacy and social-emotional skills.

SSCs provide additional capacity to communicate with families and keep them in the loop on what is happening at their students' school and in the classroom. They share positive feedback about students and elicit family perspectives to collaborate with other educators on the best ways to support students.

SSCs also are well-positioned to collaborate with community partners to create engaging family events and opportunities. They support programming that brings families into schools to learn and collaborate in their child's development and growth.

Finally, SSCs communicate and build relationships with families and students—aligning student and family needs with school-wide and classroom approaches and services. Such collaboration creates a sense of collective pride, togetherness, vibrancy, and purposefulness in building learning environments that families, communities, and students' desire.

HOW SSCS AUGMENT THIS KEY PRACTICE:

- Design and lead school-wide events to engage students and families
- Communicate and build relationships with families
- Collaborate with community partners to support student and family engagement

EXAMPLES

SSCs can host a Family Dinner event to engage families by serving dinner, providing crafts and activities for children, and leading information sessions for caregivers to inform them of what their students are learning in and outside the classroom.

SSCs can invite families to share skills and cultural traditions through classroom visits or afterschool activities.

In collaboration with teachers, SSCs can make positive phone calls home to share stories of students' growth or positive behavior or connect with families about their hopes and goals for their students.

SSCs can lead a Coffee by the Curb or Caregiver Breakfast initiative for families to acknowledge and thank them for getting their students to school on time.





KEY CONSIDERATIONS FOR EFFECTIVE INTEGRATION

Through our experience running SSC programs, supporting districts and schools in effective implementation, and conversing with communities interested in implementing their own SSC programs, City Year is often asked questions about how SSC programs operate and what is needed to be successful. A series of school visits, focus groups, and interviews with SSCs, school staff, and community partners, inform the following key considerations for successfully integrating SSC programs into community schools.

ROLE CLARITY

Everyone in the school building, from leadership to teachers to afterschool staff to SSCs, should have a clear understanding of the responsibilities within their role and how they are expected to collaborate with others. This section highlights four specific roles: student success coaches, community school directors, impact managers, and teachers.

To optimize the impact of SSCs, clear expectations are needed for what coaches should and should not be doing on a day-to-day basis. SSCs, for instance, should not be used in an administrative assistant role in which they make copies or staff the front desk, but should instead be integrated into school structures and classrooms to support student development and learning. As AmeriCorps members, student success coaches must supplement, not supplant, existing roles within a school.

Student success coaches should...

- have frequent and consistent student contact*
- lead regular math and ELA small group interventions
- promote a positive school climate
- attend relevant trainings and planning meetings
- integrate and align with the school's existing programming
- align with school-wide culture and climate goals
- contribute to school-wide initiatives and activities

***FREQUENT CONTACT INCLUDES...**

Predictable and consistent time (at least three days per week, at least 30-45 minutes per session) for one-on-one and small group instruction

Planning time and processes to promote effective partnerships between teachers and student success coaches, encourage data-driven adaptations of supports, and allow for school-level coordination that effectively integrates student success coaches into school design, routines and structures

Community school directors, SSC managers, and partner teachers in particular play an important role in the integration and success of student success coach teams.

Community School Director (CSD)

CSDs, sometimes referred to as community school managers or coordinators, are typically employed by a community-based organization or the school district. CSDs play the crucial role of connecting the school with resources that serve students and their families and handle several other responsibilities, including:

- Principal-partnership management
- Attendance initiatives (providing and analyzing data, leading attendance meetings, etc.)
- Schedule coordination of all afterschool programs and services
- Grant management
- Coordination of outside services
- Relationship management with districts and state departments of education
- Community needs assessments

CSDs are the through line that keep a school plugged into and serving the community. They regularly connect with community stakeholders to capitalize on neighborhood wisdom to address community wants and needs. Ideally, CSDs are serving as an organizer for the school and its partners by coordinating events and services, not running the services or events themselves.

Impact Manager (IM)

An SSC staff-lead, known in City Year as an impact manager (IM), directly manages the school's SSC team. This role provides continuity in a school as one cohort of SSCs ends their service and a new cohort joins. IMs handle a variety of tasks, including:

- Managing SSC team schedules, roles, and responsibilities
- SSC performance management
- Facilitating and supporting SSC/teacher partnerships
- Attending relevant school staff meetings
- Aligning SSCs with school-wide culture and climate goals
- Creating target student support lists (in collaboration with the CSD)
- Whole School support (special events, lunch, field days)
- AmeriCorps grant deliverables

Impact manager is a school-based role, though not every SSC program has a school-specific IM. Some SSC programs have two or three schools assigned to a manager, and they spread out their time at each school throughout the week. A one-to-one ratio is ideal, however, and allows SSCs to receive the support they need to be successful.

Partner Teachers

Partner teachers (teachers with an SSC in their classroom) play a critical role in SSC program integration. Three key elements of a successful SSC/teacher relationship include:

DEVELOPING AN AUTHENTIC RELATIONSHIP WITH THEIR SSC

SSC programs should ensure teachers and SSCs have time and a dedicated process for developing their relationship. Strong partnerships serve as the foundation of successful integration of SSCs into classrooms.

An example from City Year—**Hour One**: the first opportunity to establish a strong partnership between teacher and student success coach. An hour one is an initial meeting to get to know each other, work styles, communication styles, classroom routines and procedures, get to know who each person is as a human being.

CO-PLANNING WITH THEIR SSC

Teachers should ensure their SSC is aligned with them on academic supports, social-emotional development activities and classroom culture, among other topics.

SSCs and teachers should agree upon a schedule for lesson plan development, so that SSCs can adapt the teacher's lessons for their one-on-one and group academic support sessions.

MEETING CONSISTENTLY

Teachers and student success coaches should meet weekly or bi-weekly on planning, student progress, and any changes or events happening in the classroom.

SCAFFOLDING THE SSC ROLE

Introducing SSCs into the school community is an ongoing process. Even as best practices are developed, every implementation will look different. From City Year's experience, we have found that focusing on particular goals and benchmarks in each quarter of the school year is effective for setting realistic expectations and enabling increased SSC responsibility over time, as their skills and experience grows.

For the most effective outcomes for both students and SSCs, it's essential to focus significant time in supporting SSC learning and development throughout the year. Ongoing training, feedback, and coaching advances SSCs' skills, knowledge, and mindsets, as well as their understanding of their own identity and agency as civic and community leaders. In City Year's approach to developing SSCs, training bundles are created to coincide with a Learning and Experience map of the program year. Programs vary in how they structure learning and development, but it can include full-day trainings or other structures that provide concrete, protected learning time aligned to a learning and development plan for the year. For example, a team of student success coaches may serve in schools full-time Monday through Thursday and attend day-long training and development sessions each Friday. Below is an example of what this can look like.

FIRST QUARTER

Whole school, whole class support



During the first quarter of the school year, SSCs are:

- learning about the community they are serving
- getting to know students and their families
- developing relationships with partner teachers
- supporting whole school routines and schedules
- attending staff meetings and aligning their efforts with school-wide programs and curricula
- leading morning greeting and assisting with whole school events

Q1 Learning & Development Theme: Identity and Community

- building trust and relationships
- diversity, equity, inclusivity, and belonging
- self-care
- youth development
- organizational context

SECOND QUARTER

Holistic Social and Emotional Learning and Academic Support



By the second quarter, SSCs are:

- developing genuinely caring relationships with students
- providing social-emotional and academic development (SEAD)
- providing academic support by leading math or reading small groups
- assessing student progress
- providing afterschool support through structured clubs and activities

Q2 Learning & Development Theme: Developing Practitioner Skills

- support and coaching
- pedagogy
- professional relationships
- data-informed practice

THIRD QUARTER

Continue integrated SEAD Support



By the third quarter, SSCs are:

- personalizing learning for each student
- promoting a growth mindset
- taking an asset-based approach to student development
- creating positive learning environments supported by the [Clover Model](#)
- planning and leading school and community events

Q3 Learning & Development Theme: Goal Oriented Agency

- excellence and continuous improvement
- recommitment
- reflection
- vicarious happiness and finding joy

FOURTH QUARTER

Celebrating and Closing Relationships



By the fourth quarter, SSCs are:

- closing out student relationships
- preparing for life after service, or an additional year of service
- celebrating students' academic and social emotional achievements

Q4 Learning & Development Theme: Making Meaning and Legacy Building

- testing and refining skills
- closure
- celebration, joy, and reflection

SCHOOL-WIDE COLLABORATION

“When educators, families, students, and community partners share responsibility for developing the resources that address the unique needs of their schools and communities, they create conditions for working together that enable them to make transformative changes.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS FORWARD, THE ESSENTIALS FOR
COMMUNITY SCHOOL TRANSFORMATION

Central to collaboration in any school building is on-going communication and alignment on goals. When principals, teachers, impact managers, and student success coaches are on the same page, it allows for more effective integration and execution of services – in addition to a positive work experience for everyone. By including SSCs and impact managers in staff meetings and professional development days, SSC teams can more easily align their programming and interventions with the goals of the school.

PROMOTED MINDSETS AND PROCESSES: THE SEVEN NORMS OF COLLABORATIVE WORK

The Seven Norms of Collaboration is a widely adopted tool from the [Center for Adaptive Schools](#) that improves our collaboration and decision making. The norms explicitly describe behaviors that contribute to greater understanding and collaborative problem solving. City Year adopted the norms as part of its universal practices to assist in creating integrated, collaborative teams.

1. Pausing
2. Paraphrasing
3. Posing Questions
4. Putting Ideas on the Table
5. Providing Data
6. Paying Attention to Self and Others
7. Presuming Positive Intentions

Community schools can most effectively deploy the people-power of SSCs by sharing and using data to determine where SSCs are most needed and creating ongoing data structures that allow for adaptation and changes during the year. Schools can use a range of data to identify how to best integrate and place SSCs. Typical data examined includes attendance, student behavior, and core course performance—the ABCs of student data, which are also early warning predictors of the likelihood of student success.¹⁴

Access to data in a timely and consistent manner is key to an SSC program's ability to effectively analyze data and make real-time adjustments to best support students. For example, CSDs can lead weekly or bi-weekly meetings looking at attendance data to determine trends and identify students who need more targeted support. Access to assessment scores or periodic

report card grades also allows SSCs to determine how students are doing holistically and if their individualized supports are having an impact on the bigger picture of the students' success in a particular area.

Building a Data-informed Culture

An organization's data culture is a set of beliefs and behaviors pertaining to the collection and use of data shared by members of the organization. Intentionally developing an organizational data culture allows us to make decisions that will improve our impact on students and SSCs.

Data culture starts with leadership. Leaders at all levels must model actions that show they are unafraid of what the data say. They do not try to explain away the data and they do not privilege their perspective above others' when analyzing data. They encourage all members of the organization to ask questions, gather information, think about how to improve their work based on data, and conscientiously develop new sources of data to answer critical questions.

COMPONENTS OF A DATA INFORMED CULTURE:

It is not enough to collect data and build the tools to store and organize that data. The challenge of becoming a data informed organization is developing the understanding and actions of everyone in the organization. Here are nine components of a data informed culture we commit to developing.

We Understand What Data Is

Data is information. We are awash in it, though we typically think of it in terms of spreadsheets and graphs. Those are just data organized to be more understandable. We must include all data pertinent to a decision, including informal data and contextual data, and we must differentiate between inputs, outputs, and outcomes, leading and lagging.

The Organization's Theory of Change is Grounded in Data

We work to create positive change for young people. To continually improve our effectiveness, we must have a way of gauging it and uncovering the drivers of our challenges and successes. That means we need data describing conditions before, during, and after our activities from multiple perspectives.

We Have Access to Data

The lack of access to or capacity to use sources data, diminishes our capacity to make good decisions. We all need reliable access to the full range of data pertinent to our work.

We Adhere to Agreed-Upon Norms When Discussing Data

Without explicitly expressing norms that we help one another adhere to, we become susceptible to misunderstandings and conflict. Norms and processes are formal ways to help us stay focused and open while collaborating.



We Are Provided with Training

There should be professional development opportunities for all necessary skills. Professional development should also be reinforced with just-in-time training to improve the application and retention of those skills.

Data Meetings are Regular and Inclusive

We lose effectiveness if we do not regularly examine data pertinent to our work. Everyone enhances the efficacy of analysis with their perspective and additional data they bring to the dialogue. It is not enough that everyone is in the room; their participation must be supported through collaborative norms.

The Organization Prioritizes Inquiry Over Accountability

All improvement starts and progresses through questions. Starting with statements of accountability stops inquiry, leading to flawed analysis and a culture of defensiveness. Starting with questions broader than a specific goal is more likely to uncover drivers and may reveal the necessity to revise a goal.

We Are Comfortable with Ambiguity

There are very few areas of endeavor that provide clear, causal relationships, certainly not in the social sciences. The best we can do is look for a degree of certainty. There are always other drivers of outcomes that are beyond our analytical reach. This can be seen as an opportunity for additional inquiry and experimentation, but it requires being able to sit with uncertainty.

We Accept That the Answers Data Provides May Not be the Ones We Wanted

There is little point to any of these processes if we cannot embrace data that is different from what we expected. Such a circumstance should just lead us to ask more questions. That is not always easy, which is why it is so important to intentionally develop an honest and supportive culture for data use.

City Year Chicago practice of inquiry-based data method to improve student outcomes

“WARRIOR WATCH”, COLLINS ACADEMY H.S.

In past years, City Year Chicago served ninth graders at a high school in a small neighborhood near the West Side of Chicago. Because of the size of the school, City Year AmeriCorps members worked with all the freshmen in the school. The school leadership also wanted to build a community of trust and stability and to create a cohort of students working toward academic success. Multiple SSCs worked with the same students in different class settings, attendance interventions, and social emotional development. The SSC team focused on an inquiry-based method of questioning to understand what supports students needed. Prioritizing an inquiry focus means we commit to using data-informed strategies to continually develop better questions that we help us discover root causes and drivers of student and student success coach success.

The City Year team created a data meeting approach that was called “Warrior Watch.” Each SSC team would share the data and information about a particular student in the capacity in which they worked with that student. Each SSC used a specific protocol when sharing data: Framing, Observations, Opportunities. Once the team put the pieces together from all SSCs working with the student, together they created action steps and expectations. These meetings were highly effective in getting a holistic view of each student and allowed the SSC team to effectively communicate and work closely with teachers and staff to best serve students’ needs. The Warrior Watch protocol allowed SSCs to set goals with students, outline a clear set behaviors and actions for students, SSCs and staff to follow through on to support multiple needs for individual students.

LEADERSHIP SUPPORT

Investment and buy-in from school leaders are critical parts of a successful SSC program. As much as possible, school leaders should allow for flexibility and iterative collaboration throughout the organization or school. Prioritizing trust and strong relationships are the foundation for a successful program. Characteristics of programs with strong, trusting relationships include: expressing care and warmth; persistence and dependability; transparency, vulnerability and emotional safety; and sharing power.¹⁵ Impact managers and community school directors having dedicated time with leadership to review student data is also essential to ensure everyone is on the same page and has a voice in any next steps.

Leadership should find opportunities to elevate all voices, particularly those of students and those working most proximate to students, such as student success coaches. This can take the form of communicating excitement in engaging with SSCs, having roundtables with SSCs, lunch with the team a couple times a year, making sure SSCs have a place at staff meetings, trainings and, school community events, giving voice to SSCs when talking about student success, having a space in the building for the team to come together, and making sure SSCs feel a sense of belonging and community in the school building. A significant part of the school leaders' role is to foster connection with SSCs and model for the rest of the school staff how to collaborate with them.

Impact managers also play a crucial leadership role in supporting SSCs by regularly conducting observations and providing coaching. Observations of SSC's service can take several forms. Since the goal of observation and coaching remains continuous learning, growth, and improvement, SSCs should have the benefit of engaging in multiple forms of observation and feedback. Two features of an impactful coaching and observation program include: site-based SSC staff providing ongoing feedback to SSCs to continuously improve support provided to students and providing regular opportunities for SSCs to reflect on their service.

The three essential parts of observation and coaching include:

1. **Observations:** Observations occur during all aspects of service and involve the observer visiting the classroom or intervention and taking low-inference notes on teacher and SSC actions. Observations can be for an entire tutoring session, class or shorter (10-15 minutes) period.
2. **Debrief:** Debriefs allow SSCs time and space to reflect on their session and where the bulk of the coaching happens. Observers can identify discrepancies between what they observed and what the SSC experienced. The final piece of a debrief is for the SSC to create an action step for how they will improve their practice.

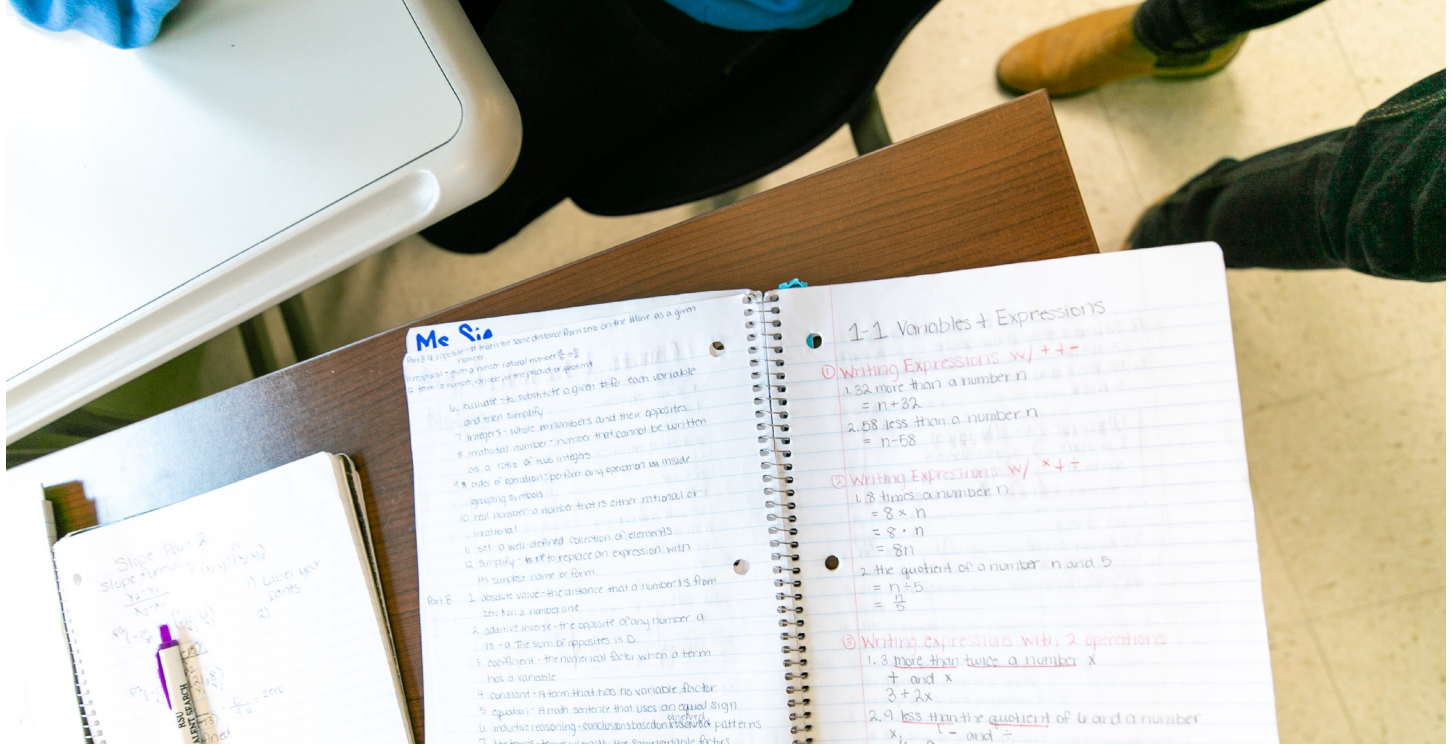
3. **Walk-throughs:** Walk-throughs are designed to gain an overall snapshot or picture of service around one or two observable criteria. Those who supervise SSCs observe 3-5 minutes of several SSCs concurrently in whole class or small groups. The purpose of walk-throughs is not to provide feedback or coaching for individual SSCs, but rather to gain a larger perspective on team growth.

Whole School Integration Promising Practice

CITY YEAR MILWAUKEE

City Year Milwaukee works with Mitchell Elementary School. This school is a major feeder to two neighborhood high schools. The feeder high schools noticed that many of the incoming 9th grade students were behind where they needed to be to be ready academically, socially, and emotionally for the rigors of high school. Mitchell decided to engage multiple outside partners to meet the complex needs of the student body. City Year was a part of this effort.

The Mitchell leadership team instituted monthly Early Warning Indicator (EWI) meetings. These meetings included members from all the community partnership organizations as well as teachers and the school leadership team. The purpose of the meetings was to look at the progress of individual students; what services each student received that month; the level of family engagement; progress from the previous month; new issues or behaviors; and success and gains from the past month. City Year SSCs were an integral part of these meetings and discussed their interactions and observations of individual students they worked with. SSC voices were heard as valuable to understand how to best support individual students. City Year SSCs also served as student advocates to ensure student voice was centered in these conversations. The Mitchell EWI meetings were a powerful way for all the people serving students to better support each student and their families in an integrated way and elevate the voice of the SSC as an advocate for the student experience.



RECOMMENDATIONS FOR POLICY AND PARTNERSHIP

Throughout this playbook, we have shared our recommendations based on years of research, site visits and focus group discussions with community school leaders, community based-organizations that operate schools, and other practitioners in the community school space, about how to integrate SSCs into community schools. We have highlighted key and recurring themes around the practice of integrating SSCs into community schools to expand capacity. Policy at the local, state, and federal level, which dictates everything from funding to incentives to accountability, also plays a key role in supporting and growing the work of SSCs in community schools. Below are six policy recommendations for those outside the school building to support this work and bolster both SSCs and community schools:

1.

Prioritize policies and strategies that foster a positive school culture in which every student feels safe, is engaged in school, and has access to positive developmental relationships.

Aligned to research, community schools emphasize cultures of belonging, safety, and care to maximize student development and learning. SSCs enhance this culture through the mentoring, tutoring, and role-modeling they provide and by expanding a school's capacity to provide the individualized supports and relationships students need to succeed. To augment the positive school cultures that integrating SSCs in community schools can achieve, we recommend:

- At the federal level, Congress should increase and align K-12 education funding to support positive school cultures and address nationwide inequities, especially in systemically under-resourced schools. High-leverage funding streams include Title I, Part A; Title II, Part A – Supporting Effective Instruction Grants; Title IV, Part A – Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants; Title IV, Part B – 21st Century Community Learning Centers; the Full-Service Community Schools Program, and, more recently the more than \$1 billion in new funding from the Bipartisan Safer Communities Act (BSCA) for the Department of Education's (USED) new Stronger Connections Grant Program. USED should issue guidance to encourage and incentivize the inclusion of AmeriCorps members and SSCs in strategies for school improvement under Title I funding for school improvement.
- Similarly, USED should support the use of Title II grants to build the capacity of school staff and school partners, including SCCs, so they can build positive cultures schoolwide. In addition, USED can provide technical assistance to highlight strategies and build communities of practice to foster positive school cultures using Title IV grants.
- USED should also encourage districts and schools to use federal funds to partner with community-based organizations that help provide the capacity needed to establish the conditions for learning necessary for student success. Federal funds that support school safety, such as BSCA, should include a focus on developing a school culture in which students have access to developmental

relationships, and feel physically and emotionally safe and connected to school.

- States should prioritize district activities in Title IV, Part A grant applications that foster positive, safe, and inclusive school cultures by including questions related to positive school culture as criteria in state-designed local applications and needs assessments, for example. States can also incentivize activities through Title I funding and monitor requirements to foster positive, safe and inclusive school cultures in school improvement plans for schools identified for Comprehensive Support and Improvement (CSI). Finally, states can adopt school climate and culture standards that both address students' connectedness to school and sense of belonging and foster positive developmental relationships among students and staff.
- Districts should prioritize specific strategies to foster positive, safe and inclusive school cultures in Title IV, Part A and B grant applications and plans. This could include promoting positive developmental relationships for students with adults, ensuring integrated social, emotional, and academic supports, and adopting restorative and inclusive disciplinary policies and practices. School districts should intentionally and strategically link their Title I, Title II, and Title IV funds to integrate academic and social-emotional support for students as part of a holistic approach to student achievement and development. Additionally, school improvement plans should include specific strategies to advance positive, safe, and inclusive school cultures.

2.

Incentivize the integration of partner organizations into the school community.

As community schools and SSCs demonstrate, partnership and collaboration between families, schools, and community stakeholders can maximize the impact of a community's resources and ensure that the students receive the integrated social, emotional, and academic supports they need. Policy can play a significant role in elevating and increasing the role of partner organizations to be most effective in providing support to schools. To help integrate partner organizations like SSCs into school communities, we recommend:

- Federal grant eligibility and competitive priorities should incentivize partnerships between school systems and community partners. USED guidance, technical support, and funding should support the integration of community partners in schools. For example, in Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 the Full-Service Community Schools program has included "Strengthening Cross-Agency Coordination and Community Engagement to Advance Systemic Change" as a competitive preference priority.
- States should leverage Title IV, Part A grants and the new Stronger Connections Grant Program to encourage integrating student-centered partnerships, including with SSC programs, in schools. They can also incentivize the integration of community partners in school improvement

processes, including incorporating community partners into needs assessments, planning, and the implementation of improvement strategies.

- Districts should establish procedures that streamline and reduce barriers to foster the formation of school and community partnerships. For example, districts can provide guidance to schools on processes for data-sharing with partner organizations to enable evidence-based, data-driven interventions, while remaining in compliance with federal and state law. Cities can also establish funding for multi-year agreements, including through levies, to support partnerships between schools and community-based organizations. These local funds can also support opportunities for workforce training and provide increased capacity for school improvement in high-need schools.

MODEL EXAMPLE

NEW YORK CITY COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Since 2014, New York City has invested heavily in the expansion of community schools throughout the city, leveraging a mix of state, federal, and local tax-levied dollars to fund this growth. Today, there are 421 community schools, led by partnerships between school leaders and community-based organizations. NYC Community Schools are supported by approximately \$240M annually in grants dedicated primarily to the non-profit sector. The New York City Department of Education also maintains an Office of Community Schools staffed by experts in the field, who provide training and technical assistance to the schools and community-based organizations that operate community schools.

3.

Expand community school and AmeriCorps funding, particularly in historically under-resourced areas.

Community schools and SSCs are focused on creating safe, equitable, engaging, and inclusive learning environments. SSCs enable these environments by providing personalized, asset-based supports. But SSCs are not benefiting as many students as they could be, primarily due to a lack of funding and lack of policies that enable the integration of SSCs. To help expand the number of community schools and the number of SSCs serving in them, we recommend:

- Congress increase funding for AmeriCorps and the National Service Trust Fund to increase the number of service participants and raise the AmeriCorps member living allowance and cost per Member Service Year. These investments are critical to recruiting and retaining a geographically and demographically diverse corps and adequately supporting programs on the front lines of our country's most pressing needs. President Biden's FY24 budget seeks \$1.479 billion to strengthen the AmeriCorps

experience and pathways to education and employment, remove barriers to service, and increase the AmeriCorps member living allowance to the equivalent of \$13 per hour, on the path to \$15 in 2025.

- Congress extend and increase funding for the Full-Service Community Schools Program (FSCS) to increase the number of eligible school districts able to receive grants, as well as technical assistance centers, and incentivize further state investment in community schools, particularly in areas with high-concentrations of poverty, such as Promise Neighborhoods.

MODEL EXAMPLE

CALIFORNIA'S INVESTMENT IN COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Since 2021, the State of California has invested \$4.1B to establish the California Community Schools Partnership Grant Program. The funding is dedicated to the growth of community schools in California and grants to local education agencies (LEAs) can be leveraged to support the planning, implementation, and extension of the community school model. At present, California's investment has awarded planning grants to 415 LEAs across the state (192 LEA's in 2021-22 and 223 LEA's in 2022-23). In addition, the state hosts a training and technical assistance center help providers implement best practices in the community school space.

- USED and AmeriCorps form an interagency partnership to advance and target SSCs where the inequities are greatest. Such partnerships are authorized by Section 121(b) of the Edward M. Kennedy Serve America Act of 2009, which allows agencies to partner with AmeriCorps to meet agency goals.

Between 2013 and 2018, AmeriCorps and USED successfully partnered on the School Turnaround AmeriCorps program, which utilized School Improvement Grant funding to support full-time AmeriCorps teams in schools implementing turnaround interventions. USED and AmeriCorps worked together to establish mutual goals and expectations for the grant program, such as partnership commitment, evaluation, performance metrics and overall program design. AmeriCorps members used evidence-informed interventions to increase parent and family engagement and student learning time; improve school culture, safety, and attendance; address students' acquisition of reading and mathematics skills; and increase graduation and college enrollment rates. A new interagency partnership could leverage the infrastructure of AmeriCorps—which has established service commissions in each state, and a track record of recruiting participants and partnering with local communities to place them in service opportunities—with the expertise, funding, and support of USED.

- Districts and cities establish district-level initiatives in partnership with national AmeriCorps programs or their

state service commission to support SSCs in high-need schools across the district.

USED issued guidance in April 2022 clarifying that grantees and subgrantees may use federal funds granted by the Department as matching funds for AmeriCorps programs. Districts can also ensure that their policies and procedures support and encourage partnerships to place SSCs in schools, including through districtwide model agreements such as memoranda of understanding (MOUs), establishing a district position to support schools in integrating SSCs into schools, or establishing school networks across the district (or participating with other districts in a district network) with SSCs.

“AmeriCorps operates a variety of programs that bring people together to tackle the country's most pressing challenges through national service, including in schools. AmeriCorps [members] regularly support students in underserved districts in a manner that promotes equity and excellence, for example, by providing high-quality tutoring, mentoring, or coaching. This work of AmeriCorps members is particularly important for helping students recover from the impact of the pandemic and addressing their social, emotional, mental health, and academic needs. The Department fully supports and encourages state and local partnerships with AmeriCorps programs, including many activities in support of student learning and success that are appropriate uses of education funds.

ROBERTO RODRIGUEZ, ASSISTANT SECRETARY, OFFICE OF PLANNING, EVALUATION AND POLICY DEVELOPMENT AT THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

4.

Establish and maintain high-quality pathways for SSC and/or AmeriCorps alumni to maximize and build on their experience through continued work in education.

High-quality developmental pathways for SSCs and AmeriCorps alumni serve the dual purposes of (1) incentivizing more young people committed to education to serve as SSCs in high-need schools and (2) establishing a pathway for them to enter the field of education (or a related field such as counseling or social work), thereby potentially serving the community for the long-term. Research shows that 44 percent of teachers leave the profession within the first five years, with the highest turnover rates in high-poverty, high-minority, urban and rural schools. There is evidence that teacher turnover is costly and harms student learning. To enhance pathways for SSCs to serve in high-need schools and augment the teacher pipeline, we recommend:

- The Federal government, particularly the White House and USED, use their national prominence to highlight greater participation in roles, such as SSCs, that serve as beneficial pathways into teaching. For example, they could host

convenings showcasing AmeriCorps members, put on webinars allowing SCCs to describe how they are working with young people, and use listservs and social media to encourage eligible individuals to apply. In addition, the White House and USED should work with Congress to increase funding for programs under Title II of the Higher Education Act (HEA) to support more teachers and teacher residency programs in high-need schools.

- States establish education and workforce opportunities for individuals who have completed their national service, particularly in the role of SSC, and should encourage high-quality pathways to put SSCs on a path to full certification and employment in the districts where they are served, including through partnerships with local universities. For example, states can ensure that incentives for attracting prospective teachers are available to SSCs and the districts that host them by reducing barriers to admission for AmeriCorps alumni, such as high costs and prohibitive admissions requirements that do not take into consideration their training and experience from their AmeriCorps service.
- Districts establish district-level internships or residency programs for SSCs independently or in partnership with teacher preparation programs, so that SSCs can build on their experiences and training to be on a pathway to full state teacher certification. They can leverage HEA Title II funds to establish partnerships between the LEA, one or more schools in the district, and a partner institution to develop teacher residency programs in high-need schools with an interest in recruiting and training former SSCs to be teachers.

5.

Establish and expand technical assistance centers for community schools and student success coach programs to provide evidence-based research, practice, and implementation assistance to communities.

Community schools require a significant shift from the traditional school model and, while SSCs are well-equipped to fit into the community school model, technical assistance is an essential tool for ensuring SSC integration in the most efficient and beneficial way. To support technical assistance efforts, we recommend:

- Invest in and elevate efforts around the National Partnership for Student Success (NPSS). Established as a part of President Biden's call to establish nationwide public-private partnerships to better support students, NPSS provides no-cost technical assistance to states, school districts, schools, and other public or nonprofit entities providing tutoring, mentoring, student success coaching, post-secondary transition coaching, and wraparound support coordination, including in the context of afterschool and summer programs. NPSS can support the comprehensive integration of SSCs in community schools.

MODEL EXAMPLE

CALIFORNIA'S INVESTMENT IN STUDENT SUCCESS COACHES

The California Student Success Coach Grant Program, launched in 2022, serves as an example of the state providing \$15 million to California Volunteers for supplemental support to existing AmeriCorps education and youth development programs dedicated to enhancing the impact of student success coaches across California. State funding was also provided to establish the California Student Success Coach Learning Network, a SSC programmatic training and technical assistance program led by City Year, to support a learning network of eight different AmeriCorps programs around SSC program development and expansion, with a goal of supporting up to 25,000 additional students.

- Districts form their own partnerships, for instance with universities or qualified community-based organizations, to serve as intermediary technical assistance providers. The University of Central Florida, for example, serves as a university partner to several central Florida community schools. The university's Center for Community Schools provides technical assistance, academic/instructional resources, evaluation or needs assessment expertise, and other supports that can be used by SSCs in community schools. University partnerships can supply an additional connection between communities, service providers, and other local stakeholders that can aid in supporting student success and seamless SSC integration in community schools."

6.

Expand the definition of school success and accountability metrics to include the holistic social, emotional, academic development of students.

Research on educational equity affirms that student success in school, work and life requires a wide range of skills that include academic achievement, but go beyond that to include other key social, emotional, professional, and life skills. Definitions of student success and the federal, state, and local accountability systems that incentivize school actions should align to a broader definition of success that includes student opportunities to learn. Community schools and SSCs have long honored a broader definition of student success by tracking indicators and outcomes based on the science of learning and development. To advance efforts to expand the definition of and accountability for student development, we recommend:

- Congress increase investment in research and development on indicators and measures that effectively capture students' opportunities to learn—including their social, emotional and academic development. Specifically, Congress could reauthorize the Education Sciences Reform Act to allow Regional Educational Laboratories and

Comprehensive Centers to provide technical assistance, offer training, and disseminate best practices on how states and districts can collect, report, disaggregate, validate, and utilize information related to broader definitions of student success. Federal programs can also incorporate more robust reporting measures. For example, the Full-Service Community School Program incorporated 13 additional indicators into its Fiscal Year 2022 and 2023 competitions that include school climate, student discipline, the provision of integrated student supports, and expanded and enriched learning opportunities for students.

States and USED can also provide guidance and technical assistance to states and districts on the evidence-base of Early Warning Indicators (EWIs) to track attendance, behavior, and course performance for individual students to help inform and provide targeted social, emotional, and academic supports to students most at risk of not completing high school and succeeding

in college. Guidance and technical assistance should build understanding of this critical strategy and how to establish and effectively implement them to target personalized supports to support student success.

- States ensure that they are incentivizing holistic student support and development by incorporating broader measures of student success in their accountability systems as described in [USED's 2022 guidance to states](#) about the impact of COVID-19 on those systems.
- Districts reexamine and enhance their accountability systems to incorporate measures and processes that incentivize holistic social, emotional, and academic development, rather than solely academic proficiency. This can include placing more weight on outcomes such as growth, parent and student voice, school culture and climate, and access to high quality programs.

CONCLUSION

As discussed throughout this playbook, research and experience demonstrate the impact of secure, trusting and consistent relationships on children. When students feel seen and cared for, it helps build the foundation for them to thrive. Student success coaches provide both daily social-emotional and academic support, increasing the capacity for community schools to serve the whole child. Working together, community schools' and SSC's students-first, value-aligned approaches to schooling are advancing education equity in their communities.

There is natural alignment between the six drivers of successful SSC programs and the six key practices of community schools, and the impact is already being seen in New York City where City Year student success coaches have been serving across 17 community schools. From them, we have learned three key considerations for successful student success coach integration: role clarity throughout the school building; school-wide collaboration; and supportive, trusting leadership.

By continuing to learn best practices about what is needed to effectively maximize student success, student success coaches can have a deeper impact in schools across the nation. Local, state, and federal investment is crucial to reduce and remove the barriers to this work. Comprehensive funding streams, expanded awareness, and technical assistance for community schools and student success coach programs can support the development of replicable, scalable approaches to addressing educational inequities.

We are hopeful that together we can better leverage the power of existing community efforts to harness an integrated social-emotional and academic approach to support student learning and thriving. Together, we can re-envision what schools can be: more joyful, equitable and welcoming places that promote positive relationships, engaging learning environments, and a sense of belonging for students and the adults who work with them.

APPENDIX: RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

City Year Resources

[The Student Success Coach Role](#)

[A Holistic Approach to Student Success](#)

[The dynamics of City Year interactions with students and how they contribute to social-emotional learning and academic outcomes](#)

[Building networks of relational trust: How consistent and caring relationships support students and adults in schools](#)

[Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development](#)

[What City Year is Learning About the Power of Integrating Social, Emotional and Academic Development in Public Schools: A Guide for Practitioners and Policymakers](#)

[Continuous Improvement Toolkit](#)

[COVID-19 Practitioner Guide](#)

Community School Resources

[Community Schools Playbook: A Practical Guide to Advancing Community Schools Strategies from Partnership for the Future of Learning](#)

[Coalition for Community Schools at the Institute for Educational Leadership](#)

[Addressing education inequality with a next generation of community schools: A blueprint for mayors, states, and the federal government from Center for Universal Education at Brookings](#)

[Building Community Schools: A Guide for Action from National Center for Community Schools](#)

[Leading with Purpose and Passion: A Guide for Community School Directors from National Center for Community Schools](#)

[Whole School Whole Community Whole Child: A Collaborative Approach to Learning and Health from ASCD and The U.S. Center for Disease Control and Prevention](#)

Social-Emotional Development Resources

[SoLD Design Principles from Science of Learning and Development \(SoLD\) Alliance](#)

[6 Principles to Foster Voice and Belonging from The Learning Forward Journal](#)

[Developmental Relationships Framework from Search Institute](#)

[Growth Mindset for Mentors Toolkit designed in collaboration with MENTOR](#)

[The Clover Model of Youth Development from Partnerships in Education and Resilience \(PEAR\)](#)

[School-wide Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports \(PBIS\) from Center for Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports](#)

[Schoolwide Social and Emotional Learning from Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning \(CASEL\)](#)

[Integrating Social, Emotional, and Academic Development \(SEAD\): An Action Guide for School Leadership Teams from The Aspen Institute](#)

[Integrated Student Supports in Schools May Boost Lifetime Incomes for Students in Families with Low Incomes from Child Trends](#)

ENDNOTES

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