

A Massive Rollout of 'Community Schools' Shows Signs of Paying Off, Report Finds

By Megan Ruge on [January 29, 2020 11:44 AM](#)



In 2014, New York City launched a \$52 million effort to launch 45 "community schools," part of a nationwide movement to transform schools into neighborhood hubs offering a range of social and health services to students and their families.

That investment, which eventually grew to more than 200 schools, is starting to be paying off, according to an independent evaluation of the schools released this week by the RAND Corporation.

The evaluation found that community schools are having a positive impact on student attendance in all grades. The results also showed a rise in on-time grade progression, high school graduation rates, and math scores for elementary and middle school students. But it didn't lead to significant changes in reading achievement in elementary and middle schools or a reduction in disciplinary incidents and school climate measures in high schools, noted RAND Corporation researcher William Johnston. The evaluation looked at key pieces of the community schools initiative across three years.

"The verdict is in," said New York City Mayor Bill de Blasio, who pledged to develop the corps of full-service schools soon after taking office. "Community Schools work. Math Scores are up,

English scores are up, we have more and more kids who enjoy school and can't wait to get to school because there's so much happening here."

New York City's community schools are part of a broader effort to organize schools in high-need communities to become full-service hubs to mitigate the effects of family poverty on student learning. Nationwide, there are an estimated 5,000 schools. Johnston said the new findings are "notable" because New York's is the largest rollout of the community schools strategy.

In the Big Apple, the schools are paired with social service agencies or nonprofit providers to offer activities and services, such as dental care, during and after the school day.

New York City Schools Chancellor Richard Carranza said the education department will now "double down on universal literacy" to boost reading achievement in the community schools and throughout the 1.1 million-student school system.

"We're actually looking at our data, we're going to continue with our periodic assessments so that we actually know our students are on track to be able to read," he said. "All of those things are in place."

Image: Mirta Rosales, the parent coordinator at P.S. 188 in New York City, greets a student during the last week of the school year. The school provides a range of health and social services to students and families in an effort to blunt the effects of poverty on student achievement and is part of a growing national trend of community schools. --Mark Abramson for Education Week.