



Better Together: Advancing Family and Community Engagement

January 2026





Community Schools

What is Community Schools?

Community Schools are public schools that provide services and support that fit each neighborhood's needs, created and run by the people who know our children best, all working together.

Pillars of Community Schools

per Virginia Department of Education from the National Model

Pillar 1: Integrated Student Supports

Coordinating academic, social-emotional, health, and basic-needs supports so students and families can access help easily and consistently.

Pillar 2: Expanded Learning Time & Opportunities

Using student voice to shape after-school, weekend, and summer learning, enrichment, and skill-building opportunities.



Pillars of Community Schools

per Virginia Department of Education from the National Model

Pillar 3: Active Family & Community Engagement

Building authentic partnerships with families and community organizations as co-designers of school-based supports and opportunities.

Pillar 4: Collaborative Leadership & Practices

Aligning school, district, and community leaders around shared goals, data, and continuous improvement.



Division-wide: Progress

Engaged district, school, and community stakeholders around common priorities: literacy, attendance, and student connection

- a. Advisory Board (equal parts community and CCS staff)
- b. Working Groups (community partner heavy with strategic placement of CCS staff)
- c. Planned for Parent Engagement through existing networks and other touchpoints (ex. Cville Tulips, City of Promise, Abundant Life, Citywide PTO, etc.)

Working to center student voice and school insights

- a. Collected and reviewed student feedback to understand belonging, support needs, and barriers to engagement at CMS, CHS, and Lugo-McGinnis Academy, additional students information gathering from Pathways, WALK, and Lugo in January
- b. Used school-level insights to identify where students need additional academic and relational support

Division-wide: Progress

Aligned existing supports

- a. Began coordinating literacy, attendance, and mentorship efforts **already happening** across schools and community organizations
- b. Reducing fragmentation by focusing on connection and follow-through rather than stand-alone programs
- c. In the process of purchasing a van for student/family transport; and transport of goods.

Strengthening relationships

- a. Engaging community partners and trusted adults to support students through mentoring, enrichment, and academic reinforcement
- b. Positioning schools and other community spaces as hubs where students, families, and partners connect to support

Confidence & Comprehension Club (Grades K–6)

Established a data-informed CCC implementation approach

- a. Ranked schools by level of literacy need to guide phased rollout
- b. Matched CCC supports (literacy kits, literacy mentors, relationship mentors; and other community based services) based on capacity and readiness

Strengthening coordination through Community Schools infrastructure

- a. Identified a Community Schools contact at each participating school to support CCC coordination
- b. Established a volunteer point person to support recruitment, placement, and follow-through at each school

Confidence & Comprehension Club (Grades K–6)

Engaged community organizations around the idea of literacy hubs

- a. Initiated partnership conversations with CBOs, not limited to, but including: Boys and Girls Club, Abundant Life, and faith-based spaces to serve as a community-based literacy and mentorship hubs.

Aligned CCC supports with existing youth and family programming to amplify work already underway

- a. Focusing reducing fragmentation by strengthening communication and shared expectations
- b. Built in accountability and readiness for scale
- c. Clarifying roles, responsibilities, and points of contact across schools and partners

Bridge Builders (Grades 7–8)

Real Talk Circles - working with the Charlottesville Department of Human Services on training/shared understandings across staff partners that serve middle school.

- a. Centering shared exceptions, engagements, relationship-building, and coordination
- b. Working to align with existing partners including, but not limited to: Creciendo Juntos, Boys and Girls Club, City of Promise, etc.
- c. Will begin relationship building with students in January 2025 (lunch time engagements in multiple languages)

Bridge Builders (Grades 7–8)

Curricular enrichment and support

- a. Working to integrate real-world problem solving with a literacy focus with the Innovation Hub
- b. Working to lesson plan for integrated cultural enrichment for middle schoolers supported by partners



The Lab (Grades 9–12 + Alt Ed)

Aligning planning to the Virginia 3E Framework (Enrollment, Employment, and Enlistment)

- a. Deepening work with Sarah Morton in order to align with the Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act
- b. Focused on applied learning, credential exploration, workforce readiness, and credit completion
- c. Centering real-world skills and postsecondary readiness (with choices)

The Lab (Grades 9–12 + Alt Ed)

Exploring use of a student connection tool

- a. Working with PVCC to design a student connection survey, that would serve as a tool for tracking and connection, based on **Network2Work's** pre-employment survey
- b. Tool seeks to understand students' interests, goals, and support needs
- c. Survey would inform LAB engagement, timing, and pathway alignment; and allow school based folk, community partners, and others, but all data owned by THE STUDENT and family

The Lab (Grades 9–12 + Alt Ed)

Listening to students

- a. Focus group at Lugo in November, another planned for January
- b. Planned focus group for other small groups
- c. Student questionnaires at CHS and CMS lunches
- d. Preparing for family engagement NOW, with baseline understanding of student needs first

Focused on coordination and readiness

- a. Clarifying roles, points of contact, and alignment across school staff and community partners

Sustainability

Sustainability means building and strengthening systems by aligning **resources**, **relationships**, and **responsibility** over time.



Federal Level: WIOA (Workforce), Title IV-A ESSA (Student Support and Academic Enrichment)

State Level: Virginia Community Schools grants support Implementation

- Community Schools coordinators or shared coordination roles
- Systems for integrated student supports
- Family and community engagement structures
- Expanded learning and enrichment aligned to school priorities

Sustainability

- Building local capacity and shared leadership
- Aligning existing funding streams and partners
- Ongoing evaluation and continuous improvement

Local Level: A coordinator could be built into the budget in coming years, especially as tied to other community goals and priorities. However, there are also lots of existing personnel that can be leveraged for these efforts.