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## **Cities and Schools Honored for Uniting Families, Schools, and Communities to Student Success**

*Work in Baltimore, Chicago, Los Angeles, and Salt Lake Receive National Community Schools Awards for Excellence*

WASHINGTON—June 19, 2015– What happens when schools, families, and communities collaborate to offer our most vulnerable youth new opportunities while addressing barriers that keep them from succeeding? The seven winners of the National Community Schools Awards for Excellence demonstrate that community ownership and joint school and community action can bolster student achievement and development, improve outcomes for families, and unite neighborhoods.

Each of the winners, which include both individual schools and multi-site community initiatives, brings a unique story of success. Organized in ways that make the most sense for their community, these winners are tackling some of today’s most pressing issues that influence young people’s development – poverty, safety, and equitable access to opportunities. They demonstrate how public schools can become community hubs that bring together educators and community partners to offer a range of opportunities and supports to families, communities, and young people. The awardees are:

- **Family League of Baltimore**, in partnership with Baltimore City Public Schools, currently has 45 community schools across the city, each with a full-time community school coordinator, that provide students with exceptional mental health supports, after-school programs, and access to food, among other services. These efforts, amongst others, are credited in helping reduce chronic absenteeism and increasing student participation in after-school programs. The Baltimore City Council recently passed a resolution urging the mayor to increase the budget for community schools and out-of-school programs by \$10 million.
- **United Way of Salt Lake**, working within three, soon to be four, districts in the Salt Lake area, has helped increase student achievement and graduation rates. At one of United Way’s partner schools, Granite Park Junior High, the percentage of students completing 9th grade on track to graduate has more than doubled in just two years. Their efforts also have increased preschool opportunities in their poorest neighborhoods. Seeing this works as a collective impact strategy, United Way has put more than \$21.5 million toward the initiative since 2012 and has set a goal of having 28 community schools in the region by 2017.
- **Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove in Baltimore** moved from one of the city’s lowest performing high schools to one of Baltimore’s top choice high schools between 2011 and 2015. Students clocked more than 17,000 service learning hours last school year and are credited with stopping the building of a waste incinerator near their campus through community organizing and various student led efforts.
- **The Historic Samuel Coleridge-Taylor Elementary School in Baltimore** has over 95 percent of its students receiving free or reduced lunch. Since becoming a community school in 2011, they

have seen their school readiness scores rise. Teachers and staff made over 100 home visits last year and over 200 teachers and staff participated in trauma-informed behavior management skills trainings through the school's partnership with the University of Maryland School of Social Work.

- **John Hancock College Preparatory High School in Chicago** has increased its social-emotional support for students as well as opportunities for them to exercise leadership skills. It is paying off in the form of higher attendance rates, increasing from 70 percent in 2010 to 90 percent last year. The school's five-year graduation rate also increased by 20 percent. Since bringing the "Become a Man" program, a mode for the My Brother's Keeper Initiative, to campus, Hancock has seen a reduction of violence and new communities of support for students.
- **Social Justice Humanitas Academy in Los Angeles** ensures all of its students have Individualized Pupil Education Plans (IPEP). IPEPs help determine how teachers and partners involved in the community school can best help struggling students and reflect the close relationships between students and teachers. This relationship led to a decrease in suspensions—only 0.2% students were suspended last year—as well as rising graduation rates, from 83 percent to 93.9% in the last year.
- **Wolfe Street Academy in Baltimore** has moved from the 77<sup>th</sup> to the 2<sup>nd</sup> highest performing school in Baltimore since adopting the community schools strategy nine years ago. Because of the strategy, students have greater access to after-school learning opportunities through ExpandedED, student mobility has decreased from 46.6-8.8% in eight years, and average daily attendance is 96%.

Together, the high-performing community schools honored this year serve more than 33,000 students and their families are in some of the most diverse and economically-challenging neighborhoods in the country. From coast to coast this year's winners, represent the changing demographics of the country and the need to be responsive to specific community needs.

"People are taking notice," says Martin Blank, Director of the Coalition for Community Schools and President of the Institute for Educational Leadership. "The community school movement continues to grow because folks are looking at their communities and realizing that the only way to get young people the opportunities they deserve is through partnership with the community. These winners represent the best of what can be done with teamwork and ingenuity."

Nationwide, community schools in nearly 100 places are using partnerships to make more effective and efficient use of resources and providing innovative and high-quality instruction and support for their students. They are seeing results such as higher attendance, lower suspension and expulsion rates, increased testing scores, most trust among families with the school.

Blank adds, "These schools are at the center of young people's lives and their communities are there with them."

To learn more about the Coalition for Community Schools, go to [www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org). To learn more about the National Community Schools Awards for Excellence, please visit [...](#)

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**About the Coalition for Community Schools:** The Coalition for Community Schools an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, higher education institutions, government and philanthropy as well as national,

state and local community school networks. The Coalition advocates for community schools as the vehicle for strengthening schools, families and communities so that together they can improve student learning. It is a program of the Institute for Educational Leadership.