



Community School Coordinators Mentoring Pre-Service Teachers in Family and Community Engagement

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Overview

In a community school, educators, local community members, families, and students work together to create a vibrant learning community. In this model, out-of-school resources including afterschool and early childhood programs, medical providers, and other community organizations provide in-school, wraparound services to promote student learning and family well-being. A community school coordinator develops the vision and goals for the school and orchestrates family and community outreach efforts.

The goal of this innovation is to expand teacher candidates' clinical experiences so that they have opportunities to learn not just with mentor teachers in classrooms, but also with community school coordinators to deepen their knowledge base before entering the field. Building on existing relationships, faculty at two institutions in Baltimore - Towson University and Loyola University Maryland's Center for Equity, Leadership, and Social Justice - provided stipends to both teacher candidates and community school coordinators to work closely together so candidates can develop and hone family and community engagement skills.

PROJECT PARTNERS

Four Baltimore City community schools

Towson University

**Loyola University Maryland's Center for Equity,
Leadership, and Social Justice, School of Education**

The Innovation

The project focused on two main activities:

- **Field experiences with community school coordinators:** Teacher candidates spent up to 10 hours per week during their spring semester working on projects assigned by the community school's coordinator, in-person and off-line, as well as managing a budget.
- **Community school coordinator workshop:** One community school coordinator presented a workshop for teacher candidates on the community school strategy and what it means for family and community engagement.

Outcomes

The innovation team collected a variety of data to better understand the impact of the project. Teacher candidates kept ongoing reflection logs and participated in three focus groups. The coordinators participated in multiple focus groups to gauge their understanding of the candidates' growth and provide feedback on the program's structure. In addition, other teacher candidates from the two institutions who were not participating in the program were surveyed to gauge their level of knowledge about the specific work that community schools' coordinators accomplish.

The innovation positively impacted teacher candidates.

Teacher candidates acquired new family and community engagement skills, especially compared to their student counterparts.

Teacher candidates put in over 100 hours of time assisting and learning from coordinators.

Teacher candidates contributed to projects including:

1. an environmental justice project where students studied the neighborhood water quality and shared the results with families and community members,
2. outreach to Spanish-speaking families about their children's school experience and navigating the district's school choice process,
3. college tours for families and students at the two campuses hosted by teacher candidates, and
4. end of semester celebration events at the community schools.

Community school coordinators grew their leadership skills and responsibilities.

Emerging data suggest that community school coordinators expanded their own leadership abilities and exuded pride in their work mentoring and coaching aspiring teachers and the possibilities it might bring to elevate their roles.

Concluding Thoughts

Overall, this innovation shows the potential for leveraging community school coordinators as mentors and coaches of aspiring teachers. This work resulted in over 100 hours of project-based work that positively impacted teacher candidates. It also resulted in expanding community school coordinators' leadership skills and responsibilities. The innovation team is currently exploring ways to expand this experience as a central part of teacher preparation programs.



Yan Krukau / Pexels

The National Association for Family, School, and Community Engagement (NAFSCE) is the first membership association focused solely on advancing family, school, and community engagement. Our mission is advancing high-impact policies and practices for family, school, and community engagement to promote child development and improve student achievement. This research-to-practice brief was developed as part of NAFSCE's Family Engagement and Educator Preparation Impact Project, the goal of which is to fund local innovations in testing components of the Educator Preparation Framework for Family and Community Engagement. We wish to acknowledge Dr. Margaret Caspe and Elia Hilda Bueno for their research and writing support. You can learn more about NAFSCE's work at: www.nafsce.org/edprep.