

U.S. Secretary of Education praises CPS Community Learning Centers as potential national model

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LOWER PRICE HILL, Ohio (WKRC) - Dr. Miguel Cardona, the U.S. Secretary of Education, is praising Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) for its Community Learning Centers. Dr. Cardona stopped in Cincinnati on Tuesday.

Cardona's visit comes as he said a housing and mental health crisis is impacting students all over the United States. Secretary Cardona said

what CPS is doing with its Community Learning Centers (CLC) could be a model to other schools around the country.

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Every school in the district is a Community Learning Center, and Dr. Cardona got a firsthand look at the impact at Oyler School in Lower Price Hill.

Dr. Cardona said there are many barriers that keep students across the country from learning, including mental and physical health. He said CPS educators are addressing that.

"I've traveled to 43 states, this is one of the best models I've seen in my time as Secretary of Education and my two decades of service in education," Dr. Cardona said.

CPS has been nationally recognized for its community learning centers. These CLCs offer health services, counseling, after school programs, career and college access services, mentoring and more. They are not just for students, but for families and community members too.

For example, Oyler School has vision, dental and medical offices in the school. The work is done through community partnerships like the Cincinnati Health Department.

"We know if they are not seeing or hearing or vision, they're not going to be able to read, they're not going to be able to come to class and learn the academics to excel," said Cincinnati Health Department's Cari Van Pelt.

Congressman Greg Landsman invited Dr. Cardona to Cincinnati to see these CLCs at work. A roundtable of community members and state and federal leaders discussed how this model could be adopted across the country and in other parts of Ohio.

"From a state perspective, we are very much interested in how we can support and expand this work," said Dr. J. Christopher Woolard, Interim State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Leaders say it is working, and so does third grader Alaina, who is part of the mentor program through Oyler.

"I like to read with my mentor a lot," she said.

Dr. Cardona said federal funding for community schools has doubled, and he hopes that helps other districts provide these services.

"There are so many things going on here that I would love to see across the country," Dr. Cardona said.

During the roundtable, Dr. Woolard said only 60% of third graders are reading proficiently in Ohio, and 1/3 of students were chronically absent last year; just two reasons he said other districts across the state could benefit from community learning centers.