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CCS: Year in Review 12/27/12

There's no doubt that the momentum for community schools continues to grow. This was one of the Coalition's most impactful years. New initiatives are cropping up across the country and existing initiatives continue to rejuvenate neighborhoods. Here's a look back at some of the highlights of the Coalition:

Fueling Local Action

· 2012 National Forum: With 1,350 attendees from 36 states, Washington, DC and Canada, six plenary sessions, over 120 workshops, and 25 breakout sessions, the [Coalition for Community Schools 2012 National Forum](#) in San Francisco (May 9-12, 2012) was the largest community school gathering of its kind. The Forum featured insightful, inspirational, and thought-provoking panels with California school superintendents and policymakers, national education leaders, and early childhood education pioneers. This comment captures the perspectives of most participants: "The Community Schools National Forum was a great experience, and I highly recommend this conference to anyone interested in enhancing the educational experience within their communities. I was challenged, inspired and gain valuable tools and information to help you succeed."

[Check out video highlights from the 2012 National Forum](#)

Informing Policy

· Community Schools Study Tour: The Coalition held two of its three anticipated study tours of high-performing community school initiative. The first study tour was held in Portland in February highlighting the [Schools Uniting Neighborhoods \(SUN\) Community School Initiative](#). The other study tour was held in Cincinnati at two of its [Community Learning Centers](#). These tours were attended by mayors, city council members, school superintendents and other members, and dozens other policymakers and local leaders. Check out video from [Portland](#) and [Cincinnati](#).

· U.S. Department of Education Race to the Top – District Competition: This competition was particularly important for the Coalition because it was a competitive priority related to our work – rewarding applicants that integrate public and private resources in a partnership designed to augment and leverage resources. This includes child and youth health programs, safety programs, community stability programs, family and community engagement programs, and more. The Coalition produced a [help guide](#) for districts applying for the competition that was accessed by hundreds of online visitors. All of the announced winners have some form of community school partnerships written into their applications. We know of at least three winners that explicitly use the community schools strategy.

Capacity Building: State and Local

· Building and Supporting State Networks: The Coalition helped facilitate an August event in Brooklyn Center, Minnesota as localities there learned from the success of Brooklyn Center Community Schools. In addition to supporting statewide efforts in Minnesota, we're also assisting Connecticut with the implementation of the community school strategy. We presented at a state-wide summit, and coordinated an invitation-only webinar with officials from Connecticut on how community schools provide the wrap-around services mandated in the state's No Child Left Behind Waiver plan.

· Scaling Up Community Schools: To date, The Coalition's online [Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships Guide](#) has been garnered over 100,000 views. Through the Guide and our local relationships, we now know that 67 places have scaled up community schools for more than five years and 100 places have been scaling up community schools 2-5 years. We've held a Scaling Up Seminar in Chicago and have seminars scheduled for Los Angeles and Florida in 2013.

Media

In the news: Community school initiatives across the country were regularly highlighted in local and national press for the outstanding work they are doing around struggling schools. The Coalition itself has been mentioned in over a dozen stories this year. We take this as a clear indication that more people are interested in and identifying with the community school strategy. In short, we feel like community schools have entered the education reform conversation in highly recognizable ways. Some of the most important media references include:

· American Public Media's Marketplace radio program is taking a year-long look at the Oyler School, a cutting-edge community school in the Washington, DC School system. ([One School, One Year](#))

· NBC News' second annual Education Nation special featured two community school initiatives in Cincinnati and Chicago. ([Cincinnati Profile](#))

· Education Week took an in-depth look at SUN Community Schools in Multnomah County, Oregon and how it is providing a blueprint for scalable education reform for state and federal policymakers. ([Oregon Community Schools Model Shows Staying Power](#)). This was an outcome of the participation of an Education Week reporter on a Community Schools study tour.

· Community Schools Messaging Framework: The Coalition unveiled a new messaging campaign that branded [community schools as "smart phones"](#). With the guidance of our leadership networks, we've crafted a graphic that illustrates community schools as a smart phone with the many opportunities that community schools offer (ie. health services, early childhood education, etc.) depicted as smart phone "apps." Several community school systems in Cincinnati, Grand Rapids, Ogden, UT, and Kansas City, have used the communications framework in their own communications and presentations to state officials and local stakeholders.

Looking toward the Future

· 2013 National Community Schools Awards for Excellence: Three individual community schools and two community school system initiatives were honored for Excellence during our National Education Day event on Capitol Hill June 5-6. Join us in Washington D.C. to celebrate these schools and to encourage federal lawmakers to adopt legislation that support community-school partnerships.

· Upcoming publications include a major synthesis of community schools research, a report on the central role of community schools in other strategies (e.g., Promise Neighborhoods, P20 Councils, Cradle to Career Partnerships), a set of case studies on early childhood and community schools and a report on expanded learning opportunities. We also have a host of new online resources planned for the Coalition's website. So stay connected with the Coalition as we roll out more and more resources to support the work in your communities in the coming year!