

Community Learning Centers championed in Cincinnati may soon spread statewide



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CINCINNATI – Everyone from National Public Radio to candidates for New York's mayor has heralded Lower Price Hill's Oyler School for using its community learning center to vault kids from high dropout rates to academic success.

Oyler's use of the centers which already has spread to 36 Cincinnati Public Schools and counting may be shared to help schools throughout Ohio under a bill introduced by Rep. Denise Drieaus that would make CPS's system a model for any district in the state that wants its own version.

Community learning centers offer supplemental services that are tailored to meet a neighborhood's needs. A school like Oyler, which serves low-income families, might include

basic health services in its center such as dentistry, eye exams and nurse-practitioners. A more affluent school might emphasize community-building features, like Pleasant Ridge Montessori, which has a Ping-Pong league and Italian classes.

"Each community decides what goes into its community learning centers. We are not trying to tell them what to do," Driehaus said.

The centers don't use education dollars. Instead they find partners within the corporate and non-profit world.

The Cincinnati Art Museum is Silverton Paideia's lead sponsor, providing the on-site Museum Resource Coordinator, teacher professional development, docent classroom lectures and student field visits to the view to the museum in Eden Park.

At Mt. Washington School, a health center in partnership with Mercy Hospital opened in 2013 with a full-time mental health team from Beech Acres, a community mental health agency.

The Cincinnati Health Department locates clinics within many of the centers, some providing pediatric care, others, like Roberts Academy in Price Hill, providing services to adults as well. Roberts has secured funding for a bilingual nurse practitioner to serve the many Spanish speakers in its neighborhood.

"It's about understanding what the community needs are and coming up with solutions that are sustainable over time," said Marilyn Crumpton, medical director of the Cincinnati Health Department.

CPS Superintendent Mary Ronan said the formula is working.

Become an Insider to learn how the Oyler approach is paying off and how it may soon be a model for schools across the state.