



## Five more schools to join Community Schools initiative

With this addition, the initiative has 17 participating schools.

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Philadelphia and School District officials announced today that five more elementary schools will join the Community Schools initiative in the fall.

The schools are: Hamilton Disston School in Tacony; Andrew K. McClure School in Hunting Park; Overbrook Educational Center; John H. Webster School in Kensington; and Richard W. Wright School in Strawberry Mansion. The addition will expand the initiative to 17 schools.

The idea of community schools is to make school buildings into neighborhood hubs for health, recreation, and social services. It's a model that is growing in popularity nationally. Ultimately, each school will look different, because each will assess its community's unique needs, build partnerships, and develop a plan. The theory is that reaching the "whole child" and aiding families in primarily low-income neighborhoods creates a better learning environment.

## IN THE NEWS

In the last couple of years, community schools have provided more than 100,000 pounds of free food to neighborhood residents, expanded out-of-school time programs for 300 elementary school students, and connected more than 500 adults to classes and job training programs, according to the Mayor's Office of Education.

"I'm encouraged by the early signs of progress in our current Community Schools, and excited to expand this initiative to serve nearly 10,000 students, as well as their families and neighbors," Mayor Jim Kenney said at a ceremony at Wright Elementary.

"The Community Schools initiative is working, thanks to strong partnerships between schools, city departments, many community partners, and businesses. I look forward to continuing work with the School District to make sure that students in Community Schools – and all Philadelphia schools – have the supports they need to thrive in and out of the classroom," he said.

Superintendent William Hite said: "Community Schools have provided critical supports to students and families such as adult education, out-of-school programs, and behavioral health supports. These partnerships are valuable assets to our schools and align closely with the District's work to provide great schools close to where children live by enhancing community engagement and growing supports for school communities."

Each school will get a community schools coordinator that is paid for by the city. The coordinators typically spend

"At Richard R. Wright School, we are committed to providing a supportive environment for children and fostering their passion for learning," principal Jeannine Payne said at the event. "Becoming a Community School will help us continue to improve student well-being and achievement by bringing in new resources and building a stronger connection between the school and our families and neighbors."

During the most recent selection process, 28 schools applied to join the program, and 11 applicants received site visits. A selection committee reviewed School Progress Report scores, poverty levels in the vicinity of the schools, and diploma attainment rates of neighborhood children.

The Community Schools initiative is funded by the Philadelphia sugary beverage tax. By 2020, the city aims to turn a total of 20 District-run neighborhood schools into community schools. The mayor originally aimed for 25 schools, but litigation against the beverage tax slowed the pace of the program.



Photo provided by the Mayor's Office of Education

## IN THE NEWS

### **Hamilton Disston School**

Principal: Kareem Thomas

Located in Tacony, Disston serves nearly 900 students in grades K-8. This school has a comprehensive parent engagement plan developed by teachers and students, and a diverse group of administrators, teachers, and parents worked together to complete the school's Community School application. The school has several partnerships in place to address student needs, including connections to the nearby Tacony Branch of the Free Library of Philadelphia and Vogt Recreation Center.

### **Andrew K. McClure School**

Principal: Sharon Marino

Located in Hunting Park, McClure serves approximately 700 students from pre-K to 5th grade. The school has strong partnerships with nearby nonprofits and universities and works closely with community partners to address language access and mental health challenges in the school community. The entire school community participated in the Community School application process, including students who wrote one-page essays about their school. The school has a dual language program and is one of only six bilingual schools in the School District. The school and community seek added health, mental health, and adult education resources so that students and their families can thrive and learn.

### **Overbrook Educational Center**

Principal: Meredith Foote

Located in Overbrook, Overbrook EC serves nearly 300 students K-8. The school is the only public school in Philadelphia that caters to students with visual impairments, and 29% of students receive special education services.

The school serves students from across the city and seeks new partnerships with community resources to ensure that students have adequate social/emotional support and expanded learning time. A 17-person committee comprised of teachers, administrators, and parents worked together to complete the Community School application.

### **John H. Webster School**

Principal: Sherri Arabia

Located in Kensington, Webster serves nearly 800 students in grades K-5. The school has a family health partnership with Temple University's nursing school, and a nearby church recently established a community center and community library next to the school. The school is eager to incorporate more parent resources to support student attendance and achievement and to address the challenges of poverty and transience affecting families living in Kensington. The school participates in the Philadelphia Resilience Project and the Opioid Impact Task Force convened by the School District and City of Philadelphia, in order to ensure the safety of students on school grounds and during their route to school.

### **Richard R. Wright School**

Principal: Jeannine Payne

Located in Strawberry Mansion, Wright serves about 350 students K-5. The school has been recognized by the state for its implementation of Positive Behavioral Intervention and Supports (PBIS) programs and has steadily improved its climate score over the last three years. The school's leadership includes parents and staff in decision-making processes and seeks to expand programming for families. The school's priorities for the work ahead include out-of-school time, nutrition, and trauma-informed supports to set the stage for improved academic achievement.