

EXPANDING FULL-SERVICE COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INTO RURAL MINNESOTA

Rachel Cox Raverty, BSSW, LSW, MSW Candidate, Lindsey Gilbert, BA, MSW Candidate, Jessica Goettl, BS, MSW Candidate, Claire Otto, BSSW, LSW, MSW Candidate & Korissa Smith, BSSW, LSW, MSW Candidate

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Investing in full-service community schools to the rural areas of Minnesota will aid in bridging the educational achievement gap – moving the state closer to ensuring a pathway to success for all of our youth.

Communities throughout rural Minnesota would greatly benefit from full-service community schools to support academic achievement and contribute to thriving communities. Lack of health and human services, mental health disparities, and cultural divides are among the greatest concerns for students in rural areas. One in 5 children birth to eighteen has a diagnosable mental health condition and 1 out of every 10 children experience a mental health problem that is severe enough to impair how they function at home, in school, and in their communities.¹⁴ When youth come to school hungry or experiencing in-home trauma, academic success is hard to achieve.⁶ Many children who have mental health needs and are referred to services do not attend the first appointment.⁴ Up to three-quarters of youth end services prematurely.⁴ The full-service community school model is an approach demonstrated to increase enrollment, and improve attendance and academic outcomes.⁶ Full-service community schools around the nation are providing supports, uniting communities, reducing barriers, improving educational achieve, and reducing educational gaps. It is vital that local health and human service agencies work together with community schools to improve service delivery for students and their families. Minnesota needs to increase its investment in the full-service community school model by expanding the availability of full-service community schools throughout every region of greater Minnesota.

UNDERSTANDING THE PROBLEM

Matters such as mental health concerns, cultural achievement gaps, and rural disparities are all reasons for expanding full-service community schools into rural Minnesota.^{4, 14}

- ◇ Wilder Research reports many children who have mental health needs and are referred to services do not attend the first appointment.⁴ Up to three-quarters of youth end services prematurely.⁴ The lack of available mental health resources become exacerbated for youth of color, due to poor identification of problems, lack of familiarity of services, discomfort accessing services, and socioeconomic factors.⁴
- ◇ Youth mental health concerns translate into lower educational achievement and higher involvement with the criminal justice system.¹⁴
- ◇ Rural communities endure disparities such as: limited access to care, a digital divide, higher need for government assistance programs, no health insurance coverage, lack of dental care, neglect seeing physicians due to costs, and chronic illness and obesity.¹⁰

- ◇ Figure 1.1 shows a 2012 Minnesota report of median household incomes across the state.¹ Median household income is lower in rural counties, especially those in the northern part of the State than urban and exurban counties.
- ◇ Social and economic injustices exist in Minnesota and nationwide.³ While many students across the state of Minnesota receive an excellent education, the state continues to see deep, unacceptable racial gaps in school readiness, health outcomes, and graduation rates.

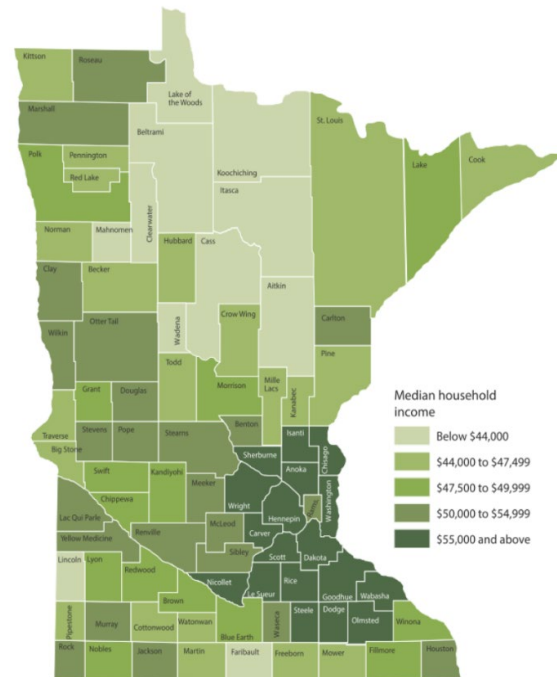


Figure 1.1 Median Household Incomes
(Center for Rural Policy & Development, 2014)

POLICY OPTION & ANALYSIS

The requirements for full-service community schools, first initiated in 2015, are stipulated in Minnesota state statute [124.D.231 Full Service Community Schools](#). Full-service community schools exist or are in the planning stage in at least six communities in Minnesota.⁵

- ◇ Brooklyn Center Community Schools – all 3 of the district’s public schools.
- ◇ St. Paul has 6 elementary and 1 middle school, including St. Paul Music Academy, John A. Johnson Achievement Plus Elementary, Dayton’s Bluff Achievement Plus Elementary, Humboldt Middle School, Hamline Elementary (Plan)
- ◇ Duluth has 3 schools: Lincoln Park Middle School, Myers-Wilkins Elementary (Plan), Denfeld High School (Plan)
- ◇ Gage Elementary School in northwest Rochester
- ◇ Jefferson Elementary in Faribault
- ◇ King Elementary in Deer River (Plan)

Description of the Full-Service Community School Model

Full-service community schools provide comprehensive academic, social, and health services for students, students’ family members, and community members that result in improved educational outcomes for children.^{11, 5} The services provided include high-quality early learning programs and remedial education, aligned with academic supports and other enrichment activities. A full-service community school engages with families, teachers, and other community members to identify strengths and needs impacting students’ success.^{3, 5} Focusing on the uniqueness of a community, full-service community schools have the potential to make a positive impact on the entire community.^{5, 7}

Full-service community schools can improve coordination, integration, accessibility, and effectiveness of services for children and families; particularly for children attending schools with a large population of students from low income families.¹¹ Not only do students benefit from services, but parents from disadvantaged situations benefit from community service

integration in schools.² This is seen by strengthening social networks, creating a more interconnected neighborhood, and enriching resources available to parents. For Minnesota to achieve systemic education equity, schools and communities must administer authentic, positive collaboration and integration.³

Funding Full-Service Community Schools

Federal, state, and foundation grants provide the funding for full-service community schools.⁵ The primary funding in Minnesota are grants through the Minnesota Department of Education: Up to \$150,000 annually to hire or contract with a partner agency to hire a site coordinator to coordinate services at each school site and one-year grants for up to \$20,000 to develop a full-service community school plan. The U.S. Department of Education, Office of Elementary and Secondary Education has a competitive/discretionary grant program.

Benefits of Full-Service Community Schools

The full-service community school model is a concept demonstrated to increase enrollment and improve attendance and academic outcomes.⁶ Full-service community schools always have their doors open; before and after school, during school, seven days a week, even year round.⁸ One full-service community school located in St. Paul offers a dental chair, therapist, literacy tutoring, food shelf, and family resource center to help with housing, energy, and other assistances.¹³

- ◇ As seen in Figure 1.2, student attendance at Saint Paul Music Academy is 5% higher than that of the state average.⁹
- ◇ Brooklyn Center Community High School is another example of a successful full-service community school, with improved graduation rates, increased attendance, fifty percent decrease in suspension rates, and closing gaps in performance on standardized tests.¹⁴
- ◇ Similar outcomes are found in Myers-Wilkins School in Duluth.¹⁴

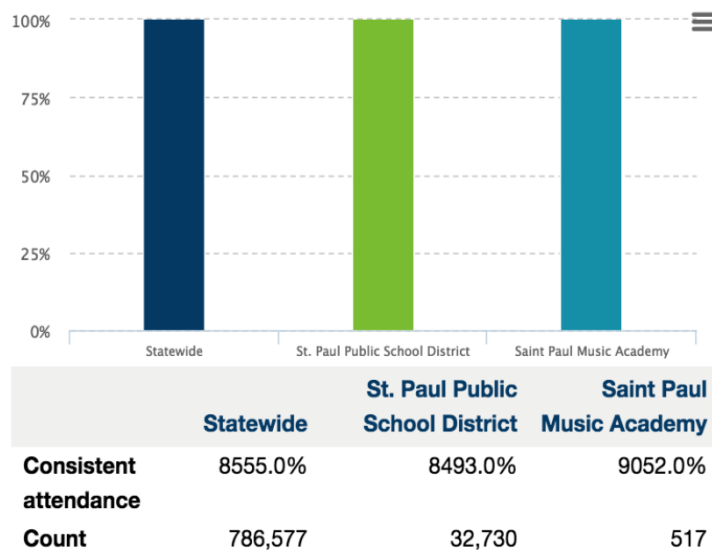


Figure 1.2 Number of Students Attending School Regularly (Minnesota Department of Education, 2018)

Critique of Full-Service Community Schools

The primary opposition to expanding full-service community schools is money.¹³ Cost resources available to the education system are limited and there are competing interests. Lumping other services together within an educational setting may stretch the already scarce resources even more thin. Another, although lessor opposition to the model, is concern about the traditional mission and role of schools going beyond purely education.¹²

RECOMMENDATIONS

Investing in full-service community schools to the rural areas of Minnesota will aid in bridging the educational achievement gap – moving the state closer to moving the state closer to ensuring a pathway to success for all of our youth.

Full-service community schools in Minnesota and around the nation are providing supports, uniting communities, reducing barriers, improving educational achievement, and reducing educational gaps. Rural Minnesota is experiencing unacceptable educational disparities.

Minnesota needs to:

- ◇ Increase its investment in the full-service community service model by expanding the availability of full-service community schools throughout every region of greater Minnesota.
- ◇ Budget for costs associated with the early integration plan for adopting the full-service community school framework.
- ◇ Encourage local health and human service branches to collaborate and co-locate within community schools to improve service delivery for students and families.
- ◇ Invest in a community education campaign to promote the benefits of the full-service community model.
- ◇ Leverage, and support local school districts in leveraging, federal dollars to fund full-service community schools in rural Minnesota.

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