

Embracing a Learning Community at George Washington Community High School: What is the Hub?

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Through efforts made in part by the school as well as the community, the community school model embraces the “whole child”. As seen in the case of George Washington Community High School (GWCHS) in Indianapolis, Indiana, which this research is based upon, addressing the fundamental needs of students to enhance academic achievement is the main mission of this project. As a full service community school, GWCHS partners collaborate to make sure students (and their families) have the supports they need to graduate from high school prepared for post- secondary education. Services are identified—and provided mostly onsite—through collaborative partnerships between 70 community organizations, neighborhood leaders, school staff, and student families to align with school improvement goals and ensure parent/community input in such governance. A unique program of the school is the HUB, an afterschool program, which was founded entirely by students for students. Supported by over thirty community organizations, one of them being Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, the staff coordinates the program on a daily basis from 2:30 pm to 6:00 pm. Unlike most afterschool programs, the HUB focuses on academics and student interests. The routine schedule for students includes program announcements, snacks, tutoring and extended learning opportunities such as, special interest clubs, physical activities, “the chill zone”, computer lab and many more. The research question for this study is: To what extent are outcomes realized for students who have participated in the HUB in the last four years? To what degree has student participation in community schools resulted in behavioral and academic outcomes? The methodology for this study includes participant surveys, observations and interviews conducted with the students and staff. The HUB creates fertile ground for understanding the after-school field and our fundamental knowledge regarding how after-school programs support academic achievement. There is a great need for research-proven ways to intervene and improve program effectiveness of afterschool programs.

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