The Pillars of Community Schools

The components or pillars of community schools are listed as either four, or six or more depending on the source of the reports. Below is a compilation of the community school components drawn from reports of four major educational organizations as well as Representative Steny Hoyer's description of a full-service community school.

The various components have been placed where they fit under one of the basic four pillars. A fifth pillar is listed in this synopsis because it contains components that don't directly fit in the initial four.

Following the synopsis of the pillars of community Schools are the pillars listed by the different organizations are presented in their expanded detail.

1. **Integrated student supports**
   A. Early childhood education and development
   B. Primary care, dental care, and mental health services
   C. Academic support for student's pre-K through 12th grade
   D. Nutrition services to combat hunger insecurity
   E. Financial stability
   F. Positive discipline practices, such as restorative justice

2. **Expanded learning time and opportunities**
   A. High-quality early learning programs
   B. Youth development and mentoring programs
   C. Community service and service learning opportunities
   D. Job training and career counseling

3. **Family and community engagement**
   A. Services that help support parents and promote family engagement, family literacy, and parental involvement
   B. Access to social service programs for families
   C. Schools function as neighborhood hubs. There are educational opportunities for adults, and family members can share their stories and serve as equal partners in promoting students success.

4. **Collaborative leadership and practice**
   A. There is **mutual respect and effective collaboration** among parents, families and school staff.
   B. Community engagement, together with school efforts, promotes a **school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful** and connects students to a broader learning community

C. Parents, students, teachers, principals and community partners build a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility using such as site-based leadership teams and teacher learning communities.

D. **Inclusive school leadership** who are committed to making the Community School strategy integral to the school's mandate and functioning. They ensure that the Community School Coordinator is a part of the leadership team and that a Community School Committee (Committee)—which includes parents, community partners, school staff, youth, and other stakeholders that are representatives of the school's

An additional component described does not exactly fit under the above 4 pillars.

5. **Excellent learning model.**

A. Curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging.

B. Emphasis on high-quality teaching, not on high-stakes testing.

Representative Steny Hoyer proposed to add his list of pillars to community schools to the appropriations legislation to fund the government for Fiscal Year 2022. His list describes what a full-service community provides. It is entitled:
Full-Service Community Schools Empower Students to Succeed.
Specifically, his list says that community schools provide:

• Support programs for early childhood education and development;
• Primary care, dental care, and mental health services;
• High-quality early learning programs;
• Academic support for student's pre-K through 12th grade;
• Youth development and mentoring programs;
• Services that help support parents and promote family engagement, family literacy, and parental involvement;
• Nutrition services to combat hunger insecurity;
• Community service and service learning opportunities;
• Job training and career counseling;
• Financial stability; and
• Access to social service programs for families.

The Learning and Policy Institute describes four pillars in their two reports:
Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence
and *Community Schools Playbook*

1. **Integrated student supports**
2. **Expanded learning time and opportunities**

3. **Family and community engagement**
4. **Collaborative leadership and practice**

The Coalition for Community Schools, The Southern Education Foundation and The Center for Popular Democracy, in their report prepared by the Center for Popular Democracy entitled *Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools* has a six-part strategy.

1. **Curricula that are engaging, culturally relevant, and challenging.**
2. **Emphasis on high-quality teaching, not on high-stakes testing.**
3. **Wrap-around supports**
4. **Positive discipline practices, such as restorative justice**
5. **Authentic parent and community engagement**
6. **Inclusive school leadership**

The National Education Association report *The Six Pillars of Community SchoolsToolkit, NEA Resource Guide for Educators, Families& Communities* describes six pillars of community schools.

1 **Strong and Proven Curriculum**
2 **High-quality teaching**
3 **Inclusive leadership**
4 **Positive behavior practices**
5 **Family and community Partnerships**
6 **Community support services**

The Coalition for Community Schools doesn't exactly contain a list of pillars, but in their November 2010 Building Capacity for Community Schools series describes *Financing Community Schools, Leveraging Resources to Support Success.*
Their conditions for learning can be compared to the pillars mentioned elsewhere.

Table 2: Conditions for Learning

● **Early childhood development** programs nurture growth and development.

● The school has a **core instructional program** with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.

● **Students are motivated and engaged** in learning -- both in school and in community settings, during and after school.

- The **basic physical, mental and emotional health needs** of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.

- There is **mutual respect and effective collaboration** among parents, families and school staff.

- Community engagement, together with school efforts, promotes a **school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful** and connects students to a broader learning community.