



Role of the Lead Partner in Community Schools

Community-based organizations serve as lead partners in community schools, helping to mobilize community assets and coordinate community schools' resources, in cooperation with school staff. Erie's Public Schools Lead Partners will be expected to work in close partnership with the school principal and community school leadership team and will be responsible for the overall planning, coordination, operation, and supervision of extended-day, extended-year, and the other supplemental and supportive services offered in individual community schools. A memorandum of understanding will clearly outline all roles and responsibilities.

Please note that youth and parent involvement play a critical role in the design and leadership of community schools.

The lead partner is the organization that joins the school to manage and lead the work of developing and sustaining the community school. The lead partner comes with a clear set of skills and competencies that enhance complement and add value to those of the school. Often these skills and competencies are in the social service, higher education or youth development fields, but they can include intermediary organizations or neighborhood organizations with expertise in civic engagement.

By coordinating and aligning community school activities with core instructional programming, lead partners have a direct connection to positive student and family outcomes. Lead agencies are also able to build stronger connections to students and families for programs happening outside of the school. Other benefits for the lead agency include: increased exposure of their organization's mission and programming; leveraging of funds for future grant opportunities; and stronger partnerships with other community based organizations.

To be successful, the lead partner needs to be viewed as an integral partner having the ability to influence all aspects of the school's life, not merely as an "add-on." The lead partner contributes to the creation of a school culture that is nurturing for students and families and hospitable to school/community partnerships. A truly effective lead partner fills in gaps and – as the school's primary community partner – leads, motivates, manages and monitors at the same time.

Equally important, the lead partner sustains and develops its own capacity and manages its work in a way that achieves visible success at all times. The lead partner must also be able to navigate change, which is the one constant.

Broker, Coordinator, Often a Provider

- Commits to long-term partnership with the school.
- Employs, supervises and supports the Community School Director.
- May also employ, supervise and support the After School Coordinator and Social Worker, pending additional funding and need.
- Brokers, coordinates and often delivers comprehensive services to the children and families based on the identified needs of the school and includes out-of-school time (OST) programming, adult education, wellness services, community cultural events, etc.
- Addresses issues of program quality, the frequency, intensity and opportunities for exposure to enriching experiences that students receive, and the responsiveness of program development to the various needs and existing assets of the students, families and community.
- Works with all stakeholders – staff, students, families, and neighborhood residents – to develop and implement a vision that gives all stakeholders access to opportunities and services they might ordinarily not have.
- Acts as the principal’s key intermediary between numerous partner organizations and the school’s population and community.
 - Brokering new relationships, regularly coordinating and monitoring, and working collaboratively are keys to the lead partner’s success.
 - The lead partner coordinates the work of other partner/providers without compromising their autonomy and identity.
 - The principal, for his/her part, should direct all outside partners to the lead partner’s Community School Director for management, to permit effective coordination.
 - The lead partner works collaboratively with the school to ensure that the staff, policies, expectations and services of the instructional and non-academic programs are fully and consistently integrated and complementary.

Culture & Climate

- Attentive to the physical space, and to the relationships within that space.
- Ensures that its presence communicates that there is something different about this school: warmth, inclusivity and responsiveness.
- Encourages and displays students’ work, puts appropriate signage around the school and is attentive and intentional in creating an environment that affirms the belief that every child needs a clean, safe, inspiring place to learn.
- Provides opportunities for both formal and informal relationship development, utilizing its resources to create social events as well as collaborative planning and problem-solving.

Responsiveness

- Committed to being very responsive and expeditious in addressing priority needs.
 - Coordinating may include developing shared policies, creating procedures around the use of shared space, creating shared calendars, joint planning with other providers, and joint celebratory activities.
 - The coordination results in the creation of an environment of abundance and choice as opposed to competition and scarcity.

Public Engagement

- Intentional in creating opportunities – in partnership with the school – for parents, staff, district officials and other stakeholders to better understand the work of the community school through open houses, performances, orientations, special events and publications.
- Creates fact sheets and other communications about the partnership – the vision, its role and contribution to the school, and how it supports school success.
- Gives as much attention to the relationship of the partnership as it does to the services and supports it provides.

Evaluation and Reporting

- Works closely with the school staff, Erie's Public Schools administration and United Way of Erie County to develop agreements on results, indicators, and measures.
- Commits to rigorous implementation and outcome evaluations.
- Shares in the accountability for shared outcomes.
- Submits reports to Erie's Public Schools and United Way of Erie County upon request.

Fiscal Agent and Fundraising

- Jointly plans with the school, Erie's Public Schools administration and United Way of Erie County to access and manage resources to produce a high return on each investment.
- May serve as the fiscal agent for some of the funds allocated to the school for community school activities and programming.
- Works with Erie's Public Schools and United Way of Erie County to secure the funding needed for long-term sustainability of the community school.