



**ACE·bc**

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Association for Community Education in BC

**WORKING SMARTER — TOGETHER**

## Community Schools are "Smart Schools"

**Conventional school models**, like outdated rotary phones, serve basically two functions – teaching and learning. **Community Schools**, like smart phones, have a network of programs, partnerships, and strategies that connect students, their families, and the community to needed supports. Students receive real-world instruction to help them develop the problem-solving skills needed for the 21st Century. Community Schools also play an important role in supporting community wellness.

Within the "Smart Schools" phone graphic are icons of the 'apps' found in community schools - whether that's early learning initiatives, inter-agency collaboration, lifelong learning opportunities for all members of the community, or the leadership provided by school and community partners.



**Conventional School Model**



**Community Schools**

 <b>Community Use of School Facilities</b>	 <b>Expanded Learning Opportunities</b>	 <b>Supporting and Enhancing Student Learning</b>
 <b>Inter-Agency Collaboration</b>	 <b>Early Learning Initiatives</b>	 <b>Youth Connections</b>
 <b>Family Support Services</b>	 <b>Lifelong Learning</b>	 <b>Community Connections and Engagements</b>
 <b>Health and Wellness Initiatives</b>	 <b>Strategic Alignment &amp; Coordinated Leadership</b>	

## The “Apps” or “Elements” of Community Schools



**Community Use of School Facilities** Community schools expand the use of the school and other neighbourhood facilities for community programs and services suited to the unique and diverse needs of all members of the community.



**Expanded Learning Opportunities** Providing increased educational opportunities for children and youth requires us to rethink traditional school calendars. Community schools utilize innovative approaches that expand learning opportunities before, during, and after school, during the summer and by extending the school day and year.



**Supporting and Enhancing Student Learning** Community Schools emphasize real-world learning and community issues. Opportunities and supports are tailored to remove barriers that prevent students from learning while also ensuring they develop skills needed for the 21st Century.

Community schools establish partnerships with local organizations, higher education institutions, businesses and others, enabling the school to “flow” into the community and the community to be closely linked to the school.



**Inter- Agency Collaboration** Community Schools support and facilitate collaboration with community agencies and create partnerships to provide services and programs. This holistic approach breaks down barriers, enabling human service organizations to provide more effective and efficient services.



**Early Learning Initiatives** Community Schools provide a variety of options to address the play and learning needs of families with young children. These opportunities facilitate seamless transitions from early learning stages through to regular school programming.



**Youth Development** Community Schools provide neighbourhood based programming and support for youth, encouraging youth involvement, social responsibility and leadership. The often underutilized skills and capabilities of youth are valuable resources for community schools.



**Family Support Services** Community schools connect families with supports and services with the goal of strengthening individual and community capacity.



**Community Connections and Engagements** Community Schools bring the school, families and community together to create safe, supportive environments in which school and community issues can be identified and addressed by local community members. As our population ages, the vital role of community schools as “hubs” of the community, providing resources and supports close to home, has the potential to become even more important.



**Lifelong Learning** Life long learning has become an essential requirement in the 21<sup>st</sup> century, not only for employment, but for all community members coping with our rapidly changing societies. Community Schools provide a variety of learning opportunities, year round, for community members of all ages.



**Health and Wellness Initiatives** Community health and wellness are integrated into the fabric of what it means to be a community school. We include this as a distinct element because of the heightened awareness of student health and wellness as the foundation of success and readiness to learn. Community Schools play a growing leadership role in this area.



**Strategic Alignment & Coordinated Leadership** Just like a smart phone operating system, community schools have an infrastructure that makes all the 'apps' work in a synchronized manner. At the school level, there is typically a broadly based **advisory group or council** in place, comprised of educators, parents, community partners, and others. A **community school coordinator** is essential, responsible for building relationships with school staff and community partners, for engaging families and community residents, and coordinating an efficient delivery of supports to students both inside and outside of the classroom.

At the district level, **community-wide leadership** collaborates to guide overall vision, policy, resource alignment and to ensure sustainability. Partners typically include school district administrators, human service organizations, local government, United Way Chapters, businesses, and community and faith-based organizations.

## Community Schools

A Community School is the hub of the community.

It is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, child & youth development, family support, and community development leads to improved student learning, stronger families and vibrant, healthy communities.

Community Schools are characterized by:

- **Extended services**
- **Extended hours**
- **Extended relationships**

*We believe that a comprehensive, coherent and collaborative Community School/Community Education strategy contributes to community wellness. By offering facilities, programs and resources at local community schools, many barriers to access are reduced and essential social supports are enhanced.*

*The Community School infrastructure makes a significant and cost-effective contribution towards building community capacity and sustaining vibrant, healthy communities.*

Don Reimer & Bill Preston, January 2014

**Coalition for Community Schools**  
Because **Every Child** Deserves **Every Chance**



Smart phone concept and graphics courtesy of the "Coalition for Community Schools"  
[www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org)