

**The City of New York**  
**Community Schools Concept Paper**  
**November 20, 2014**

Following release of this concept paper, the City of New York (City) will issue a request-for-proposal (RFP) for qualified community-based organizations (CBOs) to implement key components of a community school initiative in 83 of the 94 Department of Education “Renewal Schools.” Renewal Schools are elementary, middle, and high schools that have been identified as in need of support based on criteria including low academic achievement (test scores and graduation rates) and low ratings on DOE’s Quality Review.<sup>1</sup> The Department of Youth and Community Development (DYCD) will handle the procurement process for this RFP and participate in selecting contractors together with the Department of Education (DOE), while DOE will directly oversee and manage the resulting contracts. The RFP is part of Mayor Bill de Blasio and Chancellor Carmen Fariña’s School Renewal plan – a comprehensive, multi-year, whole-school reform designed to raise the performance of the 94 schools and enable students attending these schools to succeed.

### **Background**

The community school approach is based on a growing body of evidence showing that an integrated focus on academics, health and mental health services, social services, afterschool and summer enrichment activities, expanded learning opportunities, positive youth development, and family and community supports are critical to improving student success. In the community school approach, all of these elements become part of the core function of the school, and its success depends on extensive parent and community engagement. The approach requires strong collaborative decision-making structures among school leaders, parents,<sup>2</sup> teachers and CBOs. Each community school serves as a hub where these partners come together to coordinate and integrate a range of supports based on the needs of individual students and the community. The community school strives to offer a full spectrum of resources to meet those needs. When implemented well, this approach has proven to be effective in improving the quality of struggling schools and in narrowing the achievement gap between students from low- and higher-income families.

The community school approach is not “one size fits all.” Schools vary in grade levels, size of the student population, and the backgrounds of the students, families, and communities they serve. Therefore, it is important that individual schools undertake a thorough planning process in which parents, school leaders, and community stakeholders meet to identify community strengths and needs; agree on strategies to address those needs; solve problems; and create a welcoming, positive environment where youth and their families can enjoy learning together.

### **Initiative Approach**

This RFP will support the implementation of a community school approach including the following three components: coordination of enhanced staff and financial resources as well as parent/community engagement; expanded learning and enrichment activities; and mental health services. To be effective, these components must

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<sup>1</sup> Eleven of the 94 Renewal Schools are currently establishing community schools with funding from Attendance Improvement and Dropout Intervention grants. The remaining 83 schools will be listed in the RFP.

<sup>2</sup> In this concept paper, the term “parent” will be used to refer to parent, guardian, or caregiver.

be integrated into the school's mission and daily operation in a manner that reconfigures the school environment for individual students and their families. They must be coordinated with one another, with existing resources and services at the school, and with school-day instruction. For example, a school that has a DYCD-funded Beacon program or federally funded 21<sup>st</sup> Century Community Learning Center program may decide to invest more of this RFP's funding in mental health services as opposed to enrichment activities. The measure of success for all these components is how well they support the students and their families during the school day and through afterschool opportunities. At each site, a Community School Coordinator (hereafter, Coordinator) will take the lead in managing the implementation and monitoring of the new services and supports, working closely with the school principal, his or her staff, the school leadership team (SLT), and other stakeholders.

The Coordinator will be employed by the lead CBO (contractor), but jointly selected by the contractor, the principal, and the SLT. He or she will be responsible for leading an assessment process to determine what services are needed to support the school community and what resources are available to meet those needs. The Coordinator will work closely with the principal and SLT to carry out the assessment through a broad-based parent and community engagement process. Using the results of the assessment, the Coordinator will also be responsible for developing an annual plan for integration, coordination, and data sharing among the community school partners. The plan will specify the goals for the year, the activities of the community school approach, and how they will interrelate with one another and support the more comprehensive School Renewal plan. It will also indicate the amount of funding to be allocated to each of the three community school components, as well as determine other service areas the community school deems critical for success. Successful implementation will require ongoing communication among all of the partners: the school, parents, community-based organizations, and City agencies such as DOE, Department of Health and Mental Health (DOHMH), DYCD, Administration for Children's Services, Department of Probation, and Department of Homeless Services.

### Initiative Goals

The overarching goal of this initiative is to support 83 Renewal Schools in becoming community schools by pairing them with CBO partners and operationalizing key components of a community school approach. While funding will be focused on provision of the key components described below, contractors will not be limited to these components. Each school's annual plan may identify additional needs which the contractor would address by developing new partnerships.

#### Community School Coordination and Parent and Community Engagement

- Through a broad-based parent and community engagement effort, identify the assets and needs within the school and surrounding community to support a holistic approach to school change.
- Engage parents in decision-making and leadership roles to drive school change.
- Involve parents in their children's health, education, and social-emotional development.
- Identify and build relationships among community residents, local leaders, and the school community.
- Leverage and secure community resources for the benefit of students and their families.
- Integrate community partners into school decision-making and support structures and assessment processes.
- Develop data-sharing agreements and common metrics among the school and its CBO partners.

### Expanded Learning and Enrichment Activities

- Ensure that the expanded learning and enrichment activities are aligned with the vision and goals of the principal, SLT, and community school plan.
- Foster social and emotional competencies and physical well-being.
- Provide opportunities for youth to explore their interests and creativity in a safe, supportive, and welcoming environment.
- Build skills that support academic achievement.
- Cultivate youth leadership and community involvement.
- Engage parents and community members to support the above goals.

### Mental Health Services

- Increase access to mental health services, including substance abuse services, using evidence-based models and practices.
- Educate teachers, students, and parents about mental health issues and practices.
- Decrease stigma around mental health in the school community.
- Leverage opportunities within the school and within the community to provide needed services to students and parents.

Given the Renewal Schools' diverse demographics and unique family and student experiences, contractors would have the capacity to work with and support a variety of specialized populations. These populations include, but are not limited to, students and families in the shelter, child welfare, and criminal justice systems. Additionally, contractors would have strategies for supporting students with unique needs such as English Language Learners, students with disabilities, and students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or questioning.

### Community School Coordination and Parent and Community Engagement

The contractor will serve as the “backbone organization” of the community school’s work. The Coordinator will play a central role in developing the community school initiative within the school and coordinating the various partners working within the school to address individual student and whole school needs. In tandem with a significant parent and community engagement plan undertaken with additional support, the Coordinator will help conduct a thorough asset and needs assessment and for using it as a basis for developing a comprehensive community school plan together with the principal and SLT. The Coordinator will also be responsible for implementing key components of a parent and community engagement effort, including identifying and building relationships with community leaders and members, holding community walks for school staff and parents, and maintaining and building ongoing relationships with parents and community leaders and recruiting them to actively participate in community school decision-making structures.

In addition, community engagement efforts include identifying resources in the community to bring into the school setting. Led by the Coordinator, the first step will be to take an inventory of organizations with available services that can be rendered or co-located at the school. These organizations may include medical clinics offering free vaccinations, insurers looking to connect people to low-cost health insurance, art collectives with education programs, and legal offices offering information sessions on immigrant services. The next step will be to identify ways to work with these groups for the benefit of students and their families. Leveraging resources by offering free spaces for free services is an essential activity in support of the community school initiative’s goals.

Other strategies for leveraging resources such as securing additional public funding, foundation grants, and in-kind donations are encouraged.

There must be strong support for integrating the community school staff and other community partners into the fabric of the school. For this to happen, principals must expect their own staffs to collaborate effectively with community partners, especially when this work requires them to focus on particular students in need of assistance. Professional development would include the topic of collaboration to establish a framework for effective partnership.

The Coordinator will also work with the principal and the SLT to secure the active involvement and commitment of parents, volunteers from the community, and outside organizations to support the success of students at the school. Under the supervision of the Coordinator and consistent with the expectations of the principal and SLT, contractor staff would:

- Inform parents about the school setting, academic achievement expectations, college and career requirements, and resources and services available at the school.
- Train parents on how to effectively advocate on behalf of their children.
- Provide opportunities for parents to celebrate their children's accomplishments and to volunteer at the school.
- Sponsor events such as workshops and community fairs that address topics of interest to adults as well as youth such as accessing community resources, healthy living, and immigration reform.

Based on the needs of students and their families, the Coordinator would increase access to an array of social and preventive services such as housing, childcare, job training, adult education, and food benefits and decrease the stigma associated with accessing social and preventive services via school-based staff.

#### Expanded Learning and Enrichment Activities

The school principal, SLT, and the Coordinator will jointly plan the focus, content, and activities to be offered by the contractor, taking into account the needs and expressed interests of students as well as activities, if any, currently provided at the school. Expanded learning and enrichment programming would be tailored to the needs of each school and its student population. Activities would be age- and grade-appropriate and offer students a range of opportunities for academic skill-building, enrichment through the arts, and leadership development; the acquisition of social and emotional competencies; physical activity; and the development of healthy living habits. They would support the learning goals of school-day instruction and be led by qualified staff. Student and parent input would inform the selection of specific activities to be offered each year and would be reflected in the annual plan.

All activities, structured and unstructured, will be held to high standards and, if applicable, must meet School Age Child Care (SACC) regulations.<sup>3</sup> Structured activities would be sequenced, adopt active learning techniques, focus attention on skill development, and establish explicit objectives for skill gains. Activities, particularly those offered to older students, would include options for project-based learning. Consistent with the whole-school

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<sup>3</sup> For information on the SACC regulations, see [http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/regs/414\\_SACC\\_regs.asp](http://ocfs.ny.gov/main/childcare/regs/414_SACC_regs.asp).

approach, structured activities would be available to all students. Unstructured activities would be purposeful, planned, and supervised. Such activities could include chess, quiet time to complete homework, and counseling sessions.

Contractors will be required to offer students at least ten hours of expanded learning and enrichment programming per week during the 36-week school year for elementary, middle, and high school students. Six of the ten weekly hours must be structured activities, while the remaining activities may be structured or unstructured. Depending on the school's annual plan, activities could take place before, during, or after the school day. In addition and as part of the broader School Renewal plan, DOE will add an instructional hour to each school day.

### Mental Health Services

Mental health services will be provided on-site at the school, either by the contractor or through a subcontract with a licensed mental health provider, and would include a wide range of age- and grade- appropriate interventions. In addition to individual, group, and family counseling, services may include art therapy, meditation techniques, peer support, skill-building and other innovative approaches to mental health with a particular emphasis on prevention. At school sites which already have an on-site mental health program, contractors would work closely with the provider and DOHMH's Office of School Health (OSH) to identify ways to support and improve its services to students. At school sites without an existing on-site mental health program, contractors would subcontract with licensed mental health providers for on-site services. OSH will provide contractors with an assessment of the mental health needs of the student population. All mental health services would be designed to overcome significant barriers known to prevent students from accessing these services, such as failure to recognize mental health issues, costs of treatment, inconvenient travel to providers, and concerns about stigma.

Mental health services staff will:

- Promote mental health awareness and encourage help-seeking.
- Promote and provide mental health services to students who need them, engaging families in the treatment process.
- Assist principals and Coordinators to assess and select school- and classroom-level and small group behavioral health interventions to improve school climate.
- Offer training and consultation to teachers and other staff.
- Participate in case conferences on individual students.
- Provide other student support services as requested by the principal or the contractor.

Contractors are expected to serve both insured (e.g., those with Medicaid) and uninsured students. To cover the cost of services to uninsured students and the other mental health services noted above, contractors will receive additional funding of at least \$60,000 per school per year. It is anticipated that schools with 500 or more students would have at least one full-time clinical social worker on staff.

In addition, DOHMH staff will support the development of this area of the initiative and provide technical assistance in the following areas:

- Assessing each school's need for mental health services.
- Identifying qualified mental health providers and partners.

- Developing strategies for successful partnerships between schools, contractors, and mental health providers.
- Assisting with licensing approval and billing.
- Measuring program quality and effectiveness.

### Staffing

Each of the 83 Renewal Schools will receive funding to hire a Coordinator to manage and oversee the coordination of community school efforts. Other positions, as identified below, may be determined necessary based on the needs of the school community. Additional staff, volunteer or paid, will assist and support the key staff. All staff will be expected to create a welcoming environment at the school and provide services in a manner that is sensitive to the backgrounds and cultures of the students, families, and communities that they serve. Staff providing academic instruction would be appropriately credentialed.

It should be noted that as part of the broader School Renewal plan, DOE will provide additional staffing supports to enhance academic services such as identifying and assigning personnel to serve as school leaders, master teachers, and business managers to provide on-site technical assistance, coaching, and administrative assistance. These staff may be employees of the contractor or other organizations sub-contracted to provide specialized services.

#### Community School Coordinator

The Coordinator will be the primary person responsible for arranging, coordinating, and implementing the initiative's resources and services. He or she would be the liaison with the school, other CBOs, and City agencies on behalf of the initiative at the school level; direct the development of the annual community school plan consistent with the expectations of the principal and SLT; and lead key elements of the parent and community engagement efforts as described above. The Coordinator would have a Master's degree in education, social work, community organizing, or related field and five years of successful supervisory experience in managing student supports similar to those required in this initiative.

#### Expanded Learning/Afterschool Director

The Expanded Learning/Afterschool Director would report to the Coordinator and be responsible for hiring and managing appropriately credentialed activity specialists for all activities in the service area of expanded learning and enrichment. The Director would be the on-site supervisor and, where appropriate, meet all the qualifications mandated for SACC licensure. In addition, the Director would have a relevant four-year degree and at least three years of successful experience in providing services to students similar to the student population at the proposed site.

#### Education Specialist

Expanded learning and afterschool activities would be supported by an Education Specialist assigned from the school staff or hired by the contractor. The Education Specialist would ensure that expanded learning and enrichment activities are well-designed, engaging, and complement school-day instruction. Depending on the program, he or she would have a current New York State teaching certification, or at a minimum, a four-year college degree and experience in lesson planning, curriculum development, and implementation of structured programming for students similar to the student population at the proposed site. This position may be part time or full time. The Education Specialist would report to the Expanded Learning/Afterschool Director. Where expanded learning and enrichment activities are serving fewer

than 90 students, the Expanded Learning/Afterschool Director may, if appropriately qualified, assume these responsibilities.

#### **Mental Health Professional**

The Mental Health Professional will be responsible for providing on-site mental health services to students. The Mental Health Professional would hold a State license as a mental health professional and have a Master's degree in social work or in psychological counseling and five years of experience managing or directly providing mental health services to students similar to the student population at the proposed site.

#### **Anticipated Funding, Competitions, and Payment Structure**

The anticipated annual funding for this RFP is \$40,000,000. Each of the 83 schools will comprise a separate competition and an estimated price per school will be included in the RFP. The funding for individual school sites will vary based on an analysis of programming at each school.

Each proposer will be required to contribute a match equal to at least ten percent of its total funding request. The contributions may be in-kind or cash.

The anticipated payment structure will be a line-item reimbursement in accordance with the approved budget.

#### **Subcontracting**

As the community school approach emphasizes partnerships and specialized services in fields such as mental health, arts, and leadership training to meet the diverse needs of students, contractors will be required to subcontract out at least 20 percent, but not more than 50 percent of the total value of their contracts. The strategic use of subcontracting is seen as an important tool that will enable the contractor to arrange appropriate supports for students. Note that all subcontractors and subcontracts shall be subject to DOE approval before expenses are incurred and payments made.

#### **Reporting**

The reporting requirements for contractors will include enrollment and attendance in activities and events; services and trainings delivered (type, number of people served/trained, outcomes); and the number, types, and value of community resources secured.

#### **Eligibility, Preferred Capacity/Qualifications, and Basis for Award**

##### Eligibility

Proposers will be incorporated as not-for-profit organizations at the time of contract award.

##### Preferred Proposer Capacity/Qualifications

Due to the scope of services to be delivered, organizations with an annual operating budget of at least three million dollars and five years of successful experience in a school partnership are encouraged to apply.

### Basis for Award

CBO proposals will be evaluated according to criteria that will include the quality and quantity of successful relevant experience at the proposed school site; demonstrated level of organizational capability, including ability to leverage additional resources; proposed service approach; and familiarity with the school and the community. Successful relevant experience will take into account past performance on City contracts, where applicable. The final selection for award will be made by principals in conjunction with their SLT at each of the school sites, contingent on DYCD's final responsibility determination.

### **Procurement Timeline /Contract Term**

It is anticipated that DYCD will release the RFP for this procurement in January 2015. The proposal submission deadline will be approximately five weeks from the release of the RFP. The City anticipates entering into a three-year contract beginning May 1, 2015, with an option to renew for three additional years.

### **Use of HHS Accelerator**

To respond to the forthcoming RFP and all other client and community services (CCS) Requests for Proposals (RFPs), vendors must first complete and submit an electronic prequalification application using the City's Health and Human Services (HHS) Accelerator System. The HHS Accelerator System is a web-based system maintained by the City of New York for use by its human services agencies to manage procurement. Only organizations with approved HHS Accelerator Business Application and Service Applications for one or more of the following will be eligible to propose.

- Academic Supports
- Community Engagement
- Language Skills
- Life Skills
- Health Education and Supports
- Literacy
- Recreational Services
- Child Care
- Case Management
- Preventive Services
- Food and Nutrition
- Mental Health Services
- Public Health

To submit a Business and Service application to become eligible to apply for this and other CCS RFPs, please visit <http://www.nyc.gov/hhsaccelerator>.

## Comments

Please email comments on the concept paper to DYCD at [CP@dycd.nyc.gov](mailto:CP@dycd.nyc.gov) no later than **December 11, 2014**. Please enter “Community Schools Concept Paper” in the subject line.

Written comments also may be submitted to:

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