

Bright Research Group Issue Brief 2, November 2013

# ELEV8

YOUTH AND FAMILY PERSPECTIVES ON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



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**Elev8 Oakland is a community schools initiative funded by The Atlantic Philanthropies and operated by Safe Passages in collaboration with the Oakland Unified School District, Alameda County Health Care Services Agency, and other community partners. Elev8 Oakland serves five Oakland middle schools with coordinated services. The services include academic support for students at high risk for school failure; school-based health services such as primary care, dental, mental health services, and health education; family supports and advocacy; and family engagement efforts to help families as they strive to create supportive environments for their children's learning.**

**E**lev8 Oakland is designed to transform traditional schools into full service community schools, wherein multiple forms of support are not only available but are coordinated, so that students and their families experience a seamless and synchronized set of supports working to advance student success. This issue brief documents family and youth perspectives on these community schools based on interviews and focus groups conducted with Elev8 Oakland participants in the spring and fall of 2013, and shares policy implications based on those findings.

## ELEV8

Elev8 is a national initiative dedicated to supporting student success in school and in life through a powerful combination of high-quality supports. Recognizing that strong schools are key to strengthening low income communities, Elev8:

- Extends learning opportunities for students beyond the classroom and the traditional school year;
- Provides school-based health services to children and their families;
- Encourages parents to be actively involved in their children's education; and
- Offers family supports and resources on school campuses designed to promote economic stability, good health and continuing education.

Elev8 Oakland is one of five sites around the country that received a grant from The Atlantic Philanthropies in 2008.

In partnership with the Oakland Unified School District (OUSD), the City of Oakland, the County of Alameda, and other community-based partners, Safe Passages has served as the lead agency for Elev8 Oakland. Safe Passages is a non-profit organization committed to advocating for children, youth, and families with a special emphasis on vulnerable populations within the County of Alameda. Phase 1 funding from The Atlantic Philanthropies spanned 2008-2012 and covered most direct service, infrastructure and administrative costs associated with fully implementing the Elev8 model. Beginning in 2012, Elev8 Oakland entered into a sustainability phase of funding (termed Phase 2), which focuses on maintaining necessary infrastructure to achieve long-term program sustainability, but provides decreased funding for direct service. During Phase 2 services have been reduced and some positions have been assumed by the District or other community partners, including Family Advocates at some sites.

## THE LOCAL EVALUATION

Bright Research Group (BRG) was selected to conduct a local evaluation of Elev8 Oakland in 2012 focused on three primary areas: 1) Evaluating the costs and benefits associated with the Elev8 Oakland model of community schools 2) Identifying effective strategies for moving the most at risk students towards academic success, and, 3) Providing summative data on Elev8 students' transition to high school. Previous briefs this year have focused on documenting the Elev8 service model for serving at-risk youth and a cost-ben-

efit analysis of the Elev8 Oakland community schools initiative. This issue brief explores family and youth perspectives on youth, family and community needs and the ways in which Elev8 meets those needs.

**METHODOLOGY**

The purpose of interviews and focus groups with Elev8 families and youth was to learn more about the services and supports young people and their families receive from Elev8, how Elev8 services have helped them, and what additional services and supports would have been helpful, as well as to gather family perspectives on accessing services through the school site. The interviews also explored the supports and services that Elev8 participants have received to prepare them for a successful high school transition, which will be described in-depth in a separate report.

Participants included a cohort of 25 family members (parents/guardians) and their children who are in 6<sup>th</sup>, 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> grade and are current participants in Elev8. Safe Passages Site Coordinators identified and recruited youth and families to participate in the cohort. Adult participants completed an IRB-approved consent procedure to participate in interviews, and students provided assent. Interviews and

focus groups were conducted in-person by Bright Research Group in a confidential space at school sites or by telephone in a small number of cases. Participants were offered small gift certificates from local merchants in exchange for their time, but it was communicated that this was not conditional upon positive input on the Elev8 Oakland program. Interviews were conducted in Spanish for monolingual or bilingual participants as needed. The table below includes a breakdown of the number of individuals interviewed by site, ethnicity and gender.

Interview participants are distributed across school sites, gender, and ethnicity in a way that is relatively consistent with Elev8 Oakland program utilization. Interview data were coded and analyzed for key themes to affirm the extent to which there was commonality among responses. Individual examples of the common themes were pulled from the data set and are included in the narrative. The methods are entirely qualitative and based on a non-probability convenience sample. While this form of inquiry may not yield findings that have inferential power, it is well-suited to highlighting the experience of participants and providing insight into the meaning behind findings gathered through other means (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011; Jessor et al, 1996).

**Elev8 Oakland Key Informant Interview and Focus Group Participants**

School	Students	Family Members
Coliseum College Prep Academy (CCPA)	5	5
Madison Park Business & Arts Academy (Madison)	6	7
Roosevelt Middle School (Roosevelt)	6	3
United for Success Academy (UFSA)	5	5
West Oakland Middle School (WOMS)	5	5
Ethnicity	Students	Family Members
African American	9	9
Latino	17	16
Other	1	0
White	0	0
Gender	Students	Family Members
Male	14	6
Female	13	19

## FINDINGS

The most significant theme throughout the interviews with Elev8 Oakland youth and families was the particular value of family engagement and supports. Discussions with participants demonstrate that family supports and health services are often precursors to enhanced learning, as they help top-ple common barriers to student engagement and learning. This section is organized first with a discussion of how Elev8 supports and engages families, followed by how participants see the health impacts of Elev8, Elev8's role in promoting school connectedness, how Elev8 helps support student achievement, and, finally, some of the gaps and persistent needs that emerged from the interviews.

### FAMILY STABILITY, COMMUNITY AND ENGAGEMENT

**Elev8 families reported that Family Resource Centers and advocacy promote school connectedness, improve family stability, and strengthen student engagement in school.**

*"I did not know the school before I got involved with Elev8. I came, left my children at school and went home and was depressed. If Elev8 wasn't here, we would not be involved in the school in the same way. Now we know the school, we are connected. If we didn't have it, there would be more depression, more doctor's visits; more need for services.... I had high blood pressure; I started coming here and my doctor looked at me and said it's gone. It is because of this program. They asked me to come; I said no, I do not want to; but, they got me to come. They invited me for a cup of coffee." – Elev8 Family Member*

Low-income communities of color often experience public institutions as alienating and difficult to navigate (Franklin, 1992; Lott, 2002; Simons-Morten & Crump, 2003; Sirin, 2005). Part of the Elev8 Oakland approach to engaging families as advocates for their children and communities is through community-based and relationship-based services that build a bridge between families and the school. The roles of the Project Coordinator and Family Advocate are to build relationships with families in need, connect families with resources that meet their self-identified needs, and provide a forum for families to develop community. Family members interviewed highlighted family advocacy, coordination of services, and the family resource centers as particularly valuable components of the Elev8 Oakland service model.

Three prominent themes emerged from the data around how Elev8 Oakland supports and engages families. Families that had interfaced with the Family Resource Center, Family Advocates, or Site Coordinators reflected that Elev8 Oakland helped them access an array of services and supports to meet their most basic of needs. The Family Resource Centers also provide a forum for families to connect with each other, give and receive peer support and foster a sense of community at the school. By accessing information from the Family Advocate and their peers, families were equipped with tools to help their children succeed.

### BASIC NEEDS

*"They have a family resource center – they help us with whatever we need; it is very helpful. They connect us with other resources – legal services, food bank. If they don't have it, they will find it and connect you with the help you need." – Elev8 Family Member*

In implementing Elev8 Oakland, Safe Passages has approached the concept of full service community schools to include helping families meet their most basic needs. The Elev8 Oakland service model is based on the premise that improving family stability and access to resources improves family functioning, connectedness to school, and ultimately student learning. Many families in the cohort reported that they or their communities are facing food insecurity, financial instability, and legal challenges (both immigration and criminal justice-related). These sorts of difficulties register on the most fundamental levels of Maslow's hierarchy of needs, impeding a child's essential physiological and safety requirements.

*"I talk with the Elev8 Coordinator and she helps me get what I need for my family. For example, they help with clothing, food. If there is some type of problem with my children, they help me and give me advice." – Elev8 Family Member*

At those sites with currently funded Elev8 Family Advocates, families described the services and supports that helped them meet these basic needs, including food, tax help, legal assistance, clothing, and housing as invaluable. The family advocate was described as critical to brokering services and

supports based on family and community-identified needs at those sites.

*“I got connected with legal services; I got connected with the tax benefit program; groceries – everything. There was no one particular thing that I have not utilized.”*

– Elev8 Family Member

## COMMUNITY

*“We have a lot of families with different needs...we have that space to talk about what we are going through; the commonality of it; being able to know we are not alone. When the kids are misbehaving, it helps you know that you have the space to talk about it and know that you’re not the only one.”* – Elev8 Family Member

Families reported that the Family Resource Centers are particularly valuable in that they provide a forum for families to build relationships with each other, access information about the school and other needs, and give and receive peer support. For Elev8 families, this has increased their sense of connection and community and reduced the emotional stressors and sense of isolation that can accompany poverty, loss, monolingual status, and other hardships facing Elev8 families. Several Elev8 families described the Family Resource Center as a place for parents to gather with other parents and caregivers and access peer support in an informal setting.

*“The parents that come with stress, we help each other; if one needs [the Family Advocate or the Project Coordinator], they can speak with her by themselves. But if they need help of friends, we all talk in a circle.”*

– Elev8 Family Member

Both parents and students recognized the opportunity for camaraderie and peer support that Elev8 provides via the Family Resource Centers and advocacy components, despite differences in background, language and experience.

*“Elev8 has united parents from different backgrounds, who speak different languages, to work together to ensure that all parents feel like they are part of the community.”*

– Elev8 Family Member

*“I think it’s helpful because it lets families know that there is someone out there who cares about your family – you are*

*not alone in a hard situation.”* – Elev8 Student

## ENGAGEMENT

*“Elev8 taught my mom how to be more active in my school – she comes more often now cause she cares more. Before I went to Elev8, she would come once in a while, but now she comes everyday. It taught her to have that experience with me and do things more with me.”* – Elev8 Student

One of the pillars of Elev8 is to engage families in their student’s education and schools. Families and youth come into Elev8 through a variety of channels – some are referred by a teacher; others come through the Coordination of Services Team (COST). Regardless of their point of entry, Elev8 engages families by meeting them where they are and connecting them with services that respond to their self-identified needs. For some families, this means helping the student to enroll in the Extended Learning Program; for others it is about brokering services through the Family Resource Centers. Helping families access needed services and supports is the first step in establishing a relationship between the family and the school site. As families feel more engaged, the hope is that students will also experience an increased sense of connection with the school and that families will move from recipients of service toward being active stakeholders in the life of the school. Many of those interviewed attributed increased family engagement in their children’s education and the life of the school to Elev8.

Several families and youth described the ways in which Elev8 helped their family become more invested in their education and provided opportunities for families to participate. Many reported that Elev8 created an easy entry point for family members to volunteer, join school meetings and advocate for their children, engaging in a “deeper way.” Youth who were interviewed credited Elev8 with increasing their parents’ engagement in their education. Some families talked about how they worked together as peers to co-create the various services and supports offered through the Family Resource Center – from putting together bags of food, to organizing social events at the school site – moving from recipients of service to part of the unpaid community school workforce.

*“My mom is a parent volunteer here. She came here with my brother and was concerned about the school not being safe; so, she got involved; she started volunteering and the*

*school is a lot better now. When they have meetings she calls all the parents to get them to come and she speaks. She is a great mom.” – Elev8 Student*

*“Elev8 engages parents in a deeper way. They can be here every morning to help make sure that kids are on track and help teachers. Elev8 builds more of a community in the school, and the parents get to advocate for what they need for the school.” – Elev8 Family Member*

For immigrant families that were interviewed, especially those with limited English proficiency and low levels of education, navigating homework and the school system can be particularly challenging. In these cases becoming more engaged with the school has helped them to overcome these challenges, increased student engagement with school and supported their children’s academic success.

*“I don’t know how to read or write; I can’t help them with their homework, but the school can help them. With my son, I couldn’t help him. My daughters have 3.5 GPA. They were very scared about coming here. But, now I tell them the school is good. They see me coming here; I come to the parent center [Family Resource Center]. They see that I am happy and supported and involved in the school. They see that I am here and they are trying hard in school.... I didn’t go to school. My mother didn’t have enough [money] to buy a pencil. We had to work to eat. I thank God that I came here. My husband is able to provide. I am thankful for everything that I have received here: food, support, friendship.” – Elev8 Family Member*

## SCHOOL CLIMATE AND CONNECTEDNESS

### For young people participation in Elev8 helped them forge meaningful relationships with caring adults and peers.

School safety and connections to caring adults on campus are predictive of how successful a student will be in school (Hanson et al., 2003; Resnick et al., 1997). For many of the students at the Elev8 schools, negative past experiences with school officials and teachers, poor family relationships with the schools, or a general distrust of adult figures hampers the cultivation of caring relationships with adults on campus. The interviews show, however, that Elev8 helped students feel more connected to both adults and peers at school.

*“It makes me think about the future and helps you think*

*before you do something or make bad choices. If someone wants to fight with me, I think before I do it and I’ve stopped fighting a lot. I have someone to talk to if I need help. It prevents me from going to gangs or going into other problems.” – Elev8 Student*

## ADULT RELATIONSHIPS

Meaningful contact and relationships with adults is widely recognized as an important component of school connectedness, which is, in turn, regarded as an important factor in reduced risk and increased academic engagement and achievement (Arthur et al., 1997; Blum & Rinehart, 1998). Several youth who were interviewed identified adults employed by Elev8 with whom they forged trusting relationships. For these students, relationships with caring adults helped them to feel less isolated and more connected.

*“When my brother died I was crying a lot. My family is busy; I try not to bother them. So [Elev8 staff member] helped me; she gave me someone to talk about [it with]. If not, I would be walking around the hallway crying.” – Elev8 Student*

*“[Elev8 Staff Member] is always free to talk to and they will try to help you. I feel like I’m in a better mood in general because of it. I get to see my friends more often and play sports. I would have been a loner if I didn’t go to Elev8. I would have no friends. And I really trust [Elev8 staff] and [the] nurse. – Elev8 Student*

## PEER RELATIONSHIPS

For Elev8 youth, being a part of the Extended Learning Program and other Elev8 activities provided an opportunity to form positive peer relationships with other young people who were focused on succeeding. Some credited Elev8 with helping them make more positive choices.

*“Friends who succeed motivate her. The program helps her succeed.” – Elev8 Family Member*

*“It’s your choice, but everyone has the opportunity to better yourself or not. I’ve seen that when we had Elev8 kids weren’t acting up as much. Myself I stopped acting up. I was really bad before. I don’t know what it was, just going to the program and just experiencing different things. When I went to DC, just having that experience I saw that acting up doesn’t get you very far and if I act appropriately I can be a better person. – Elev8 Student*

## ACADEMIC ACHIEVEMENT

**Elev8 families and youth reported that participating in Elev8 helped them improve academically.**

*“Socially and academically she has improved; her grades have increased a whole lot. She has made a complete [turn-around]; she wasn’t failing, but she was on the border. She was on the cusp.”* – Elev8 Family Member

The family supports, family engagement, mental health services, primary care, positive peer and adult relationships, and all the other aspects of Elev8 share a common objective – they help students overcome barriers to learning. Elev8 is also designed to provide direct assistance to students who are struggling academically. The program model both addresses the underlying causes of school disengagement (negative relationships, unresolved trauma, unaddressed health issues, etc.), and works with students to address academic challenges and grade failure. Through the Extended Learning Program (including the leveraging of AmeriCorps volunteers), Elev8 provides tutoring at no more than a 5:1 ratio. Students voiced an appreciation for the level of attention that they received from tutors, who they felt helped them with learning.

*“It really helps the student when they need it. It really helped me improve my grades. [Elev8 staff] was a very good mentor. The mentors or teachers really put time and effort into really helping the student.”* – Elev8 Student

Students claimed that they were seeing results from this extra help:

*“If AmeriCorps wasn’t here, I would have a much lower GPA; my focus in classroom, it wouldn’t be like it is now.”* – Elev8 Student

*“I think my mom’s really proud of me. If I show her my report card, she acts like she doesn’t care, but she brags to everyone about the grades, about me getting a 4.0.”* – Elev8 Student

English language learners attributed Extended Learning Programs to helping them with their English, while families with limited English proficiency and/or low levels of education felt particularly grateful that their students had a safe place to go after school to get help with their homework.

*“My English is getting better, and that makes me happy.”*  
– Elev8 Student

## HEALTH

**Some families reported accessing services through the school-based health centers, though youth were less likely to speak about receiving mental or primary health care services through Elev8.**

Each Elev8 site has a school-based health center where youth, families and the community can access health services. Students can receive onsite dental services, health care, as well as health education and mental health counseling or therapy. While youth were less likely to mention health services or mental health services they received, some parents and guardians spoke of the benefits of the health center and the mental health services offered at Elev8 sites.

*“The dental services are very good for my daughters. I have used the clinic here; the clinic is perfect; my daughters didn’t miss school when they had to go to the dentist. They did it all in a day. Now, they have their period, they get help and have their questions [answered].”*  
– Elev8 Family Member

Several family members reported that counseling services for their children were valuable in helping to manage behavioral health challenges, trauma, and other issues associated with the general ups and downs of adolescence.

*“[My daughter] needed a lot of mental health services; there were some things that occurred with her before she attended this school – that wavered over with her. When she started here they connected me with the services here. She was very out of control. I see her growth, her maturity. She was dealing with self-esteem issues; she is not dealing with it anymore. Between 12-14 is a very critical time in her life; trying to find who you are. She is different; she wants to go places without me, she is more independent. Having the support from the school is critical.”* – Elev8 Family Member

While few students mentioned receiving health services<sup>1</sup> some students did talk about the programs and services that were offered through the health centers.

*“I like the Youth Health program. It helps us be better students because we apply the information from the program to*

*other parts of our lives. I learned a lot about health related to relationships, family programs, advice.”*

– Elev8 Family Member

<sup>1</sup>High utilization rates of health services at all of the Elev8 Oakland school based health centers imply that the lack of mention may be more indicative of hesitancy to discuss health matters with a stranger than a lack of value on the health services themselves.

## GAPS AND PERSISTENT NEED

**As Elev8 moves into a sustainability phase, some services are being provided collectively through public and community partners, while others have been reduced or eliminated. Interviews with families and youth suggest fading brand recognition for Elev8.**

By and large the students and family members interviewed offered praise for the Elev8 services; however, interviews with youth and families pointed to a loss of brand recognition and a decline in services that they or their families had accessed in the past. This finding is closely tied to the Phase 2 funding period during which time the programs have gone into sustainability mode. In the sustainability phase, core project coordination and extended learning components have been retained, while summer transition and Saturday school components have been eliminated. For some sites this has also meant the loss of the Elev8 family advocate; in others, the position has been replaced with a school, district or community partner family advocate. On the one hand, important groundwork has been laid for many of the core Elev8 services and supports to be integrated into the fabric of the school through leveraging and partnering. On the other hand, interviews with youth and families suggest that decreased funding has resulted in a depletion of needed services.

One of the things that stood out in the interviews was how many of the references to Elev8, particularly from students, were made in the past tense.

*“I’ve seen that when we had Elev8 kids weren’t acting up as much.”* – Elev8 Student

*“I used to have a program with them; there used to be a guy that came to the school and talked to us about summer program; trips; I joined Elev8 because people helped me with my homework; it was afterschool.”* – Elev8 Student

*“It improved my grades a lot.”* – Elev8 Student

Some students had the impression that Elev8 no longer existed at their school:

*“I wish they would come back. Some of these people that come to school they need help. Most of the kids here are violent. I wish they [Elev8] would come back.”*

– Elev8 Student

*“Elev8 – I wish it could come back. It helped me and I think it can improve my GPA to a 4.0. It can help me get more involved. I’m already involved because of my experiences with Elev8 last year, but I could be more involved. It doesn’t seem like I can find programs without having to ask my grandma look around. Elev8 always had things right there for you.”* – Elev8 Student

Those students who had the impression that there were no longer any services that carried the Elev8 brand tended to describe individual relationships with Elev8 staff or specific program components.

Despite these perceptions, there are program elements that have been institutionalized at the sites, through partnerships with the County, private partners and other public funding streams, including the health centers and, to a varying extent, family advocacy. There were a number of students, however, who indicated that they were unaware that the health services were connected to Elev8, or that they were not aware that there were any services available to parents through Elev8. The reduction in services in Phase 2 appears to be accompanied by significantly diminished brand recognition.

## DISCUSSION

The concept of the full service community school arose from a recognition that students had needs that were impeding their learning, needs that were not being met elsewhere. The best conditions for learning include having one’s basic needs accounted for, having parents or family members who know how to navigate the system and advocate for the student, having no unmet physical or emotional health issues, having a good association with the school based on positive adult and peer relationships, and having enough academic support and help to get through the work itself (especially when parents are unable to provide that). Interviews and focus groups found that youth and families participating in Elev8 Oakland perceive that the program provided services

that improved conditions for learning for the students at these schools.

In Phase 2, some of these services have been reduced, and, accordingly, some of the students perceive that there are school-wide needs that are not being met in the same way. The reality is that reduced funding means reduced services, a loss students identified. But one element of service that has been retained in Phase 2 is AmeriCorps tutoring, which students found valuable. Another element of the program that is not diminished by funding cuts because it does not require a great deal of investment is peer support for parents and guardians, something which emerged quite clearly as valuable from the interviews.

It should be noted that Elev8 Oakland has benefited from a robust set of private and public partnerships, which have helped to enhance the pool of stakeholders and, during Phase 2, have improved the possibility of Elev8 sustainability. Some of the interview data, however, give insight into the challenges of sustainability, and imply that as the funding has diminished, so has fidelity to the Elev8 model. This is very much a preliminary finding, but it suggests that future inquiries should more closely examine the tension that may exist between program sustainability and fidelity to the model.

## POLICY IMPLICATIONS

This inquiry points to the promotion of policy that enables youth and families to access supports at the school site.

**Basic Supports and Parent Centers:** When basic needs and peer support needs are met at the school site, parents perceive the school as a more welcoming place and appear more likely to become involved at the school.

**Policy Implication:** At the school and school district level, it is worthwhile for schools to carve out Family Resource Centers or some other sort of physical space in the school that is designated for families to gather. The space alone may not suffice, however. An upfront effort (and monetary investment) may be required to intentionally work within the school community create a parent-friendly culture. In many cases this would include engaging a full-time, paid Family Advocate who could serve as a liaison between the school and the families by developing relationships, organize formal and informal events and gatherings for families, provide fami-

lies with referrals for school-based and community-based supports and services, create volunteer and peer-support opportunities for families at the school, and generally help to ensure that the school is a welcoming place for all families.

**Health Centers:** Onsite health offerings, particularly mental health and counseling services, are valuable to students and parents alike. Students recognize that their counselors have helped them make good choices, and some list health center personnel among the adults on campus they feel they can trust. There is an abundance of literature supporting the idea that colocating health services on school campuses promotes better outcomes.

**Policy Implication:** School districts, county health departments and local federally qualified health centers should work together to ensure that there is funding, personnel and physical infrastructure in place to offer these services on site at the highest risk, lowest-income schools. This can be an extensive undertaking, but the documented improvement in access to healthcare for students and their families can be used to persuade multiple partners to support the installation of such school-based health centers.

**School Connectedness:** Whether it is the school nurse, mental health professional, tutor, or Site Coordinator, adults at the school who occupy a role outside of teacher or school administrator may hold an important place in student connection to school. It is important that schools recognize students have a need to cultivate trusting relationships with adults on campus, and adults outside of the traditional authority structure may be in an ideal position to form those relationships.

**Policy Implication:** Schools and school districts should cultivate partnerships with community based organizations and service providers to expand and deepen the sense of community and the range of adults with whom students can develop trusting relationships. Through these efforts, the number of trust-worthy adults working on campus, and therefore the number of trusting relationships students have with adults, can be increased.

**Peer Associations:** Students who are failing academically may need to shift peer groups.

**Policy Implication:** Opportunities for struggling students to in-

Interact with different peers should be fostered deliberately by school policies and practices that make it easy for peers to interact across ethnic, socioeconomic, social, and achievement groups. There are many ways to accomplish this, including building attractive, well-supervised out-of-school-time and in-school activities that include conscientious student groupings.

**Tutoring:** Removing barriers to learning will not be enough to advance most failing students to a place where they are on par with their classmates. These students need additional help, including individualized and small group tutoring designed to improve academic achievement. This is particularly valuable for English learners or students whose parents are Limited English Proficient.

**Policy Implication:** Schools should utilize AmeriCorps and/or look into other volunteer-based tutoring services, including cross-age peer tutoring. There exist low-cost tutoring options that, once the initial infrastructure and relationships are built, can be sustained long-term without an excessive budgetary burden.

**Coordination:** A key piece of an effective community school model is the coordination of services. A good community school should include brokering resources and supports that are coordinated and available at the school sites. Project Coordinators working at school sites pull together resources and work in tandem with the school to make sure that the right students are targeted, that additional resources are brought in, and that the whole child is served by the supports available.

**Policy Implication:** Schools and district should put into place a systematic procedure that enables academic and non-academic supports to be coordinated for seamless student and family experiences. Districts should consider hiring a full-time, paid Project Coordinator who would be charged with the synchronization of academic and non-academic supports, as well as the identification of additional partners and resources that can be leveraged to maximize the impact, smooth coordination, and access points for services and supports. When properly executed, a school's investment in a full-time Project Coordinator can result in a substantial return in the form of leveraged resources.

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Bright Research Group would like to acknowledge the help and leadership of Safe Passages. In particular we are grateful to the project coordinators for facilitating access to multiple stakeholders for this policy brief. We are also grateful to the families and youth that participated in the interviews and focus groups.

We would also like to acknowledge The Atlantic Philanthropies who funded the study. The Atlantic Philanthropies are dedicated to bringing about lasting changes in the lives of disadvantaged and vulnerable people. Atlantic is a limited life foundation that makes grants through its five program areas: Aging, Children & Youth, Population Health, Reconciliation & Human Rights, and Founding Chairman. To learn more, please visit: [www.atlanticphilanthropies.org](http://www.atlanticphilanthropies.org).

Bright Research Group is an Oakland-based, woman- and minority-owned public sector consulting firm founded in 2009 to help public agencies and companies maximize their ability to deliver quality service, align their work with proven practices, and develop long-term strategies to transform systems and communities. Learn more about us at [brightresearchgroup.com](http://brightresearchgroup.com).

This report was written by Moira DeNike and Brightstar Ohlson with qualitative research contributions from Mejin Leechor. Suggested Citation: DeNike, M., Ohlson, B., et al., (2013). "Youth and Family Perspectives on Community Schools." *Bright Research Group Policy Brief*. Issue 2, October 2013.

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