



Transforming Schools * Revitalizing Neighborhoods

Frequently Asked Questions Cincinnati Public Schools' Community Learning Centers (CLCs)

What are Community Learning Centers (CLCs)?

Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) calls its community school model, "Community Learning Centers." In Ohio, charter schools are called "community schools," so Cincinnati Public Schools uses the term Community Learning Centers, or CLCs, to set them apart. CLCs are schools that transformed into "community hubs" or centers of community where students, families and community members participate in programs, services and activities that meet their needs and enrich their lives.

When did the idea of CLCs start - what inspired this model?

Originally, the transformation of all schoolhouses into CLCs was part of Cincinnati Public Schools' Facilities Master Plan – a detailed, \$1 billion, 10-year timetable for rebuilding or fully renovating all of the district's school buildings. Funding for this plan depended on taxpayers' approval of a school bond issue, and the idea of rebuilding schools as CLCs appealed to the public. The bond issue passed in 2003, confirming public approval and enthusiasm.

The process of engaging the public in the design and implementation of CLCs took several years and much conversation. Led by a known non-profit organization (Children's Defense Fund), a passionate consultant to CPS (Darlene Kamine) and supportive district leadership and Board of Education, school and community members began to dream and envision how new schoolhouses could be centers of community. The construction of new schools began to reflect their dreams, with community rooms and other unique features that reflected careful thought and a new vision. Some schools were built with space for full health clinics, large theaters, garden spaces — all uniquely designed to meet community needs and interests.

Of course, CLCs are more than bricks and mortar, and, as these new buildings were completed, Resource Coordinators — full-time staff who recruit, manage and coordinate all CLC services — were hired, and the goal of achieving the shared vision of "schools as centers of communities" became a reality.

How many CPS schools are Community Learning Centers?

The CPS Board of Education established a policy that all of our schools would be Community Learning Centers. (In 2013-14, there are 55 schools.) Today, all CPS schools are in some stage of transformation into the CLC model.

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Cincinnati is a very generous community, and all of our schools benefit from partnership programs and services offered in our buildings.

Our established CLCs have full-time Resource Coordinators on-site to implement the model, and, currently, we have 36 Resource Coordinators.

How are Community Learning Centers funded?

Community Learning Centers are made possible through the investment of many stakeholders. Resource Coordinators — full-time staff who recruit, manage and coordinate all CLC services — are funded by blending district federal dollars (Title I and School Improvement Grants) with grants from the Greater Cincinnati Foundation, the Haile/U.S. Bank Foundation and the United Way of Greater Cincinnati.

Two local community-based organizations, the Community Learning Center Institute and FamiliesFORWARD, provide Resource Coordinators at no charge to the district.

Additionally, community partners bring millions of dollars in services and programs into our CLCs. Many stakeholders invest in CLCs – from individual community members to national corporations. We are very fortunate in Cincinnati to have a model that leverages all of this funding and generosity to benefit students.

Is the Resource Coordinator a school employee?

In most of our Community Learning Centers, the Resource Coordinator is an employee of a community-based, non-profit organization. CPS enters into a formal agreement (Memorandum of Understanding) with these organizations to provide a full-time employee in the selected CLC.

The non-profit organization providing the Resource Coordinator is carefully chosen for its likelihood to help the school and community achieve the shared CLC vision. Each school chooses the community-based organization to lead its CLC – a formal selection process that requires the site-based governance (the Local School Decision Making Committee or LSDMC) to interview potential candidates and select the one that is best for the school. Currently, CPS has 13 different community-based organizations providing Resource Coordinators. Community-based organizations provide expertise that is different from that of a school and bring a “different view” to the CLC.

Cincinnati Public Schools provides Resource Coordinators in three schools – at the request of the local site-based governance team and typically because there was a school employee with strong family and community ties and proven abilities to lead the CLC transformation.

What types of organizations provide Resource Coordinators?

Resource Coordinators come from a variety of community-based organizations, including the Community Learning Center Institute, The YMCA and YWCA of Greater Cincinnati, St. Aloysius Orphanage, Boys & Girls Clubs of Greater Cincinnati, The Urban League of Greater Cincinnati and the Cincinnati Art Museum.

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A variety of local non-profit organizations also provide Resource Coordinators, including Beech Acres, FamiliesFORWARD, Talbert House, Central Clinic, Imani Family Center and GRAD Cincinnati.

What are the hours of operation for Community Learning Centers?

Community Learning Centers are accessible beyond the traditional school day. Some of our CLCs have after-school programs that run until 6 p.m. and evening programs that run even later. Saturday programs are offered at some sites, and churches utilize some of our buildings on Sundays. Across 36 CLCs, the schedules vary, but all have some expansion of traditional hours to accommodate the needs and interests of students, families and communities.

Can anyone use the building or become a partner?

All CLC partners are chosen by the school-based governance (Local School Decision Making Committee, LSDMC). Resource Coordinators screen partners initially, assuring that the partnership is meeting a need or interest at the school and that the program, service or activity is of good quality. The LSDMC vets the partnership and occasionally must choose from several partners wanting to provide the same service. Partners who are chosen to be co-located in the school building or to meet regularly with students must complete a formal partnership agreement (Memorandum of Understanding). Partnership networks, such as Growing Well (health), Mindpeace (mental health), Leave No Child Inside (environmental education) and others assist Resource Coordinators in locating the right partner for their needs. This careful screening and selection of partnerships is key to maintaining high-quality CLCs.

How does the district handle security and maintenance in CLCs?

CLCs operate under the same policies as the school district. All individuals who will be working directly with students on a regular basis must agree to criminal background checks and must wear CPS identification badges. For guests and visitors, each school has an identification-scanning machine in the front office that issues temporary paper badges before people enter hallways. Visitors, guests and our CLC partners understand that we must protect our students' safety and cooperate with district policies and procedures.

The daily cleaning of buildings is handled by the district's maintenance staff, but CLC partners are asked to keep building spaces clean and tidy after use. If a partner is renting space for a large event, maintenance costs must be addressed, but, in most cases, all agree to pitch in and work to restore the space to its original condition. As in any shared space, all must do their part to keep the schools clean and safe for students.

Where can I find more information about CPS' Community Learning Centers?

Additional information about Community Learning Centers is available on CPS' Community Learning Centers website: www.cincinnati.org. This website has a list of all CLCs and contact information for each Resource Coordinator.

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