

The Netter Center for Community Partnerships

The Netter Center for Community Partnerships' University-Assisted Community School Programs

Since 1985, a collaboration between the University of Pennsylvania, led by the Netter Center for Community Partnerships, and West Philadelphia school and community partners, has helped to transform existing public schools into university-assisted community schools throughout the local neighborhoods. Currently seven university-assisted community schools function as centers of education, services, engagement and activity for over 6,000 students, parents, and community members in West Philadelphia. Innovative collaborations have come to define this award-winning program, which has been widely recognized — and strategically replicated — for its effectiveness in improving both the *quality of life* and the *quality of learning* of children in urban neighborhoods.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES & LESSONS LEARNED:

- ***University-Assisted Community Schools*** focus on the school as the core institution, the hub, for community engagement and democratic development.
- ***University-Assisted Community Schools*** open their doors to all before and after school, weekends, and summers, to provide safe and engaging environments.
- ***University-Assisted Community Schools*** serve the educational, social service, health, and recreational needs of all participants and the broader community.
- ***University-Assisted Community Schools*** link school day and after school curriculum to solving locally identified, real world, community problems—every opportunity for service is an opportunity for learning.
- ***University-Assisted Community Schools*** engage youth (and the schools themselves) as deliverers not simply recipients of service.
- ***University-Assisted Community Schools*** engage universities as lead partners in providing academic, human, and material resources.
- ***University-Assisted Community Schools*** engage higher education faculty and students in developing and implementing community school programs through academically based community service linked to the university's core educational and research missions.

Recent Honors and Recognition

In 2008, the University of Pennsylvania was selected as one of three schools in the country to receive the **Presidential Award for General Community Service** from the Corporation for National and Community Service (CNCS) in the second annual Honor Roll. Selected out of more than 500 institutions, Penn is being recognized for its overall efforts in **community service and service-learning**. The Corporation's citation highlighted, "The University of Pennsylvania is an exemplar for its outstanding commitment to **leveraging university resources** to solve real world problems in **their local community** and beyond.... One strong and long-term project, coordinated through Penn's Netter Center for Community Partnerships, is **the development and support of community schools** in the neighborhood surrounding the university. Community schools provide an array of educational, health, athletic, cultural, and other programs to the community.... Penn faculty teach more than 50 courses in the community. In addition, the Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative.... continues to expand from one school community in 1995 to 22 schools and 10,000 students currently."

In Fall 2007, Philadelphia Safe and Sound chose Sayre as a **model Beacon Community School** site and used it as an example of *best practices* in the unveiling of their Neighborhood Report Cards. The 2007 graduates of Sayre received more than \$50,000 in scholarships as a result of the Penn-Sayre partnership. The Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative (AUNI) at the Netter Center was recognized as the **best year-round youth internship program** by Work Ready Philadelphia in 2007.

The Netter Center for Community Partnerships' collaboration with its school and community partners in West Philadelphia is focused on three high school catchment areas:

- Sayre High School: Sayre (9-12), Huey (K-8), and Hamilton (K-8, held at Sayre) Schools
- West Philadelphia High School: West (9-12), Shaw (7-8), Lea (K-8) and Wilson (K-6) Schools
- University City High School: University City High (9-12) and Drew (K-8) Schools

Several key school day and after school programs support the university-assisted community school approach in West Philadelphia. These programs include:

Moelis Access Science works to improve Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) education in K-12 classrooms as well as to help to improve undergraduate and graduate STEM education at Penn. Access Science is coordinated by the Netter Center and Penn's Math Department, and includes faculty from the School of Arts and Sciences and the School of Engineering and Applied Science. Access Science works with teachers to make the best use of their standardized science and math materials while also helping teachers take advantage of a variety of supplemental resources to support inquiry learning. Access Science currently has over 25 Penn student fellows and a dozen Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) courses. Access Science also provides teacher professional development and has supported the redesign and professional development of the School District of Philadelphia's core STEM curriculum. Since October 2005, Biology graduate student Jennifer Doherty and colleagues in the Department of Biology at Penn have run a monthly series of Professional Development sessions for SDOP HS Biology Teachers. The sessions run from 3:45-6:30 on weekday afternoons. Over the past three school years, 80 teachers from 43 schools have participated. Additionally, since the implementation of the SDOP Core Curriculum, Penn Biology faculty and graduate students have worked with SDOP staff to refine the Planning and Scheduling Timeline and identify and create more resources for teachers. An effective method of teaching biological processes is to use models, manipulatives, and other hands-on/minds-on activities. However, purchasing supplies and models for activities from biological supply companies can cost \$100s per teacher. Jennifer and colleagues have also been working to create and improve budget versions of these supplies. Many of the activities developed for PD sessions, tested in Philadelphia classrooms, and improved by Philadelphia teachers are now posted online and have drawn the attention of teachers around the country. In January 2008 the website hosting the activities had over 20,000 page views and is the #1 Google result for "hands on biology"

http://serendip.brynmawr.edu/sci_edu/waldron/

College Access and Career Pathways is a comprehensive four-year program for 9th-12th grade students (currently 89 students from Sayre and University City High) which includes several core components:

- **Internships:** Students are provided with a paid internship at various locations: their high school (community school programming), the U. of Pennsylvania Health System, the Penn campus, or local businesses. Internships provide students with opportunities for critical thinking, service learning, and problem solving. Ideally, students progress overtime from peer education and community revitalization positions to leadership and advocacy and professional worksite positions. Although a minimum academic standard is not required for participation, students must increase their grades in school in order to remain in their internship; they are provided with academic support to fulfill this requirement.
- **College and Career Pathways Sessions:** These sessions run weekly after school and focus on engaging students in real world discussions, hands-on workshops, and academic support sessions to

educate and prepare students for post secondary challenges, opportunities, and choices while supporting their success in their internship and academic courses. This encompasses:

- 1) **Life Skills:** *Choices and Decisions* (9th & 10th grade). Students are provided with a platform to constructively discuss issues in their school, local communities, and society at large.
 - 2) **College Access:** *Thinking About College and Getting There* (11th & 12th grade). 11th grade students participate in college culture and environment sessions. 12th graders are paired with a Penn undergraduate to receive assistance with the college search, application, and decision processes.
 - 3) **Job Readiness:** *Becoming Career Bound and Professional Development* (10th– 12th grades). Students are required to participate in a number of professional development sessions that focus on conflict resolution, workplace etiquette, time management, interview skills, and becoming organized. In addition, students participate in resume and cover letter workshops. 12th grade students who choose not to attend college are paired with a Penn undergraduate to receive assistance with applying for skilled jobs after high school.
 - 4) **Academic Support:** *Attaining High Academic Achievement* (9th-12th grades). Students are provided with tutoring opportunities instructed by high school teachers, and Penn undergraduates and graduates. Homework help is also available through peer assistance, community school staff, and Penn students. All students are required to complete an Academic Growth Plan (AGP) to map out their academic goals, and they must meet regularly with an academic advisor who monitors their progress.
 - 5) **Portfolio Project:** *Producing Tangible, Measurable Outcomes* (9th-12th grades) Students are required to complete a portfolio that reflects their progress in this program over the course of their high school career. The portfolio will include but is not limited to: resume, cover letter, school and professional references, personal mission statement, goal planning sheet, budget sheet, open bank account and additional pieces specific to College or Career Bound students.
 - 6) **CCP Summer Institute** (rising seniors only). Over the summer, rising seniors are prepared to apply for college during an intensive six-week session. They are paired with college students and prepare a sample college application, FAFSA form, three personal essays, a sample recommendation, and three scholarship applications. Students are also taken on college trips and are exposed to working professionals in the greater Philadelphia community.
- **Parent Outreach:** Parents and legal guardians are actively recruited to participate in all college visits, social, educational, and cultural outings, and are required to attend parent and legal guardian meetings.

University-Wide Literacy Tutoring Program is a program initiative that understands that one of the most serious social problems in the United States is the failure of schools in low-income communities to teach children to read. Each year, many hundreds of Penn undergraduates volunteer to help in local schools. However, there is at present no general program for training tutors to teach reading, and the majority of student tutors are engaged in providing general classroom assistance or programs not related to the acquisition of basic skills. Moreover, there is as yet no general program for measuring the effect of tutors on literacy skills. Based upon 8 years of successful Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) literacy tutoring partnerships, Bill Labov is creating general Literacy Tutoring Program that adapts his ABCS work and provides tutors with essential knowledge for the teaching of reading, along with procedures for assessing the results. This program is currently partnered with the Netter Center's America Reads program and is focusing on 3 schools in West Philadelphia where the Netter Center operates school day and comprehensive after school programs. This work intends to develop a literacy training program that would mobilize university resources for literacy tutoring on a large scale to raise reading levels in schools in the vicinity of Penn. The program is also intended to be replicable nationally.

The Community Arts Partnership (CAP) uses the arts—visual arts, music, dance, creative writing, and theater—as a medium for community revitalization, improved scholarship and teaching, and strengthening Penn's relationship with West Philadelphia. CAP goals include demonstrating how

community arts can address community needs and building the partnerships and infrastructure needed for the successful implementation of community arts projects, including developing a vital network of West Philadelphia artists and community leaders, Penn arts and humanities students, faculty, and staff, and public school teachers and administrators who are well-versed in community arts. Far more than simply bringing art and artists into West Philadelphia communities and schools, the CAP Program seeks to utilize the rich and varied arts traditions of the urban environment to encourage integrated arts-based curricula and research and new approaches to teaching and learning. Students in ABCS courses explore education and the arts in K-12 classrooms and the community, serving as both the lead implementers of CAP initiatives and as direct beneficiaries. Through initiatives ranging from artists in residence in public school classrooms to arts-based community service courses at the University level, from teacher professional development in integrated pluralistic arts education to community-wide arts events, CAP strives to support West Philadelphia residents, particularly our school partners, in using the arts as a tool for academic subject mastery and increased community engagement.

The Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative (AUNI) works to improve community nutrition and health. AUNI supports university-assisted community schools (UACS) so that schools become effective centers for improving nutrition and wellness and reducing the burden of obesity for the students and the entire community. AUNI's major activities fit into five general categories.

- 1) **School Day Nutrition Education:** The primary focus is on increasing the nutrition knowledge of K-12 students while incorporating hands-on components, such as monthly healthy food tastings.
- 2) **Increasing Access to Healthy Foods:** AUNI engages young people in organizing better choices for their communities through school and community based efforts. Youth work to improve lunchroom choices and operate after-school fruit stands as well as help neighborhood food stores create convenient healthy food stations and to operate community farmers' markets.
- 3) **Increasing Opportunities for Participation in Regular Physical Activity:** AUNI works with PE teachers and school coordinators to improve exercise opportunities during PE class and recess time as well as promote family-oriented exercise classes through Family Fitness Nights.
- 4) **School Gardens:** AUNI builds and maintains school gardens to increase familiarity with healthy foods and provide a food systems link to the science curriculum.
- 5) **Youth-Led organizing, Peer Education and Internships:** In addition to school day peer education, AUNI coordinates job-training and youth leadership programs for high school students. The AUNI internship program engages teens in organizing better food choices in their communities by working after school and during the summer. Interns combine direct service approaches, which include teaching healthy cooking classes to all ages and growing healthy foods in school gardens for sale at farmers' markets, with advocating for broader systems change.

Technology partnerships include a recent grant to provide computer equipment and services to the Netter Center's partner schools. In the fall of 2006, the Netter Center for Community Partnerships was approached by the Presidio Philanthropy Group to apply for a grant providing Fujitsu computer equipment and services to non-profit organizations working to improve urban education. The Netter Center applied and was awarded Fujitsu equipment and services, valued at up to one million dollars, to be placed in the following six university-assisted community schools: Sayre High, University City High, West Philadelphia High, Drew School, Lea School, and Huey School. The six schools selected for placement of equipment and services are a part of the Center's UACS network and are committed to using the donated technologies to enhance their educational programs focusing on improving student academic achievement during school, extended academic activities after school and cultural, recreational and educational opportunities for the community residents and families in the evenings and on weekends. The donated technologies will provide vastly improved access to information resources, bridges across geographically dispersed communities of practice, and powerful new instructional tools for teachers and students alike.

The following are after school programs that incorporate some or all of the above resources:

The K-8 Project Based After School Program, staffed by Penn volunteer and work study tutors, program instructors, and community volunteers, provides a safe space daily between 3:00 and 8:00 p.m. for community youth. Youth participate in daily academic enrichment and recreational activities. The program also hosts monthly field trips, parent meetings, and student showcases.

The 9th-12th Grade After School Program combines elements of academic support, college and career mentoring, real-world job experience/training, and extracurricular activities. Several highlighted activities include:

- **College and Career Pathways Program** (described above)
- **After School Academic Enrichment**: In partnership with high school administration and faculty, the Community School coordinates and funds an innovative academic enrichment and support program six days a week that includes explicit connections to students' individual school day needs. Enrichment and support activities are staffed by school faculty, Penn tutors, and paid program staff. In addition, students are paired with advisors from Penn to execute individualized *Academic Growth Plans*. At Sayre Community School, these efforts have been publicly credited by school leadership in contributing to Sayre's achievement of Adequate Yearly Progress.

Freedom School/Summer School implements an intensive literacy and service-learning curriculum for K-8 students during the summer, while high school students work as Junior Servant Leaders (JSLs) alongside college-aged Servant Leaders. In 2008, Freedom School will engage a total of approximately 600 K-8 youth across 6 Community School sites, while 60 Sayre and West Philadelphia High School students will serve as JSLs.

Family Fitness Nights held at the Community Schools provide classes and workshops for community members of all ages in recreational, self-improvement, education, and health classes, at no charge to participants. Classes include health cooking, adult computer literacy, line dancing, arts and crafts, and much more.

Financial Literacy has become an increasing focus of university-assisted community schools. For example, Sayre Community School is offering Financial Literacy with a holistic approach "Reach one Teach one." The team's goal is to help families find out what their financial personality is, learn the concepts of money, how to budget, self worth vs. net worth, and wants vs. needs. The Sayre K-8 after school program is on a rotating schedule, engaging youth of different ages and blending into Family Fitness Nights, where financial literacy is incorporated in various classes. In March 2008, Commerce Bank facilitated its first workshop at Sayre with 24 children ages 5-9, teaching them Banking 101, called "Commerce WOW Zone." Each student received a certificate for learning and a coupon for \$10 to open a savings account. During Sayre Community School parent meetings, parents are encouraged to take their child(ren) to Commerce Bank to open up saving accounts. Staff will keep a log of students that have accounts as they continue the Financial Education Workshops taught at Sayre on Tuesdays and Thursdays. High school students at Sayre are engaged in entrepreneurship activities, called "Own My Business," such as running an after school Smoothie Shack. At Lea Community School, the Financial Literacy program's key goal is to teach financial responsibility and entrepreneurship to its youth. The program incorporates the earning of "Lea Dollars" for purchases at the school store. Lea Dollars are earned for a variety of reasons, such as homework completion, and lost for poor behavior. Lea youth are also taught about future financial goals, such as investments/stocks and bonds, mutual funds, CDs, etc. West Philadelphia High Community School will begin a four-week series in April for community adults, focusing on debt management, credit counseling, home ownership, and savings accounts.

Additional Honors & Successes for University-Assisted Community Schools in West Philadelphia

- **Sayre High School** made Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) according to NCLB measures, by meeting 13 out of 13 AYP targets in 2006-07. This includes attendance rates, test participation, and academic performance on the Pennsylvania System of School Assessment (PSSA). Sayre is one of only five neighborhood high schools (of a total of >30 city-wide) that made AYP in 2007, making progress along with many of the city's magnet schools. Specifically, student attendance increased from 75% to 85% from the 2005-06 to 2006-07 school year.
- In 2006-07, among **Sayre's first graduating class** of **80** students, **71** graduated (**90%**); **40 out of 71** enrolled in post-secondary education; 2007 graduates also received more than **\$50,000** in scholarships as a result of the Penn-Sayre partnership (including from the Palmer Foundation; Mural Arts Program; Young Business Leaders; National Youth Leadership Forum).
- Represented by high school students at **Sayre and University City High**, the Agatston Urban Nutrition Initiative (UNI) was recognized as the best year-round youth internship program by Work Ready Philadelphia, a program of the Philadelphia Youth Network (August 2007).
- The Math Chair at West Philadelphia High School reports, "The addition of the Saturday enrichment program through the **West Philadelphia High Community School (WPHCS)** has had immediate and impressive results on the achievement of a core group of students.... As a result of the Saturday program, these students are active learners and engage with the material in ways that are not observed during the regular school day." Specifically, students participate in math and reading enrichment with community school staff, who use PSSA prep materials in addition to Study Island, a computer based program directly linked to the PSSA. The Math Chair reports that the students in this program now have an average Math score of 72.3% on the Study Island program, versus the school-wide average of 66.7% and the statewide average of 66.1%. Reading scores have also increased.
- Previously, **West Philadelphia High** students who were assigned community service hours in truancy court were not able to complete hours at the school. The community school team has identified school and community-related activities for them to log in their hours, in partnership with the 52nd Street Business Association (i.e., tutoring Lea After School students, working with 52nd Street Green). In the Saturday program, students will also receive tutoring support (starting 4/5/08). The team will be tracking these students' school day attendance as well as future enrollment in other programs.
- The Future Business Leaders of America program at **WPHCS** is directly connected to the Business and Technology Academy. All students participate in an hour and a half homework and academic enrichment session, which includes math and reading games focused on the development of critical thinking skills. Currently, 15 WPHS students participate and they won the citywide FBLA competition. The students are currently exploring "Best Business Practices," and the community school team will sponsor them at the National FBLA Conference in April.
- **Lea Community School** is running an after school Literacy Workshop, with the assistance from school day teachers. K-2nd grade students are assisted with letter recognition, reading, and phonics. Teachers have reported a significant change in school day performance.
- Philadelphia Safe and Sound's recent report on **Huey Community School** (March 2008) reflects that the resources provided for 50 after school slots has leveraged additional resources and interest, now enrolling approximately 100 students, while consistently serving about 80 youth a day.
- At **Drew Community School**, after school and family fitness programming are beginning in March 2008. Activities will build on school day partnership success, such as Penn Professor Bill Labov's Individualized Reading Program with Penn undergraduate tutors, which resulted in a 50% improvement in the number of proficient readers in the 3rd grade at Drew from 2003 to 2006.

Replication, Adaptation, and Training

- From 1994-2004, a total of 23 colleges and universities participated in the Netter Center's national replication project. Through this project, local sites adapted the framework of the university-assisted community school, emphasizing various aspects, which changed over time given the goals of a particular institution and the funding streams it was able to capture.
- Through a Training and Technical Institute at Penn, an additional 75 teams of higher education, community, and school partners were trained on the university-assisted community school model, during this time.
- Each year, the Netter Center hosts more than 50 visitors from colleges and universities around the country and around the globe.
- University-assisted community schools are also part of a larger national movement for community schools. The Netter Center's Director is the Chair and a Founder of the Coalition for Community Schools, which now has more than 160 local, state, and national member organizations in education K-16, youth development, family support, community building, government, and philanthropy.