

**MUNICIPAL LEADERSHIP TO SUPPORT STUDENTS
REQUIRES COLLECTIVE ACTION:**

Recommendations for Building Community Learning Hubs

THE PROBLEM

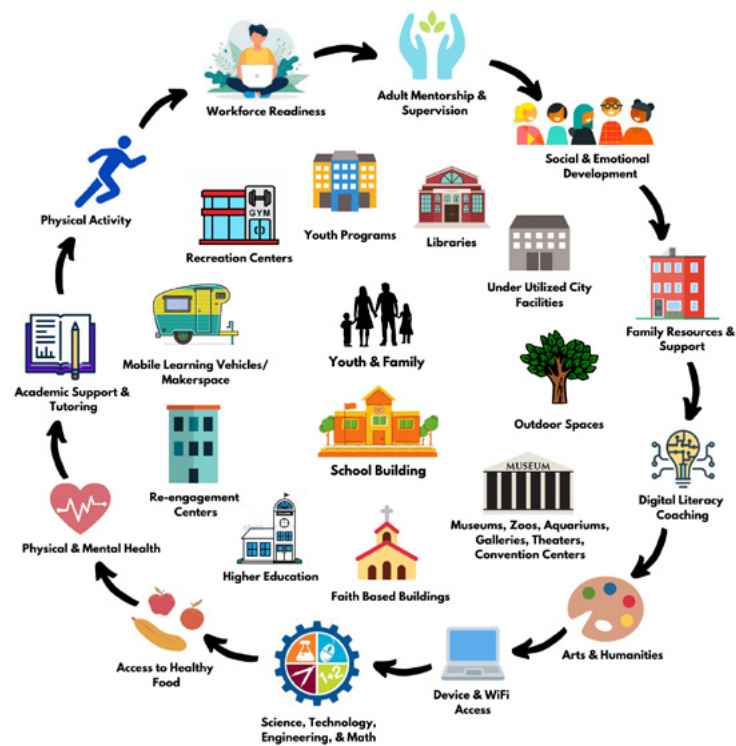
As the coronavirus pandemic continues, unemployment skyrockets, and calls to reopen schools increase, education and local leaders must balance a myriad of considerations to deliver the promise of a quality education for all children and families – in person, online, or in a hybrid approach. The 2020-2021 school reopening plans will need to consider the growing public health concerns; disparate digital access including technology and high speed internet connectivity; safe, affordable, and accessible childcare and youth supervision; places to learn, catch up, and keep up; the growing equity concerns of parent funded “learning pods;” and basic needs insecurities, all without ignoring significant historic problems that have created longstanding systemic inequities.

A SOLUTION

Schools alone cannot solve these challenges. Communities that can collaborate, align programs and resources, and center their work in equity will be better positioned to bounce back from this pandemic more quickly, and see longer-term education, health, and economic gains. Mayors, city councilmembers, and other local elected officials can leverage their leadership, bully pulpit, and convening authority to call upon community-based organizations, municipal agencies, faith-based organizations, the private sector, and philanthropic partners to help ensure that youth and families have access to what they need to successfully participate in virtual learning. This includes access to technology, school supplies, basic needs, a safe and quiet place to study and do homework, and adult mentorship, tutoring, and guidance to support learning in partnership with their schools. These places are referred to as Community Learning Hubs.

Benefits of the Community Learning Hub Model:

- ▶ **Collect Data to Determine Neighborhood-Specific Needs** to target unique, cultural, and diverse supports and resources to young people and their families in the short-term and inform strategies for local rebuilding and recovery in the long term.
- ▶ **Leverage Local Facilities, Staff Expertise, and Community Resources** to design and coordinate services to support the needs of the community.
- ▶ **Prioritize Health & Safety Concerns** using the latest information on the virus to develop solutions tailored to localities' unique needs.
- ▶ **Address Systemic Inequities** by providing the most vulnerable populations with the additional support services that they will need to be successful inside and outside the classroom.
- ▶ **Provide Comprehensive Wraparound Supports** to address the holistic needs of children, youth, and families from food and housing insecurity, mental health and trauma informed care services, childcare/ youth supervision, to social-emotional development opportunities.



Getting Started

This type of robust effort demands a full range of stakeholders that can commit to collaborating intentionally and intensively toward the goal of supporting children, youth, and families during this time of public health and economic crisis, disruption in education, and beyond. The National League of Cities has developed a more detailed guide to help local communities implement Community Learning Hubs. Below are some steps to consider when getting started:

PARTNER

Local leaders are embracing a collective action approach guided by community priorities, diversity, and need. City leaders can work with their school districts to serve as the conveners, leveraging the knowledge, capacities, and resources of all sectors in collaboration, especially municipal facilities, and staff. Key partners to consider:

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| ▶ City Departments: | ▶ Museums | ▶ School district administrators |
| ▶ Public Works | ▶ Arts and Culture organizations | ▶ Public health experts |
| ▶ Environmental Health | ▶ Organizations providing basic needs | ▶ Afterschool and summer learning programs |
| ▶ Health and Human Services | ▶ Private sector business | ▶ Statewide Afterschool Networks |
| ▶ Parks & Recreation | ▶ Chambers of Commerce | ▶ Community-based organizations |
| ▶ Neighborhood and Leisure Services | ▶ Philanthropic entities | ▶ Faith-based organizations |
| ▶ Economic and Workforce Development | ▶ Postsecondary Institutions | ▶ Representatives from large civic, cultural, and race-based organizations |
| ▶ Police, Fire, EMS | ▶ Parents | |
| ▶ Libraries | ▶ Youth | |
| | ▶ Principals/ Educators | |

PRIORITIZE

Community Learning Hubs can provide digital access, education support, meals, adult supervision, and wrap-around services to provide support for the most vulnerable youth and families in your community.

- ▶ Community Learning Hub partners can help collect data to identify the immediate needs of youth and families and determine geographic areas of high need to make decisions about where to open learning hubs.
- ▶ Define the mission and vision of your community learning hubs, the resources and staff capacity each partner can contribute, and assign roles for each partner organization to play to implement these learning hubs.
- ▶ Identify alternative facilities in the community that can be used to create small groups of [cohorts](#) to ensure physical distancing- preferably in walking distance to high needs communities.

COORDINATE

Key coordination will occur at the local level where city leaders, school administrators, and community-based organizations are uniquely in tune to the needs of the community and share a vested interest in supporting student and family success during this pandemic. Ideally, the partnerships and collaborations established during this crisis will endure beyond the pandemic to collectively rethink strategies to support vulnerable students and families in the future.

- ▶ Review existing school plans and adjust in anticipation of potential COVID-19 outbreaks, utilizing the Community Learning Hubs as a resource. The Community Learning Hub model may be implemented at the beginning of the school year in some places, while in other cases it may be implemented throughout the academic year.
- ▶ Partner with school leaders to determine how Community Learning Hubs can support in-school learning, increase school attendance, and reengage with students who were disconnected from school in Spring 2020.
- ▶ Be intentional about partnering with content-based enrichment organizations to infuse arts, music, STEM, STEAM, sports, outdoor experiences, and other enrichment opportunities into community learning hub programmatic offerings.

- ▶ Seek opportunities to assign a liaison from the Community Learning Hub partnership to a state/county-led school reopening taskforce and/or public health commission to ensure reciprocal information sharing between local leaders to state policymakers. The number of communities utilizing this model continues to grow as the pandemic wears on.

Below are some examples of how communities across the country are using Community Learning Hubs to support the needs of children, youth, families, and educators - inside and outside of school. For more information and broader recommendations, see the [Municipal Leadership to Support Students Requires Collective Action Brief](#) or contact NLC program specialist Gislene Tasayco at Tasayco@nlc.org.

City of San Francisco, California

The City will utilize 40 city recreation centers, libraries, and other local non-profits to serve as Community Learning Hubs to provide digital and technology access, education support, meals, and afterschool enrichment services to support 6,000 low-income students who need additional support and adult supervision.

City of Orlando, Florida

The City is designating six neighborhood centers to be used as out-of-home learning spaces with access to computer labs, Wi-Fi, and Orange County Public Schools' (OCPS) LaunchEd Program. OCPS will provide snacks and lunches at no cost to city facilities. Youth participating will also engage in outdoor play scheduled during OCPS breaks throughout the learning day. Afterschool program opportunities will be offered at 17 sites.