



Support Needed for School-Based Food Pantries in PPS Community Schools (20 Title I Schools)

The Community Schools strategy offers a transformative solution to the systemic challenges facing public education. By addressing education inequities through six key practices, the model reimagines schools as hyper local community hubs that coordinate resources, collaborate to increase opportunity, and reflect the unique strengths of each neighborhood and community.

Food Insecurity

One significant pillar of the community schools model is Integrated Student Supports, which includes wrap-around services. Wrap-around services support basic needs to reduce barriers to success for all students. Food insecurity has risen to the top of articulated needs based on a community Needs Assessment conducted in the schools. The community school strategy emphasizes a distributive leadership model as well as varied stakeholder voice and input.

Currently in PPS, the community school model is being implemented in 20 Title 1 schools throughout our city. These school sites serve the largest number of McKinney Vento (houseless) students, frequently carry the lowest student attendance rates, serve the most racially and culturally diverse populations, as well as the largest historically underserved demographics. In Portland, the number of houseless families is projected to grow in each of these 20 schools. These schools serve students and families from as young as 10 weeks to 14 years old, as many of the sites serve Early Head Start, pre-school, elementary and middle school students. Community schools are the most appropriate setting for food programming, providing support through school-based pantries, access to cooked meals, thriving culturally specific community gardens, and culturally specific/responsive cooking classes/nutritional programming.

A significant component of the community school model are wrap-around services, ensuring families and students have what they need so that all students are able to reach their fullest potentials. Additionally, the community school model includes strong family and community integration into the functions of school. Families and community stakeholders have a significant leadership role and collaborate on multiple facets of the operations and supports at the school site. All of the community school sites have a community school site coordinator who has experience as a social worker, being healing-centered, trauma-informed, and with expertise in resource support and navigation. Additionally, nearly half of the site coordinators are multilingual.

Current resources for school-based food pantries are insufficient. Schools are partnering with organizations, for donations, that are themselves at capacity, often dealing with staff shortages, inventory and shipping issues, and an ever growing demand. The need for food support in schools has continued to rise in the last five years. School sites are an ideal space to provide food to families as each community school site supports robust wrap-around services, the school site is able to destigmatize food assistance, and the community school model creates schools as the “hub” of the community.

Proposal

In the first year (2025-26), food programming will be open to all students (7,000 students plus their families). Though programming and support is open to all students at our sites, our most historically underserved students (McKinney Vento students, refugee, immigrant, and BIPOC students and families) will be prioritized in terms of outreach and holding leadership roles in the program design, support, and evaluation. When compared to current data of families who utilize food support in spaces that are able to provide food, approximately 15% of each school is currently accessing food support, and we anticipate this number could grow to 30% with increased inventory in the food pantries and complementary programming (e.g. cooking classes, gardening).

Option 1: 20 schools x \$15,000 for pantry set up, garden set up, planning + \$50,000 ready cooked meals for unhoused individuals = \$350,000.

\$15,000 for the year, per school will equate to approximately \$1,500 a month. Schools will determine how to supplement current food supply partners’ inventory with needs expressed by the community, as well as support garden infrastructure and support.

Option 2: 20 schools x \$10,000 to supplement pantry inventory, support partnerships with organizations, maintain and continue garden programs, obtain supplies for cooking classes, procure gift cards to incentivize community and family participation in running/supporting + \$50,000 ready cooked meals for unhoused individuals = \$250,000.