



THE FEDERATION FOR
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

HB684: How this Bill Became a Law

A Step-by-Step Guide to Program-Driven Policy Change

HB684: How this Bill Became a Law

The process of an idea being transformed into a law is often laid out as a linear one that starts with a bill and ends with a law. Though there are consistent steps along the path to creating legislation, there are also missteps or steps taken off the path that require constant attention, modification and re-direction. House Bill 684 (HB684) – which changes the Illinois state school code to include community schools as a legitimate activity for schools and sets up a request for proposal (RFP) process to allocate any funding – had its own pathway from program to policy to law. This brief outlines the key steps, missteps and mid-course corrections that moved this concept, relatively quickly, through the Illinois State Legislature. Using HB684 as an example, this brief provides a structure that other groups can follow to create community school legislation.

1. **The idea – “Community Schools Codified into State Law:”** In Chicago and throughout Illinois, there are over 200 “official” community schools with well over another 100 schools that are clearly on the path of becoming community schools. The transformation from traditional school into community school is an organic one stemming from schools’ struggle to meet all the needs that their students are presenting at school and which inhibit student academic success and positive youth development.



Students at Jenner Elementary School, a community school on Chicago’s northside, participate in drumming classes

In Chicago, there was an intentional decision by Chicago Public Schools (CPS) to commit resources and work in partnership with private philanthropic organizations to implement the community school model on a grand scale. CPS and their foundation partners saw the community school model as an effective way to close the achievement gap, provide necessary enrichment programming and leverage resources from within the community for the benefit of students and their families. Outside of Chicago, schools were just as intentional in making the community school transformation but without the coordinated effort demonstrated in the larger Chicago initiative.

2. **The Policy – HB684:** The Federation for Community Schools created a policy based on the program work of Illinois community schools, i.e. the policy was driven by those individuals working at community schools as well as those benefiting from programs, resources and services at community schools. Relying on the work of the more than 900 Federation members, the policy was crafted and edited by the Federation for Community Schools’ staff in concert with members to ensure that HB684 accurately reflected members’ work in

community schools and that it addressed their aspirations for the community school model and for their own community schools.

The policy establishes and formalizes the community school model as a legitimate structure for schools in Illinois by amending the Illinois School Code to include community schools. The policy also includes the primary tenets of the model and that schools need to meet to be considered community schools. Since there are many afterschool programs, it was necessary that the policy differentiated between a community school and more generalized afterschool programs. This is an important distinction because research on community schools clearly demonstrates the effectiveness of community schools in addressing academic enrichment by the implementation of highest-quality afterschool programs, but also through meaningful parent engagement, community engagement, and working to remove barriers to student success, including those that are “non-academic.”

In addition, this policy change outlined by HB684 included establishing an RFP process to fund community schools should state funding be allocated. At the same time, this policy establishes an infrastructure in the state of Illinois to access federal dollars in support of community schools, if they become available. This process is articulated in HB684.

3. **The Voices – Moving the Issue Onto the Public Agenda:** The Federation for Community Schools is a coalition comprised of more than 900 individuals who represent organizations engaged in or supportive of community schools. The Federation for Community Schools worked with its members to develop advocacy strategies that would promote the policy defined in HB684. Telling the *community school story* was the first step to garnering support for HB684 (and any other community school related policies). Some of the ways that Federation members were able to share the community school story follow.
 - Stakeholders worked with their communities to send ***community school post cards, signed by students and adults, to key policy makers in Illinois.***
 - Members participated in ***community school phone call-in days to policy makers to help orient policy makers with community schools. Members also facilitated call-ins by their own stakeholders.***
 - ***Community schools participated in national after-school efforts such as Lights On and spread the word about their community schools’ efforts throughout their communities;***
 - ***Community schools invited and hosted policy makers at program showcase events, which provided an opportunity for policymakers to see community school impacts first-hand, in their own districts;***
 - ***Community schools had parents fill out letters explaining how important their community school is to them and sent these letters to legislators, policy makers, and community leaders;***
 - ***Community school partners signed on to organizational letters of support to policy makers articulating their interests; and,***
 - ***Individuals and organizations shared stories about community schools, their activities, and how they impact students’ lives, which were written and distributed to policy makers.***

While Federation members worked together to promote community schools, the group also worked to continue to professionalize and standardize the community school work in Illinois. The community school members have worked on the Federation's Professional Development committee to define how the model works in practice, how to benchmark progress at community schools, what standards measure community school outcomes, how to establish effective partnerships and leverage existing community resources, how to develop leaders within the families supported by community schools, and how to articulate the model in a clear and succinct way.



Federation for Community Schools Executive Director Suzanne Armato addresses community school stakeholders and supporters at the annual Community School Advocacy Day in Springfield

The community school movement is fairly young in Illinois. The standardization of efforts outlined above has advanced the movement not only in terms of how the work is successfully undertaken but also in attracting new members who are doing the work but were unaware of the actual community school model.

This group of voices in Illinois is what makes the issue of community schools heard and seen throughout the state. The Federation serves as the conduit of these many voices, the conductor of this orchestra working together in common purpose and mission to advance the sustainability and quality of community schools in Illinois.

- 4. The Champions – Leaders to Promote and Advance Community Schools:**
In addition to having the policy and voices of support necessary to advance the policy, the Federation had to find champions who would take on the policy as his or her own. In order to be successful, HB684 needed champions who would first support it and second take whatever steps s/he could to advance the policy. These champions needed to be people who believed in the community school model and the policy, saw its credibility and positive outcomes, appreciated the many “on the ground” supporters of this movement, and who in the end would make this issue one of his/her top few policy priorities.

This last point is what distinguishes a supporter from a champion. Many people will give their support, which is also important, but finding the policy makers who will advance the policy by giving it his/her own power and authority is challenging, and key to the policy's success.



Representative Pritchard (R-Sycamore), a sponsor of HB684 and community school champion, addresses the crowd at an advocacy day event

The Federation found leaders in both the State House and the State Senate, individuals who would support the advancement of the policy and also get behind the policy to ensure its successful outcome. This type of support is absolutely essential. One way that the Federation was able to secure this support was by approaching legislators about the community schools in their districts, sharing the stories of the schools' successes and impacts, and inviting legislators to the community schools in their district to see the work first-hand.

The Federation looked to its members to engage policy makers and to welcome policy makers into their community schools. This type of direct involvement from those working at the schools and participating in programs at the schools made a significant impact on legislative policy makers, giving several of them the personal understanding of community schools as well as their "own" community school story which they could share with their colleagues.

5. **Making a Bill a Law – A Process Full of Opportunity:** One key to HB684's success was the presence of the Federation and its members at each and every point of the bill-making process. At every turn, the Federation and its members shared with legislators their community school stories from across the state so that legislators would have a solid understanding of the bill's content and goals. As we all know and have experienced, the community school model can be difficult to explain to those not working at or benefitting from community schools, and it can be difficult for people to really understand the benefits that community schools offer.

At a recent conference, a funder new to community schools said it best when he stated "there is something there (at a community school), something that you cannot put your finger on or even articulate, but it's magical." Having community school participants sharing their stories directly with policy makers is how the "magic" taking place at community schools across Illinois becomes comprehended.

The legislative process is fairly linear, both at the state-level and at the Federal level. The following steps outline the bill process, which in turn are points of opportunity to share the community school story.

- a. Policy in legislative form must be submitted by the champion(s) – *look to the bill champion to do take this step.*
- b. Additional bill sponsors will be needed – *approach fellow community school participants and ask them to share their community school stories with their legislators; give each legislator a personal story for his/her district.*
- c. Bill must be assigned to a substantive committee – *know to which committee education bills are assigned and see which legislators are on that specific committee; see if any community schools are in these members' districts; share the community school story with the specific legislator; invite the legislator for a visit to the school(s) in his/her district.*
- d. Substantive committee must have hearing of the bill – *provide witnesses to present on community schools; meet with the champion of the bill to see if s/he requires any additional information or support to make a powerful community school case before the committee.*
- e. After bill is heard and voted on in the House, then the bill is off to the entire House floor for a floor vote – *engage community school participants to contact their legislators about their schools, invite them to visit schools for brief (i.e., half hour) visits, make sure to have parents and other constituents at the visits; have parents and other constituents also contact the legislators and share their own stories; initiate a letter writing or post card campaign to support community schools (consider using templates that people can customize or postcards on which they can share their own thoughts about the importance of community schools); sponsor a call-in day for community school stakeholders to talk about the importance of community schools back home in the legislators' districts; and, organize an education day in the state capital during which community school supporters can meet with their policy makers and share their community school stories. With all this support, the bill will successfully pass through the different steps in the process, securing more champions throughout.*
- f. After the bill passes out of the House, it is on to the other chamber of each legislative branch, the Senate. The whole process outlined in sections a-e happens again – *remobilize the troops by explaining that the first half of success occurred and now the bill is moving on to the next steps, where support for community schools is just as critical as in previous steps.*

Every step of the process is an opportunity to educate other policy makers and to expand the pool of policy supporters. Each step needs to be leveraged and utilized to tell the story, even if success is guaranteed at a particular step in the process. As implied in the above steps, communication is absolutely essential to success. Keeping members informed is required in the form of a constant, steady and clear communication.

6. **State Agencies are Partners – Internal State Government Leaders:** Another layer of advocacy is with the state administrative agencies, which in Illinois and for the sake of HB684 is the Illinois State Board of Education (ISBE). There are several ways to provide input to the state boards of education including direct communication with the agency director or the chairman of the state board. In Illinois, the Federation worked with its members to bring the community school model to forefront for educational state agency leaders. Several of the strategies used included:
 - a. *Testifying before the ISBE Board hearings across the state; working with members to write testimony and prepare to share that testimony at ISBE hearings;*
 - b. *Initiating letter writing campaigns to the chairman of the ISBE Board; orchestrating campaigns by drafting a template letter and urging members to add their own story too, and then fax the personalized letters to the chairman's office;*
 - c. *Meeting with key policy makers within the state agency to educate them about community schools and garner their support of the policy initiative; work with the agency's internal policy makers to identify and address concerns within the department that might hinder policy advancement; and,*
 - d. *Creating sign-on letters of support that promote and advance community school initiatives and that are sent to the department secretary.*
7. **Governors Hold the Key to Support and State Priorities:** The last layer of direct advocacy to advance any issue, including community schools, rests in the executive branch. In Illinois, the Governorship has been shifting or under investigation for years now, which has made advancing the community school cause a challenge. The Federation worked with its members to provide ongoing communications to the Governor's office, which included personalized letters, post cards and post card campaigns, students' drawings, and other types of mass advocacy activities. In fact, one post card campaign yielded over 1,000 post cards, completed by students and parents and sharing their community school stories.

In addition to having Federation members and community school students and families sharing their stories with the Governor's office, the Federation also identified education policy makers within the Governor's office and met with them to share the community school story. Moreover, the Federation staff worked with these staff members in the Governor's office to identify and resolve concerns and

issues around community schools and community school policy so that the policy could move forward with the Governor's support. The Federation has also looked to find existing taskforces or committees overseen by the Governor's office and worked to integrate community schools into the missions of these broader committees. In fact, the community school advisory function as outlined in HB684 is embedded in the Governor's P-20 Council, which will help to ensure the longevity of community schools in Illinois.

The Governor's office typically has a Lieutenant Governor. This person is "second in command," and should be included in any advocacy and outreach efforts, for several reasons. In some states, the Lt. Governor acts as an important advisor to the Governor. In other states, s/he is directly involved in the legislative process. The most obvious reason for reaching out to the Lt. Governor is his/her position as "second in command," and the replacement for the Governor in the event that s/he cannot fulfill the duties of the office. In Illinois and in the early stages of this process, the Federation did reach out to the Lt. Governor's office to work on community education and community schools, which led to efforts to secure funding for community schools. That Lt. Governor is now the Governor of Illinois, making that initial advocacy effort even more significant.

8. **Unnamed Policymaker – the Media:** Though there are specific individuals in specific roles that facilitate the formation of policies (as outlined above), the unnamed policy maker, which cannot be overlooked, is the media. In Illinois, the media has dethroned a governor or two, has made capital punishment illegal, and has helped to spread the story of a local community organizer who is now president. The media can generate support for very unpopular policies; they can also become worthy advocates of an issue. The Federation has worked with the local media to share the community school story – stories into which our members breathe life by sharing the impacts they have seen and benefits they access through their community schools. These personal elements, real stories shared by real people, are required by the media to earn their attention.

The Federation has worked with the media throughout the state, both in Chicago and statewide. Remember, larger city media markets often have more stories than they have room to publish; whereas, smaller communities are looking for media stories. Also remember to consider online media and outlets – in many smaller communities, the traditional published paper is stepping aside in favor of new media outlets. A compelling community school story or event in a smaller community will often receive media attention. This has a double effect, not only reaching the general public but also reaching legislators and policy makers, as local legislators often read and depend on the local papers and media outlets for information and ideas.

Some of the media work that the Federation has engaged in includes:

- a. *Submitting Letters to the Editor when the community school model can be related to other newsworthy items;*
- b. *Authoring and distributing press releases with specific community school stories;*
- c. *Submitting materials to editorial boards to educate board members about the community school movement and successes;*
- d. *Having ongoing “conversations” (i.e., communications and emails) with key members of the media and developing relationships with local journalists so that when the time is right journalists will make contact for more information or stories; and,*
- e. *Assisting members in finding media contacts in their communities and giving them story ideas to pitch.*

Remember with the media, the work is about building a long-term relationship with the journalist so that s/he knows whom to contact, and that there is a story out there for him/her. There will be times when the media will publish articles on community schools as well as letters to the editor, but be patient!

9. **Emerging Opportunities at the National Level:** Even before former Chicago Public Schools CEO Arne Duncan left to become the Secretary of Education, there were advocacy opportunities for community schools at the Federal level. These opportunities included community school legislation in the federal House and Senate, in the forms of the Full-Service Community School House bill and the Keeping PACE Act in the Senate. In addition, Representative Hoyer (D-MD), who sponsored the Full-Service Community Schools bill, advocated for community schools through a budget line item that distributed federal monies through the Department of Education’s Request for Proposal process.

The Federation has also been on the forefront of working with its members to keep the community school issue in the minds of its Congressional delegates. Through legislative briefings and ongoing communications, Illinois’ delegates are aware of and more supportive of community schools in Illinois and nationally.

These activities on the Federal level have put our Congressional delegates above the curve on information regarding community schools. Moreover, the relationships that have been built allow the Federation to work even more closely with Illinois’ delegates now that there is an executive branch that is embracing the community school model.

In summary, advocacy strategy implementation is much like developing programming at a community school. To be successful and focused requires first pulling together a key set of stakeholders. This group will assess the policy needs. A broad set of advocacy activities are then developed, and the team is mindful of the various audiences that need to be informed. Once the strategy is in place, those who will directly benefit from the policy change or programs as well as those providing the programs are engaged in the advocacy activities. While they participate in advocacy activities, the advocacy strategies themselves are refined, modified and updated in order to maximize the capabilities of those involved. In the end, the outcome is a series of orchestrated activities that are driven by one common purpose – to expand and sustain high quality community schools.

Just as a community school follows these very steps to provide comprehensive programming that leads to success for students and their families, so does following the above outlined advocacy steps lead to successes for the community school initiative, such as the one that Illinois has achieved with the passage of HB684.

The Federation for Community Schools acknowledges the work and support of its funders, JPMorgan Chase, the Polk Bros. Foundation, and the Chicago Community Trust.

APPENDIX A – SAMPLE CO-SPONSOR REQUEST LETTER

February , 2009

The Honorable _____
Stratton Office Building
Springfield, IL 62706

Dear Representative ____,

We are requesting you to co-sponsor **HB684**, which seeks to change the Illinois School Code to include supporting language for the creation of community schools in Illinois. Throughout Illinois, there are over 200 community schools with many more emerging. In your own district, six of your elementary schools are official community schools, as designated by Chicago Public Schools.

The Federation for Community Schools members have seen the impact on schools and their communities when a regular school makes the transformation into a **community school**. When a school extends its traditional school hours to include robust enrichment programming (students, parents and community members) in the afternoon, evenings, weekends and summer, great things happen for students, their parents and the communities. Research on community schools demonstrates the following outcomes:

- Children's student achievement gap is closed;
- Children's academic test scores are improved;
- Children receive access to vital social services and supports;
- Children have intensive learning time and more opportunities to learn;
- Children are re-engaged in school and perform better; and
- Children are safe at schools from 3 - 6pm.

At the same time, we see communities become reconnected and recommitted to lifelong learning; communities create a goal of success for its youth and continued growth for its adults aligning their resources to support these goals. Parents become truly engaged in their children's learning and also participate in learning opportunities themselves. Moreover, community schools leverage existing funded programs, whether it is from local area non-profits, or local businesses, or civic entities such as the park districts or libraries. Community schools reach out to these partners and bring these local resources to the school, which in turn, expand school programming without additional costs to the school or program.

Currently, community schools are funded through a myriad of sources. Many community schools are funded through federal 21st Century Learning funds, using these grants to transform existing schools into community schools. These schools have proven their effectiveness by moving their schools from not meeting AYP to meeting and exceeding AYP. Private foundation dollars have supported the creation of many community schools as well. Local and county dollars throughout Illinois communities

has been quilted together to support this robust enrichment programming that occurs at a community school between 7am - 7pm.

We are attaching a series of additional materials for your review as you consider sponsoring HB684, which has been sponsored by Representative Will Burns from Chicago. The community school materials outline what a community school is as well as define the many positive outcomes, ranging from academics, to student's engagement at school, to safe havens for kids to improved health for children. If you need any additional information, please feel free to contact me at 312-671-0244 or by email at sarmato@sbcglobal.net.

We urge your support of community schools in Illinois. Community schools are a wise investment in both its outcomes as well as the other resources it leverages. All geographic areas of Illinois can benefit from community schools as they already exist in urban, rural and suburban communities. Moreover, with Arne Duncan as the new secretary of the Department of Education and his proven commitment to community schools, there is great opportunity for Illinois to take the lead across the nation in this educational initiative called ***community schools***. Illinois can showcase this innovative program and its proven successes. In addition, if Federal dollars become available for community schools, Illinois will already have the established budget line, RFP process, and administration in place to fully embrace new federal dollars.

We thank you again for your consideration of this and make ourselves available to you for further discussions about community schools in Illinois. We would be happy to take you on a visit to the community schools in your district. You can visit our website for more information at www.ilcommunityschools.org.

Sincerely,

Your Name
Your Organization

APPENDIX B – POASTCARD TEMPLATES

FRONT –



THE FEDERATION FOR
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS



Community Schools link public schools with their communities so that children can succeed, at school and beyond.

Build on success - Community Schools in Illinois and the nation have a proven track record of improving educational outcomes and strengthening schools.



BACK –

Dear State Senator _____,

I am writing you to urge your support of **community schools**. I am directly involved in community schools and have seen their impact. In Chicago there are over 120 community schools, and there are countless others throughout our State. This education model works in helping children succeed in school and acquire important life skills, while strengthening the school and its community.

I urge you to sign on as a sponsor of HB 684, which is now in the State Senate.

Sincerely,

APPENDIX C – SCRIPT FOR CALLING LEGISLATORS TO SUPPORT HB684

**SCRIPT for calling your State Senators about Community Schools
and HB 684**

Hello, my name is _____. I am a constituent of State Senator XYZ.

I wanted to let you know about the great working going on in XYZ School. XYZ School is a community school, which is both a place and a set of partnerships. XYZ School brings together the school, families and community members, as everyone works together to remove barriers to student success.

At my school this means...*(provide personal example here)*. Please, support community schools in our State; please support HB 684 which comes to the Senate floor for a vote this week.

APPENDIX D – SIGN ON LETTER OF SUPPORT TO GOVERNOR



THE FEDERATION FOR
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

MAY 29, 2009

THE HONORABLE PAT QUINN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
JAMES R. THOMPSON CENTER
100 W. RANDOLPH, 16-100
CHICAGO, IL 60601

DEAR GOVERNOR QUINN:

WE ARE REQUESTING THAT YOU SIGN **House Bill 684** INTO LAW, THEREBY CHANGING THE ILLINOIS SCHOOL CODE TO INCLUDE SUPPORTING LANGUAGE FOR THE CREATION, GROWTH AND DEVELOPMENT OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS IN ILLINOIS.

THROUGHOUT ILLINOIS, THERE ARE OVER 200 IDENTIFIED COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, WITH MANY MORE EMERGING AND MANY ALSO OPERATING AS COMMUNITY SCHOOLS UNDER OTHER NAMES. THE FEDERATION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS' MEMBERS HAVE SEEN THE IMPACT ON SCHOOLS AND THEIR COMMUNITIES WHEN A REGULAR SCHOOL MAKES THE TRANSFORMATION INTO A **community school**. WHEN A SCHOOL EXTENDS ITS TRADITIONAL SCHOOL HOURS TO INCLUDE ROBUST ENRICHMENT PROGRAMMING (STUDENTS, PARENTS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS) IN THE AFTERNOON, EVENINGS, WEEKENDS AND SUMMER, GREAT THINGS HAPPEN FOR STUDENTS, THEIR PARENTS AND THE COMMUNITIES. RESEARCH ON COMMUNITY SCHOOLS DEMONSTRATES THE FOLLOWING OUTCOMES:

- CHILDREN'S STUDENT ACHIEVEMENT GAP CLOSES;
- STUDENTS' ACADEMIC TEST SCORES IMPROVE;
- CHILDREN , YOUNG PEOPLE, THEIR FAMILIES AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS RECEIVE ACCESS TO VITAL SOCIAL SERVICES AND SUPPORTS CRITICAL FOR THEIR DEVELOPMENT;
- CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE HAVE INTENSIVE LEARNING TIME AND MORE OPPORTUNITIES TO LEARN, AND OPPORTUNITIES TO PRACTICE AND REINFORCE THE LEARNING TAKING PLACE DURING THE REGULAR SCHOOL DAY;
- STUDENTS OF ALL AGES ARE RE-ENGAGED IN SCHOOL AND PERFORM BETTER ACADEMICALLY; AND
- CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE SAFE AT SCHOOLS FROM 3 – 6PM AND BEYOND, DURING SCHOOL BREAKS AND WEEKENDS.

AT THE SAME TIME, WE SEE COMMUNITIES BECOME RECONNECTED AND RECOMMITTED TO LIFELONG LEARNING; COMMUNITIES CREATE A GOAL OF SUCCESS FOR THEIR YOUTH AND CONTINUED GROWTH FOR THEIR ADULTS AND ALIGN THEIR RESOURCES TO SUPPORT THESE GOALS. PARENTS BECOME TRULY ENGAGED IN THEIR CHILDREN'S LEARNING AND ALSO PARTICIPATE IN LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES THEMSELVES. MOREOVER, COMMUNITY SCHOOLS LEVERAGE EXISTING FUNDED PROGRAMS, BE THEY FROM LOCAL AREA NON-PROFITS, LOCAL BUSINESSES, OR CIVIC ENTITIES SUCH AS THE PARK DISTRICTS OR LIBRARIES. COMMUNITY SCHOOLS REACH OUT TO THESE PARTNERS AND BRING THESE LOCAL RESOURCES INTO THE SCHOOL, WHICH IN TURN, EXPANDS SCHOOL PROGRAMMING WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COSTS TO THE SCHOOL OR PROGRAM.

We urge your support of community schools in Illinois and hope you will sign HB 684 into law today. IF YOU SIGN THIS LANDMARK BILL INTO LAW, ILLINOIS WILL BE THE FIRST STATE IN THE COUNTRY TO CHANGE THE STATE SCHOOL CODE TO INCLUDE THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL MODEL.

COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ARE A WISE INVESTMENT BOTH BECAUSE OF THEIR OUTCOMES AND BECAUSE OF THE EXISTING RESOURCES THEY LEVERAGE. ALL THE GEOGRAPHIC AREAS OF ILLINOIS CAN BENEFIT FROM COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, AND THEY ALREADY EXIST IN URBAN, RURAL AND SUBURBAN COMMUNITIES. MOREOVER, WITH ARNE DUNCAN AS THE SECRETARY OF THE U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND HIS PROVEN COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, THIS IS GREAT OPPORTUNITY FOR ILLINOIS TO TAKE THE LEAD ACROSS THE NATION IN THIS EDUCATIONAL INITIATIVE CALLED **community schools**. ILLINOIS CAN SHOWCASE ITS INNOVATIVE PROGRAMS AND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS' PROVEN SUCCESSES. IN ADDITION, IF FEDERAL DOLLARS BECOME AVAILABLE FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, ILLINOIS WILL ALREADY HAVE THE ESTABLISHED BUDGET LINE, RFP PROCESS, AND ADMINISTRATION IN PLACE TO FULLY EMBRACE NEW FEDERAL DOLLARS QUICKLY, EFFICIENTLY, AND EFFECTIVELY.

SHOULD YOU OR YOUR STAFF HAVE ANY QUESTIONS REGARDING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS, HB 684, OR POTENTIAL FEDERAL FUNDING, PLEASE DO NOT HESITATE TO CONTACT OUR OFFICE AT 312-629-4990.

SINCERELY,

SUZANNE ARMATO
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

AND

MEMBERS OF THE FEDERATION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
(SEE DOCUMENTS ATTACHED)

APPENDIX E – SAMPLE BILL FACT SHEET



HB684 Fact Sheet

HB 684 would amend the Illinois School Code to establish community schools as a legitimate and standardized innovative strategy for Illinois schools to implement and seek funds, when available, to address student academic success as well as parental and community engagement at the school. With over 200 community schools in Illinois and over 100 schools waiting to make the transition to community schools, it is in Illinois' best interest to establish community schools in its school code should federal funds become available from stimulus dollars.

What is a Community School?

Community schools are located in urban, suburban and rural areas all across Illinois. Community schools transform schools into hubs of their communities by providing expansive out of school time programming, from 7am - 7pm, and programming for parents, students and community residents. The ABCs of community schools are: aligning out of school time for students with in-class learning goals to enhance and expand upon classroom teaching; bringing together the school, families and community so the groups are working in tandem; and coordinating academic and student resources so students' needs, whether academic, emotional or physical, are addressed. Illinois community schools are part of a national movement that includes 41 states.

Do Community Schools Work?

Yes. Research shows that community schools make a positive difference in student achievement, behavior and attendance, family involvement, and community engagement with public schools. They leverage existing community resources so that for every one dollar invested in a community school, an additional 4 – 7 dollars in other funded programs are brought to the school. Community schools also provide a safe learning haven for youth during the critical time of 3 – 6 pm.

“My schools have afterschool activities. Am I a community school?”

Public schools will have more success if they pay attention not only to students' lives in the classroom, but also to the numerous elements of their development: social, emotional, physical, cognitive, civic and moral. Working alone, schools or families may not be able to provide students with the support needed for academic success, but community schools are an approach to public schools that provides diverse activities and programs for students, families and community members in order to focus on nurturing all aspects of students' well-being. Public schools can do this by breaking down the walls around the public school and engaging school residents and community stakeholders to be part of the education solution. With everyone collaboratively setting common goals for the school's students' and community's needs, the transformation begins.

Why Community Schools NOW? What's the urgency?

Federal stimulus dollars will be targeted to states that are showing innovative educational initiatives, especially those that show partnership between schools and community stakeholders and resources. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan urged Illinois to be innovative – community schools are that innovation. Plus, with a dropout rate at nearly half of Illinois youth, the children of Illinois need this research-based, proven-to- be-effective educational model NOW.

What do Community Schools cost?

There are costs associated with having dedicated staff to serve as the Coordinator or Director of programming. There can also be costs involved in providing the after school programs.

Community schools typically cost \$150,000 - \$200,000 per school for daily programming, Saturday programming and five or six weeks of summer school and programs. The average per pupil cost is \$1,000 for standard programming; \$1,500 if medical or mental health needs are high in the school/community.

ISBE's Role with Community Schools:

The Federation in collaboration with ISBE, the Governor's office and state law and policymakers is attempting to codify community schools and seek federal stimulus dollars to fund them. These funds would be in the ISBE budget and would be administered by ISBE through an RFP process. With a \$10 million community school budget line, ISBE would be able to provide expanded, enrichment programming to at least 10,000 students across Illinois.

HB 684 passed out of the House unanimously. State Senate sponsors: Senator Kwame Raoul, Sen. A.J. Wilhelmi, Sen. Jeff Schoenberg, Sen. Mattie Hunter, Sen. David Koehler, Sen. Michael Noland, Sen. Pamela Althoff and Sen. Dale Risinger.

APPENDIX F – SAMPLE MEDIA ALERT



THE FEDERATION FOR
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

HB684, Community Schools Bill, Unanimously Passes in Both Illinois State Houses

Bill Formalizing Community School Model in Illinois' School Code Puts State at the Front of the Line for Innovation Funds

Springfield, IL -- On May 28th, 2009, House Bill 684 passed the Illinois House of Representatives in a final, victorious vote of 117-0, making Illinois the only state in the nation to codify community schools into their state school code. By formalizing the community school model and providing a structure for community school oversight and expansion, Illinois is also poised to take full advantage of "Race to the Top" federal stimulus funds later this year. Illinois can now answer Secretary of Education Arne Duncan's call for innovation in education.

A community school is a public school that serves as the hub of its community by engaging community resources to help meet their children's needs in order to be successful academically and grow up to be productive young adults. Community schools offer a range of on-site programs and services that support the success of students and their families. Though every community school looks different – because each school works to meet the unique needs of its unique students, families, and community members – all community schools are built on the four pillars of academics, health, families and community.

"Throughout Illinois we have seen community schools change the lives of students and their families. Magic happens during the extended school opportunities that catches children and young people's attention and gets them re-engaged and re-connected to school," said Suzanne Armato, Executive Director of the Federation for Community Schools. "Because community schools are so effective in supporting the learning needs of children and young people, we are elated that Illinois has adopted this educational model, and now we call on our state to support the development of community schools in rural, suburban and urban neighborhoods, which includes the use of future federal stimulus dollars."

By building on the existing community schools in Illinois, the state can quickly, effectively, and efficiently use federal stimulus funds. One of the key areas of education innovation articulated by the Department of Education is closing the achievement gap. Community schools have been shown by research to decrease the academic achievement gap, increase academic success, and keep children safe.

The bill's chief main sponsors, State Rep. Will Burns and Senator Kwame Raoul, championed the bill. This bill received bi-partisan co-sponsorship in the Illinois State

Legislature from throughout the state. State officials' who co-sponsored this legislation include: Senators Kwame Raoul, A.J. Wilhelmi, Jeff Schoenberg, Mattie Hunter, David Koehler, Michael Noland, Pamela Althoff, Dale Risinger, and Jackie Collins; and Representatives Deborah Mell, Robert F. Flider, Jehan A. Gordon, David E. Miller, Luis Arroyo, Esther Golar, Barbara Flynn Currie, Lisa M. Dugan, Suzanne Bassi, Robert W. Pritchard, William Davis, Jack McGuire, Susana A Mendoza, Mike Fortner, Sandra M. Pihos, Elizabeth Hernandez, Kathleen A. Ryg, Harry Osterman, Cynthia Soto, Karen A. Yarbrough, Maria Antonia Berrios, Paul D. Froehlich and Betsy Hannig.

For more information about community schools, including [video case studies](#) of urban, rural, and suburban community schools and [the community schools' ABCs](#), please visit our Web site at www.ilcommunityschools.org.

The Federation for Community Schools works to bring together a diverse group of individuals and organizations who support community schools throughout Illinois. We serve as a clearinghouse for community school best practices and facilitate the professional networking of community school practitioners.