| **School Name**  | Community Day Arlington |
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| **Grade Span Targeted by Best Practice** | K-4 |
| **Contact** | Laura Goodwin (lgoodwin@thecommunitygroupinc.org) |
| **Related Charter School Performance Criteria/Conditions for School Effectiveness**  | Mission and Key Design Elements  |
| **Innovation/Best Practice(s)** | Planning a Community School: Building Trust and a Shared Vision for a Turnaround School |
| **Rationale Supporting Best Practice** | * In 2015, Community Day Arlington (CDA) was redesignated as a Level 1 school from a Level 4 school.
* Achieved 100% parent involvement in parent-teacher conferences.
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| **Partner** | Parents, Lawrence Public Schools, Lawrence Community Works, UMass Lowell, Groundworks Lawrence, LEAP Program, Community Day Learning, Head Start, 21st Century Community Learning Centers, Latchkey, Boys & Girls Club, YMCA, Lazarus House, LPS Family Resource Center. |
| **Target Audience for Best Practice** | Schools/districts looking to improve a chronically underperforming school. |
| **Objective for Disseminating this Best Practice** | To build and foster relationships with families to support under-performing schools.  |
| **Summary**  | In 2011, Lawrence Public Schools (LPS) were declared “chronically underperforming” by the state and a receiver was appointed to turn around the district. The public school system was struggling with a graduation rate 30 points below the state average and low levels of math and ELA proficiency. In the fall of 2012, **The Community Group (TCG) whom helped to found Community Day Public Charter School partnered with the Lawrence Public School district to manage operations at Arlington Elementary School**, then one of the lowest performing elementary schools in the district. More than 65 percent of students entering kindergarten at CDAES tested in the lowest 10 percent of students on a national scale rating school readiness. There was a language barrier between families and teachers/administrators and the groups were having difficulty relating to each other. TCG had a strong connection to Lawrence and the Arlington neighborhood, having started its first preschool program in 1969 and more recently receiving a Promise Neighborhood grant in 2011 to focus on the Arlington neighborhood. The leadership team saw the strong partnerships developed with parents, social service agencies, community leaders and teachers during that grant period and knew that together with the community they could build a high achieving school. They saw a number of opportunities including highly invested families, the long history of TCG in the Arlington neighborhood, **highly motivated teachers and administrators, and teachers and administrators who had the skills and experience needed to make academic gains**. Using the model created in their successful charter school, Community Day Charter Public School-Prospect, they knew that creating a community and involving the parents was key to successfully turning around this school.They **hired a full-time director of community engagement who is rooted in the community** knowing that maintaining parent connections to the school was critical, regardless of language barriers. **Spanish-speaking classroom assistants and operations managers’** help teachers communicate with parents, home visits are completed for families in need or students with excessive absences, and bilingual Parent Advisory Board meetings are held monthly and run by parents.To build trust further, **we went above and beyond to provide additional services** **to families** to show our dedication to the community. Partnering with another local organization, family network playgroups were established for families with young children in the Arlington neighborhood; the school held English as a second language classes; computer, financial literacy, nutrition, and cooking classes; citizenship classes; workforce training programs for parents; parent trainings to be family child care providers; and an open gym program for students at night. Parents are encouraged to take a leadership role in the school, make it their own.**CDA was able to make significant gains and was redesignated as a Level 1 school in 2015; this accomplishment would not have been possible without co-investment with families.** |
| **Reflection** | Partnering with Lawrence Public Schools to turnaround Community Day Arlington, solidified our belief that **you need to be dynamic and nimble enough to adapt to the constantly changing needs of students and families.** This experience helped us create new parent training programs based on parent input, going beyond what we had provided in the past. We learned the value of whole staff home visits. On the academic side, we implemented new student based services groups, which we didn’t have previous experience with that helped us gain a great new skill set to help students who lag behind in an area catch up to their classmates. |
| **Resources** | * American Institutes for Research Policy Brief – *A New Approach to School Turnaround: Charter Operators Managing District Schools* <http://www.air.org/sites/default/files/downloads/report/New-Approach-to-School-Turnaround-Charter-Schools-Lawrence-July-2016.pdf>
* CDA Turnaround Presentation – <http://www.thecommunitygroupinc.org/uploaded/Arlington/Documents/CDA_Community_Schools_Conference_Presentation.pdf?1478626037534>.
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