



COMMUNITY SCHOOLS ARE ADAPTING TO REMOTE LEARNING. HERE'S HOW.



Doña Ana Elementary in New Mexico created a help desk to respond to parents' questions and connect families with mental health and social support services.

Duarte High School in Los Angeles maintains a tracker of student contact numbers and home language needs so that staff can contact each family to offer support services such as Internet hot spots and warm meals.

And in **Oakland, California**, school-based health centers are providing tele-counseling and training for teachers on supporting families during the COVID crisis.

These are just a few ways in which community schools have modified their usual in-person interactions. Those personal connections have, in the past, been a cornerstone of this research-based model that aims to address student learning, whole child well-being, and links to the community. National Education Policy Fellow **Jeannie Oakes**, Anna Maier, and NEPC doctoral student researcher **Julia Daniel**, in *Learning in the Time of COVID-19*, a blog series published by the **Learning Policy Institute**, write:

Because community schools prioritize relationships with family members—often offering social services and classes for parents and guardians—they were already deeply rooted in their students' lives and had relationships and infrastructures in place when COVID-19 hit that enabled them to mobilize support services and connect with their students and families meaningfully and quickly.

So-called wraparound services such as mental health counseling and emergency food provision are just one aspect of community schools. Another key tenet is a community-based approach to learning that encourages students to meaningfully engage with problems and

issues directly related to students' neighborhood environments. At the UCLA Community School, for instance, students conduct interdisciplinary research projects about topics such as gentrification and homelessness, then present the results to the community, [write](#) Karen Hunter Quartz and NEPC Fellow [Marisa Saunders](#) on the Learning Policy Institute's COVID blog series. When learning moved online, some aspects of these projects were no longer feasible, but educators adapted. For example, in one history class, students used articles, data, videos, and research to explore COVID's disparate impact on people of color. For a science unit on pollution, students employed street maps and data to examine the issue of environmental waste in their community. Their teacher created a "landfill" in a box in her home so students could see (on video, of course) how materials like plastics and paper do—or do not—break down over time. And parents were invited to attend Zoom meetings where they shared their approaches to recycling and their experiences with neighborhood pollution.

Quartz and Saunders [write](#):

Alongside the inspiring stories of distributing meals, social services, and technology to families in need right now, community schools are also enabling students to understand and confront the structural inequalities they encounter each day—the very inequalities that are causing Black and Latino Californians to die of the coronavirus at disproportionate rates.

NEPC Resources on Community Schools

This newsletter is made possible in part by support provided by the Great Lakes Center for Education Research and Practice: <http://www.greatlakescenter.org>

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