



**MURRELL  
DOBBINS**  
CTE HIGH SCHOOL  
(GRADES 9-12)



MAYOR'S OFFICE  
OF EDUCATION

THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF  
**PHILADELPHIA**

A City of Philadelphia  
Designated Community School

COMMUNITY  
SCHOOL PLAN  
MARCH 2017

## LETTER FROM THE MAYOR



This past July, the City of Philadelphia, in partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, proudly announced the first cohort of Community Schools. The Community Schools initiative is a key piece of our shared vision to improve the educational landscape of our city. This effort marks a new approach for how the City supports students and families, strengthens schools, and revitalizes neighborhoods.

By providing services like food pantries or access to dental care we remove barriers that prevent our students from learning. Ultimately, Community Schools and the services they provide allow our students to focus on learning and our teachers to focus on teaching.

I am happy to share that over the past six months the Mayor's Office of Education has conducted a thorough analysis of each of our nine community schools. Our dedicated team has surveyed more than 2,000 community members, students, school staff, and parents to get a comprehensive understanding of the unique needs within each school community. More than 500 additional people participated in 1 of 50 in-person focus groups, providing feedback that informed this report.

This report highlights the ways the City will expand services to meet the specific needs of our schools. Our Community School Coordinators will continue to work closely with their Community School Committees over the next year and we invite you to join them in this shared effort to strengthen our schools and neighborhoods.

Together, we will help our children reach their full potential.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "James F. Kenney". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of the first and last names being capitalized and prominent.

James F. Kenney  
Mayor of Philadelphia

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## PHILADELPHIA'S COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

### **SUPPORTING STUDENTS AND FAMILIES, STRENGTHENING SCHOOLS, REVITALIZING NEIGHBORHOODS**

The City of Philadelphia's Mayor's Office of Education (MOE) launched the Community Schools initiative, in partnership with the School District of Philadelphia, to strengthen school communities by improving access to programs, services, and supports for the children and families of Philadelphia. Funded by the Philadelphia Beverage Tax, nine community schools were established during FY17.

Community schools are public schools where a full-time coordinator works with the entire school community—students, families, teachers, administrators, service providers, and neighbors—to identify student and community needs, such as expanded health services, after-school programming, and job training. The coordinator then works with service providers and City agencies to bring these resources directly into the school, enabling community schools to become thriving neighborhood centers.

Successful community schools leverage public, private, and philanthropic resources to address non-academic barriers and challenges that too often keep our students from learning. Through this strategy, the City strengthens schools and the School District by sharing the responsibility for meeting the needs of the whole child, and thereby helping hardworking educators focus on teaching.

#### **Community School Coordinators**

A key tenet of a community school is a dedicated Community School Coordinator who works directly in the school and with the entire school community. Philadelphia's Community School Coordinators are city employees reporting to MOE, and working in partnership with the school principal. MOE also provides technical and programmatic assistance to support principals, coordinators, and community partners to secure resources and create opportunities that benefit students, families, and neighbors. Examples of this centralized support include systems strategies around resources such as social and emotional wellness, health services, training and professional development, identifying new resources and partners, and working with local and national coalitions.

#### **A Focus on Health**

Because the physical, social, and emotional health of children is critical, MOE is also working closely with the School District of Philadelphia, various city departments, community organizations, and service providers to develop strategies to increase these services. One highlight is a new collaboration between MOE and the Philadelphia Department of Public Health (PDPH) to develop expanded health services and access in school communities, including dental and vision, asthma care and other strategies to support the district's school nurses. Through this partnership, MOE also hired Healthy Schools Coordinators to provide additional support to community schools. Grounded in the understanding that healthy, active, well-nourished children learn better, they are working to improve access to healthy foods, physical activity and drinking water habits that students need to thrive in and out of the classroom.

#### **Community School Committee**

Each school has organized an advisory committee to review information and provide guidance on priorities for the community school plans. The Community School Committee (CSC) is comprised of school staff, parents/caregivers and community members. The CSC works with the Community School Coordinator and school leadership to develop and implement this plan based on the unique set of needs of their community school. The CSC sets priorities, and advises in the implementation of the community school plan.



## IDENTIFYING SCHOOL NEEDS

Once a school receives designation as a community school, the first step is to conduct a needs assessment in order to discover the strengths of the school and its neighborhood assets, as well as what the school community identifies as priorities for the community school to address.

### What MOE did at every school:

MOE utilized a variety of tools to obtain feedback from community school stakeholders. Staff engaged five stakeholder groups: students, parents, teachers/staff, organizations providing services in the school, and representatives from the community. Methods included:

- ✓ Surveys (paper and digital)
- ✓ Focus groups
- ✓ One-on-one interviews
- ✓ Participation in school activities to hear from as many stakeholders as possible



MOE also analyzed community datasets including information from the American Community Survey, the School District of Philadelphia's annual student, family, and staff surveys, Public Health Management Corporation's Household Health Survey, the Community Health Assessment, and other data sources. This data review process helped provide context for understanding neighborhoods, and was used in conjunction with information from surveys and focus groups. Using this data, MOE created maps and presented detailed data presentations on neighborhood resources, health and census information to each community school committee for their specific neighborhood.<sup>1</sup>

### What MOE learned across schools:

During citywide community outreach there were some consistent themes across all nine of our community schools:

- Job training and access to job opportunities
- Food insecurity and access to healthy foods
- Access to physical, social and emotional health services, including the need for a "trauma informed" approach to serving students
- Access to clothing and uniforms
- Cultural and social opportunities

For example, students who are hungry are not ready to learn, and in many of the neighborhoods where community schools are located people identified food insecurity as a need. To address this broader need, the Mayor's Office of Education is working with SDP and key partners including philanthropic and community organizations to implement food access programs at all the community schools. These programs may include a food "backpack" pilot where students take home food monthly, establishing food pantries and/or fresh produce stands to bring healthy and

<sup>1</sup> A detailed methodology description is available in Appendix A

## IDENTIFYING SCHOOL NEEDS

affordable foods directly to community schools, working with partners like Philabundance, the SHARE Food Program, the Food Trust and Common Market. Some programs will take time to develop and some are advancing already.

As Mayor Kenney has said, every City department has a shared responsibility to improve the ways the City of Philadelphia supports students, families and local schools. MOE is working closely with numerous departments and agencies to create opportunities that can build upon existing good work and align the City's many programs and services. For example, the Community Schools initiative is partnering with the Health Department to place Healthy School Coordinators in schools to support programs to increase physical activity; promote access to healthy food and drinking water, physical activity, and family engagement in wellness. In addition to working closely with the Health Department, the Community Schools team is working with the REBUILD initiative, PHLpreK, the Department of Human Services, and the Managing Director's office to align strategies to serve families and neighborhoods. The Department of Behavioral Health and Intellectual disAbility Services (DBHIDS) is working with MOE to help identify schools' ongoing needs and barriers to services, with the goal of strengthening connections to behavioral health services for students and families. Technical assistance staff work closely with the Office of Community Empowerment and Opportunity to refer families to programs that will connect them to public benefits, and with the Commerce department to expand workforce development efforts. The Office of Adult Education is working to help bring their extensive portfolio of adult education to schools. Other examples include working with the Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy and Mural Arts to bring arts and cultural opportunities to schools. MOE is also partnering with the Office of Immigrant Affairs to respond to the critical challenges our immigrant and refugee families are facing.

From this work, MOE created a profile of each school, including an assessment of community resources, demographic information, and information about the neighborhood and specific school community.



***“We cannot expect our children to succeed academically if they come to school hungry, sick or too traumatized to learn. Expanding the community schools approach is one way that we will strategically align City services and other resources to better address the needs of students and families. I’m excited to expand this proven strategy in Philadelphia and look forward to working with these school communities.”*** - Mayor Jim Kenney

# ABOUT MURRELL DOBBINS HIGH SCHOOL

## Dobbins Career and Technical Education High School

is located at the intersection of North 22nd Street & West Lehigh Avenue in the Strawberry Mansion section of the city. The high school is known for its strong Career and Technical Education (CTE) programs and has an active School Advisory Council (SAC). The school also has a strong alumni network of prominent Philadelphians and athletes who maintain a relationship with the school. The school building is on the National Register of Historic Places and is across the street from what was once the Connie Mack Stadium, the home of the Philadelphia Phillies for almost 70 years. Dobbins is building relationships with the two key commercial corridors along North 22nd Street and Lehigh Avenue.

|                             |       |
|-----------------------------|-------|
| Total students <sup>2</sup> | 614   |
| English Language Learners   | 2.1%  |
| Special Education           | 14.3% |
| Economically Disadvantaged  | 100%  |

## Current Offerings:

CTE programs include

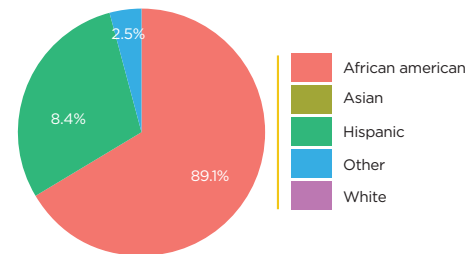
- Culinary Arts
- Graphic Design
- Fashion
- Barbering
- Cosmetology

## Partners:

- Dunbar Community Mental Health
- College Possible
- Church of the Advocate
- Pride Youth Services
- Delta Sigma Theta Alumnae, and more!

Many partners participate in monthly partnership meetings, and some are active School Advisory Council members.

## Murrell Dobbins Career and Technical High School Demographics



Percentage of households below the poverty line Dobbins<sup>3</sup>:

**45%** 82th percentile

City average: **30%**

Percentage of residents 16 or older who are unemployed Dobbins<sup>4</sup>:

**13%** 70th percentile

City average: **11%**

**Recreation Centers** Cecil B Moore Recreation Center is a 6.8-acre property right next door to the school and includes a ballfield, pool, sports field, track, volleyball court, two basketball courts and two tennis courts.

**Libraries** The Widener library branch is just a few short blocks from the school.

**Green Space** The school is located next to Reyburn Park.

**Health Resources** The closest hospital is Temple University, but many neighbors also go to St. Christopher's Hospital, which is a 15-minute drive.

**Grocery Stores** The Fox Street ShopRite is 1.5 miles to the north, and the Save-a-Lot on York Street is 1.2 miles to the southwest of the school.

<sup>2</sup> Data in this table is taken from the School Profiles on The School District of Philadelphia website, [https://webapps1.philasd.org/school\\_profile/](https://webapps1.philasd.org/school_profile/)

<sup>3</sup> American Community Survey 2009-2014

<sup>4</sup> American Community Survey 2010-2014



# ABOUT MURRELL DOBBINS HIGH SCHOOL

## What MOE Learned at Dobbins School

At Dobbins, more than 340 students, staff, families, community members and school partners completed surveys, participated in focus groups or interviews.

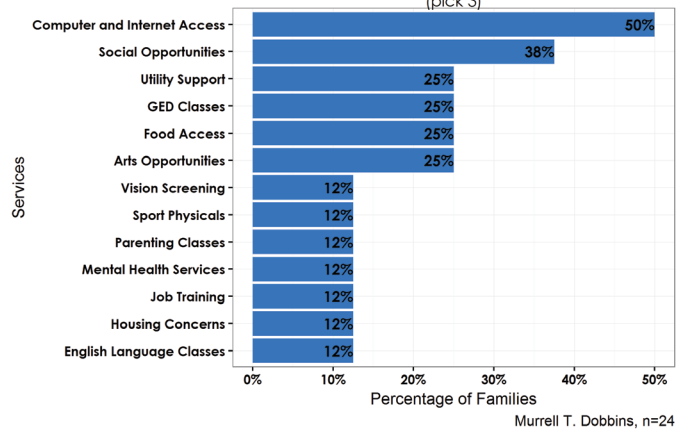
- ✓ Students, staff, families and service providers agree that job training and preparation is a need for students; community members also identified job training as a need for adults in the neighborhood
- ✓ Students and staff agree that there is a need for more afterschool programs, tutoring, and extra-curricular activities
- ✓ Community members and families identified a need for increased access to healthy foods

Additionally, staff identified a need for bullying prevention services and increased access to mental health services at the school. Students also identified a need for more opportunities for physical activity such as sports and yoga.

Dobbins's community school committee (CSC) consists of families, teachers, staff, community members, school partners, the assistant principal and both the community school and healthy school coordinators. (A list of CSC members is available on page 13.)

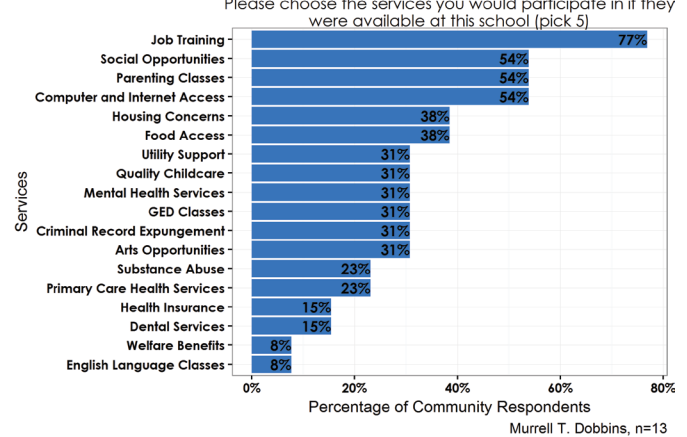
### Services Families Want For Themselves

Please choose the three biggest needs for yourself (pick 3)



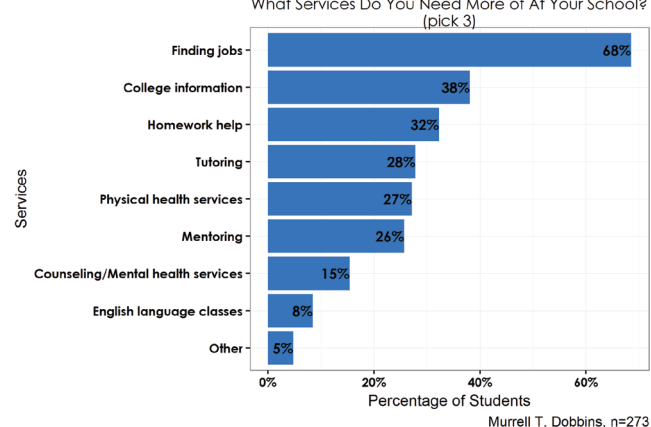
### Services The Community Wants

Please choose the services you would participate in if they were available at this school (pick 5)



### Services Students Want

What Services Do You Need More of At Your School? (pick 3)



# DOBBINS' COMMUNITY SCHOOL FOCUS AREAS

## PRIMARY PRIORITIES

- Align resources to improve school climate
- Increase access to healthy foods
- Increase job training and supports for students and adults

### **Align resources to improve school climate**

On surveys, 63% of staff members identified bullying as a problem, and in focus groups and Community School Committee discussions students, staff, families, and partners shared concerns about climate issues at Dobbins including absenteeism, lateness, and conflicts between students. To address these concerns the community school will focus on increasing supports for youth including mentoring and conflict mediation resources.

#### *Initial action steps (3 month)*

- Identify and develop training for community volunteers
- Implement strategies to incorporate youth voice into climate planning (e.g. student assemblies and student work groups)
- Build partnerships with multiple organizations specializing in conflict resolution and mediation

#### *Short-term goals (6-12 months)*

- Develop peer mentoring and mediation workshops with community partners
- Improve school morale (e.g. school spirit day, increased number of connections between students and alumni, etc.)

#### *Long-term goals (2 years)*

- Ensure that families are engaged throughout the year in a variety of ways including family game nights, volunteer and leadership opportunities, and more
- Ensure all students have access to peer mentoring and mediation services
- Maintain clear communication and common values among all stakeholders (students, families, staff, community members, and partners) at Dobbins

### **Increase access to jobs and job training**

Families and community members at Dobbins stated that job trainings and opportunities are a priority. Student and family surveys show that there is an immediate need for job readiness training, and the school is developing several partnerships to begin to address employment needs for students and adults. This includes reaching out to local unions to get feedback on what types of training they need for their workforce.

## DOBBINS' COMMUNITY SCHOOL FOCUS AREAS

### *Initial action steps completed (3 month)*

- Identify opportunities to expand current partners offering GED and job training programs
- Partner with employers to conduct mock interview workshops with students
- Partner with MOE, to identify adult education programs

### *Short-term goals (6-12 month)*

- Offer résumé building workshops for students and residents
- Create a job board that includes the City's civil service exam schedule and job postings
- Offer an interviewing skill workshop for community members
- Implement a Dress for Success program

### *Long-term goals (2 year goals):*

- Partner with local employers to host an annual job fair
- Establish long-term partnerships with local unions
- Offer an ongoing GED program for community members
- Offer on-site apprenticeship programs to students

## **Increase access to healthy foods**

At Dobbins, service providers, students, and parents identified a desire for healthier food options for families and neighbors in the area. Currently, there is no adequately-stocked food market near the school. The Community School Committee identified several strategies to potentially address this need during the meetings about community school priorities.

### *Initial action steps (3 month):*

- Contact food banks for their monthly distribution calendar
- Work with current partner Eat.Right.Now to expand nutrition education and healthy cooking demonstrations to students, families, and community
- Start a physical activity and healthy eating day initiative with Community School Committee, students, and staff

### *Short-term goals (6-12 months):*

- Provide families with information on nearby food pantries
- Provide a list of low-cost, healthy recipes
- Survey students about what healthy foods they would prefer to eat

### *Long-term goals (2 year goals):*

- Establish a farmer's market at the school
- Start a community garden
- Increase school and community access to affordable, high-quality food retail options



# DOBBINS' COMMUNITY SCHOOL FOCUS AREAS

## SECONDARY PRIORITIES

**Increase access to physical activity for students.** At Dobbins, students report they would like more physical education and gym classes. Initial discussions about increasing physical activity will focus on opportunities to include more movement breaks in the classroom and developing ways to utilize the school space for increased physical activity.

**Increase extracurricular activities for students.** On surveys, students identified a desire to have more options for extra-curricular activities in the school. Initial steps to address this will include working with students, school staff, and afterschool partners to identify more opportunities for after school programming.



## GET INVOLVED

### What's Next

As the name implies, Community Schools are not the work of one person, but of all the people in the school and in the neighborhood. Already, partners are coming together every month to share resources and identify new ways to help the school families and staff are meeting regularly at Community School Committee meetings, and new strategies are being developed to achieve the community school's goals. The principal, staff, and Community School and Healthy School Coordinators will continue to work together with existing community partners to expand services and opportunities that meet the needs of students, families, and community members.

### Get Involved

There are many ways to support your neighborhood community schools:

- **Volunteer** – Community schools offer events throughout the year that require volunteers. Volunteering can include one-time opportunities, such as presenting during career days, special event support, or ongoing opportunities with the school or one of the many partners who work there. *Volunteers in community schools will need to follow the SDP volunteer guidelines and complete all required background checks.*
- **Partner** – Philadelphia is a city with many strong neighborhood, community and citywide organizations that are working, or would like to work with schools to bring additional resources and opportunities to children and families. *Please be aware that if your organization is interested in working in a school there are School District of Philadelphia requirements you may have to meet.*
- **Contribute** – Community schools are often looking for donations, including in-kind items such as winter coats or uniforms for clothing closets, as well as for funding for specific initiatives or programs.

To learn more about how to volunteer, partner or contribute, contact our office at **[Community.Schools@phila.gov](mailto:Community.Schools@phila.gov)**

To find out more about the Community School Committee or specific opportunities at this community school contact the Dobbins Community School Coordinator, Charles Reyes. Email: **[Charles.Reyes@phila.gov](mailto:Charles.Reyes@phila.gov)**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

**The Mayor's Office of Education would like to thank the following individuals, organizations, and city departments for their valuable support in producing this plan.**

School District of Philadelphia  
Dobbins Principal Dr. Toni Damon

The members of Dobbins' Community School Committee:

Marjay Smith, *Student*  
Nahjae Strong, *Student*  
Deborah Azore, *Parent*  
Robin Zatuchni, *Staff Member*  
Victoria Monacelli, *Staff member*  
Robin Garland, *Parent*  
PJ Craig, *Partner*  
Allegra Simms, *Partner*  
Denise Kenner, *Parent*  
Muriel Brown, *Parent*  
Doris Geiger, *Community Member*  
Linnea Branch, *Parent*  
Missy Hudson, *Community Member*

Thank you to the many educators and administrators of the School District of Philadelphia and the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers who have worked with MOE to develop this strategy to support our schools.

Many City Departments and City Council Offices have offered their partnerships, and shared their knowledge, ideas, and resources to support this initiative.



## METHODOLOGY

### Survey Development

To develop the community school surveys, the Mayor's Office of Education worked with local and national partners, reviewed surveys used by other community school initiatives and cities, and worked with coordinators and students to ensure that the data collected was useful and the questions meaningful. In total, nine surveys were reviewed by two national and seven local partners including the Philadelphia Federation of Teachers, Community Legal Services, and more. Initially, surveys were created for each key stakeholder group: students, families, school staff, community members, and service providers. An additional survey for younger students (grades Kindergarten – 2nd) was also used. Themes incorporated into the surveys included questions about needs and services, and stakeholders' perspectives on the school and community.

### Focus Groups

Focus groups provided community school coordinators the opportunity to have deeper discussions with stakeholders about their concerns and priorities. Each focus group was facilitated by either the community school coordinator or healthy school coordinator. Staff from the Mayor's Office of Education supported the process as note takers when necessary. Training on facilitation was provided to community school and healthy school coordinators in August, and sample focus group scripts were shared with all coordinators. Questions focused on the needs of the school and community. Focus group notes were reviewed, themes were identified for each discussion and entered into a summary table for comparison across stakeholder groups.

### Interviews

In order to collect as much information as possible, some coordinators chose to do additional outreach to stakeholders in the form of 1:1 interviews. Interviews were between 20 and 60 minutes long and notes were collected and reviewed similar to focus groups.

### Community Data

The community information section presents findings from an analysis of data from the American Community Survey (ACS), Philadelphia Health Management Corporation's (PHMC) Household Health Survey, the Philadelphia Police Department, and Get Healthy Philly.

- Key measures asked in the 2009-2014 ACS were measured in all census tracts that overlap the area within 1000 feet of the school.
- The PHMC survey data was calculated for 2010, 2012, and 2014 by measuring respondents within 4000 feet of a school (the larger buffer was chosen due to the survey's relatively low sample size.)
- Drug crimes were measured using public data released by the Philadelphia Police Department's part II narcotics offenses, and calculated by adding up the number of events within 1000 feet of each residence in the city. The average number of crimes per residence is then calculated within ½ mile of the school.
- Estimates from Get Healthy Philly (Philadelphia Department of Public Health) are used for areas of the city that have both high poverty (greater than 20% of the block is below the poverty line) and there is low or no access to healthy food within walking distance (half a mile).



***“This initiative will put us on the trajectory to build stronger children, stronger families, and stronger communities.”*** – Dr. Toni Damon, Principal



MAYOR'S OFFICE  
OF EDUCATION

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**PHILADELPHIA**

**Otis Hackney**

Chief Education Officer  
City of Philadelphia

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**Susan Gobreski**

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