

MARCH FOR CHILDREN & YOUTH MONTH PLAYBOOK



A Union of Professionals

#March4Youth
#CommunitySchools



Introduction

Over the last two decades the [Coalition for Community Schools](#) has been at the heart of the community schools movement providing a vehicle for equitable opportunities for students to thrive. With multiple challenges facing our children and youth at this moment in time-including racial tensions, gun violence, drug use, and other traumatic experiences-now more than ever we need to work together as one voice to counter these forces. Help us during March for Children & Youth Month to raise awareness and grow champions for our public schools including community schools, and the specific programs and funding streams that help young people learn and thrive.

In solidarity, this Playbook provides a platform to synchronize our advocacy concentrated across one month in a very powerful way.

Overview of March for Children & Youth Month by week

March 1-9: Twitter Storm

- March 1: Kick off advocacy month with live [Facebook LIVE](#) broadcast from a community school
- March 1-9: [Twitter and Facebook storm](#). Tweets will raise awareness of community schools; and advocate to members of Congress for strong federal funding for children and youth FY 18 and 19.

March 12-16: Public Schools Week

- Promote [Public Schools Week](#) and the sample tweets, press releases, etc. from the campaign
- Templates/sample language to email/call/meet with staff of members of Congress in their local district offices to build a relationship, ask your Senator/Representative to share a success story from your school/organization, and invite their DC staff to a Hill briefing March 16
- March 15: (Tentative): webinar hosted by the Coordinators Network on how coordinators can tell their community school story

March 19-24: Grow a champion (local or state level)

- Templates/sample language and tips to schedule and conduct a successful meeting with an elected official to raise their awareness and support for community schools. Twitter chat to share successes and champions
- Join the Institute for Educational Leadership and for a [‘March For Our Lives’](#) gun-control march in Washington.

March 26-30: Host a site visit

- Templates and tips to host a successful site visit for your elected officials. Post tweets, pictures and video of the site visit on social media, and invite local media to cover.

Week 1-March 1-9: Twitter Storm

Share your story by participating in a Twitter Storm to kick off March for Children & Youth Month. The purpose of this Twitter Storm is to:

- 1) Raise awareness to your elected officials at all levels of the power of the community schools strategy to help children and youth learn and thrive; and
- 2) Advocate to your members of Congress for strong federal funding for children and youth in the FY 2018 and 2019 budgets; and for supportive policies.

Actions

- 1) From March 1-9, tweet every day with these sample tweets. Make sure to use the hastags #CommunitySchools and #March4Youth when tweeting to elected officials. We invite you to craft your own tweets as well to share your own examples of how community schools help your children, youth, families, and communities; and certain federal programs that support your work
- 2) Reach out to one of your local or state elected officials to schedule a meeting the week of March 19-23 with the elected official or their staff. See more information under Week 3-March 19-23 for guidance. Also, see more information under Week 4 for guidance on preparing for a site visit.

Week 2-March 12-16: Public Schools Week

Participate in a national campaign titled Public Schools Week and led by the Coalition's partner AASA, the School Superintendents Association, along with several other national partners.

Why Public Schools Week? From our partner, AASA:

“At a time when education policy may be distracted from the rich history of our public schools and the role they play in preparing students to be productive adults, we want to encourage policymakers, national education organizations, school districts, parents, the media and other advocates of public education to promote the great things happening in our public schools. The events this week are intended to highlight the critical role public schools play as the bedrock of our civic society and their work to prepare students to be successful, contributing members of their local, national, and global communities.”

Actions:

- 1) Access this [Google drive](#) of resources to participate in Public Schools Week. There are many actions you can take, from tweeting to calling your members of Congress. We ask that you commit to tweeting using the sample tweets provided in the Google drive and the hashtag #PublicSchoolsWeek, especially during the Twitter Storm on March 15 from 1-3 pm EST.
- 2) Contact your local district offices of your U.S. Senators and Representative to build a relationship. When you visit or call, state that you are a constituent, describe how you are connected to public education, and that you are supporting a national campaign

called Public Schools Week. Share a success story from your school/organization and ask that your Senator/Representative share this story to celebrate Public Schools Week either through their Twitter account or on the House or Senate floor this week. (Be prepared to email a summary of the success story to make it easier for your Senator/Representative to share it). Also, invite your Senator/Representative's DC-based staff to a Hill briefing for Public Schools Week on March 16 from 10-11:00 am in Rayburn 2044. See more information on this Hill briefing below. *You can find the address and phone number of your members of Congress' district offices on their websites.*

- 3) From 10-11 a.m. in Rayburn 2044 on 3/16 AASA (the School Superintendents Association) will be hosting a panel titled "Understanding the funding streams that impact public school students" featuring:
Bruce Lesley, President, First Focus
Stan Collender, Executive Vice President at Qorvis MSLGROUP
Sharron Parrot, Senior Fellow and Senior Counselor, Center on Budget and Policy Priorities
Moderator: Lauren Camera, National Education Reporter U.S. News and World Report

Week 3-March 19-23: Grow a Champion (local or state level)

Meet with your local or state level elected officials about the impact and importance of your community school. The elected official could be a school board member, city councilor, county commissioner, mayor, state legislator, or governor.

Reach out to the elected official whom you think has the greatest potential to become a champion for community schools based on their track record/priorities/current support for community schools.

Actions:

- 1) Plan to reach out by the first week of March to request a meeting with the elected official or staff. See the Appendix for tips and templates for a successful outreach and meeting.
- 2) Participate in a Twitter chat the week of March 19-23 (exact date TBA) to share your story of success and community school champions with other advocates across the country.

Week 4-March 26-30: Host a Community School Site Visit

Cap off this month of advocacy with a powerful action: hosting a community school site visit for elected officials. Reach out to your elected officials at the local, state, or federal level. Congress is on recess this week so your Senators or Representatives could be available for a site visit.

Action: By the first week of March, invite your elected officials to a community school site visit. Schedule the visit for the week of March 19-23 if possible; if not, then try to schedule it

for as close to this week as possible. If the elected official cannot attend, ask if a staff member can. Be sure to let them know if the media is coming. Tweet pictures and video of the visit using the hashtags #CommunitySchools and #March4Youth to share your great advocacy. See the Appendix for tips and templates for a successful outreach and site visit

Appendix

Resources for Action Week of March 19-23: Scheduling and Conducting a Successful Meeting with your Elected Official

Tips for Scheduling a Meeting with your Elected Official

- Contact the elected official's office and ask to speak with the appointment secretary/scheduler.
- Explain who you represent (community school/organization) and the reason you want a meeting with the representative (to share with them the positive impact your community school/organization is having for children/youth, families and communities). Ask the scheduler how you can arrange a meeting and request a meeting the week of March 19-23 if possible.
- If your elected official is unavailable for a meeting, consider requesting a meeting with the appropriate staff. Staff of Elected Officials have significant influence on an elected official's priorities and can relay your information and become an advocate for your work to your elected officials.
- If you would like to invite the elected official to a site visit the following week (March 26-30), also mention this to the scheduler.

Tips for Preparing for a Meeting with your Elected Official

- If possible, invite one or two more people to attend the meeting who can speak first hand to the positive impact of community schools: a student, parent, teacher, community partner, etc
- Prepare talking points, or items you want to make certain you share with your elected official. This should include a brief overview of your community school/organization, anecdotes and statistics demonstrating impact, and a specific policy ask.

- Determine your “ask” for your elected official. Is it more funding for community schools or for related programs, legislation, or even raising with them certain barriers to success that could be addressed through policy or funding? Also invite them to come by and visit your community school? Be very clear and specific about your ask and practice stating this ask before the meeting.
- Prepare any materials to share that will be helpful for your elected official and their staff to better understand the impact of your community school/organization.

Tips for Conducting a Successful Meeting with your Elected Official

- Arrive early to get settled, chat with your elected officials’ staff and review your talking points.
- At the start of the meeting, thank the elected official for their time to talk with you.
- State up front what you’d like to discuss, and what your “ask” is (see above).
- Ask your elected official how familiar they are with the community school strategy. Then give a brief overview of community schools based on their level of understanding. Feel free to use some of the Coalition’s messaging.
- Describe your community school/initiative/organization. How many children/youth and families are impacted? Share your successes, including one or two stories and some data/statistics on things like attendance, family engagement, academic achievement, participation in out of school time activities, etc.
- Pause to see if your elected official has any questions or comments.
- Share your “ask” with your elected official. If they say yes to your ask, express your thanks and discuss any next steps. If they say I’m not sure/maybe, ask them if they have any questions you can help clarify in order for them to support your ask. If they say no/not right now, ask them what is preventing them from being able to support your ask. Listen carefully to their response and see if you can address any of their concerns/points.
- Thank them again for the meeting and say you look forward to staying in touch to share more about your work and how it’s helping children/youth, families and communities.
- Personally invite them to your scheduled site visit, or on a site visit in the future if you do not have a site visit planned.

- Within a few days of the meeting, email your elected official and/or the relevant staff person and thank them again for the meeting, and offer yourself as a resource moving forward to learn more about community schools.
- Remember: this is the beginning of a relationship that you will continue to strengthen!

Resources for Action Week of March 26-30: Scheduling and Hosting a Successful Site Visit

The following steps provide a guide to schedule and carry out a successful site visit:

✓ Step 1

- Prepare to contact your elected officials: It's up to you which elected officials you want to target: federal, state, and/or local. You can invite all or some of them, depending on the level of attention you want to be able to give them. Prioritize the elected official(s) who demonstrate the most potential to be a champion for community schools.

✓ Step 2

- Contact your elected officials: Call their office.
- Tell the scheduler/legislative aide that you would like to schedule a tour of your community school for the policy maker to attend.
- Offer the week of March 26-30 as your preferred dates. Give them the range of time however, emphasize the most important moment especially if media is going to be present. If your elected official is not available, see if a staff person can make the visit instead. If neither your elected official nor a staff member can do the week of March 26-30, offer a few other dates around this time for a personal visit.
- Keep in mind that elected officials' schedules can change without notice. Several days before your scheduled visit, call to confirm the site visit and have alternate dates in case you need to reschedule.
- Remember also that sometimes an elected official will not be able to participate in the visit, but a staffer will. Staffers are responsible for sharing information and making recommendations to elected officials. They play important roles, and it can be very impactful having a staffer participate in a site visit as well.

✓ Step 3

- Before the visit, identify youth, parents, program staff, school officials and community partners who would be convincing spokespeople for your school/initiative/organization.
- Once you have identified the spokespeople to represent your community school, give them any background material you have on the policy maker so

they will feel comfortable meeting them. This is a good opportunity to share the schedule of the site visit and clarify their roles.

- Determine your “ask” for your elected official. Is it more funding for community schools or for related programs, legislation, or even raising with them certain barriers to success that could be addressed through policy or funding? Be very clear and specific about your ask, and be sure that what you show them and talk about on the site visit connects to this ask.

✓ **Step 4**

- Congratulations! It’s the day of the site visit.
- Have a fact sheet on your school to give attendees. Include information that demonstrates the reach and impact your community school has on children, youth, their families, and the surrounding community.
- Take pictures of the visit and post on social media including Twitter. Use the hashtags #CommunitySchools and #March4Youth in your tweets so we can know about your site visit. Consider inviting the local media as well to cover the site visit. Ask the staff of your elected official if they are comfortable with this. It’s also likely that a communications staff of your elected official may attend.
- After the visit ends, send a thank you email to your elected official for attending the site visit and offer yourself as a resource moving forward for learning more about community schools.

Suggested Timeline to Prepare for a Site Visit

Time Prior to Visit	Activity
3-4 weeks	Invite Elected Official/Staff to visit your community school the week of March 26-30. Call the Elected Official's office and follow up with an email. Follow up with a call if you don't hear back in a few days. If a visit the week of March 26-30 is not possible, aim for a date soon before or after this week.
3 weeks	Invite parents, community members, school officials, and youth to participate in the site visit and explain the specific roles you'd like them to play. Explain the purpose of the visit and share a little background information on the elected official and his/her priorities to prepare all participants. Work with the principal to ensure the visit minimizes disruption to learning that day.
2 weeks	Develop detailed schedule for the visit. Ask principal to inform entire school staff so they are prepared. Invite the media if your elected official/staff is comfortable with that.
1 week	Finalize program agenda and materials to share with the Elected Official/staff. See below for a sample information sheet of your school that you can prepare. Meet with other people who will participate in the visit (principal, coordinator, teachers, parents, students) to review their roles, talking points, and address any questions or concerns. Call your Elected Official's office to confirm visit.
Day of Visit	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have a fact sheet available to distribute. Don't forget to have your camera ready to take pictures. ● Walk the tour yourself in advance to make sure everything is in order and that you deliver your intended message.

Sample Schedule – Day of Site Visit

Time	Activity
10:00 AM	Elected Official/Staff arrives at the community school and is greeted by Principal, Program Coordinator, or other lead host.
10:05-10:15 AM	Lead the Elected Official/Staff on a tour of the school. Choose areas that demonstrate the impact of your community school on the academic, social, health and well-being of your students.
10:15-10:30 AM	Introduce Elected Official/Staff to students. Ask them to talk about their experience at the community school.
10:30-10:45 AM	Facilitate a discussion between Elected Official/Staff and school staff and parents. Ask school staff and parents to share how the programs and initiatives housed at the community school helps their students/children/families.
10:45-11:00 AM	<p>Ask the school Principal and Resource Coordinator to talk about school- wide improvement attributable to the community school. Ask the resource coordinator to explain their vital role to lead coordination at the school site.</p> <p>Follow up with a thank you email.</p>

Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove in Baltimore, MD



Benjamin Franklin High School at Masonville Cove in Baltimore moved from one of the city's lowest performing high schools to one of Baltimore's top choice high schools between 2011 and 2015. From an early childhood education program for parenting teens to workforce development for community members, a network of over 75 partners customize responses to needs presented by students and families. Students clocked more than 17,000 service learning hours last school

year and are credited with stopping the building of a waste incinerator near their campus through community organizing.

Demographics	Results
<p>Location: Baltimore, MD Grade Levels: 9-12 Number of Students: 437</p> <p>Race/Ethnicity</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● African American 51% ● Asian American 1% ● Caucasian 25% ● Hispanic 23% ELL ● Students: 15% Special ● Education: 27% ● Free/Reduced Lunch: 85% 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● From 2011 to 2015 BFHS moved from one of Baltimore’s lowest performing high schools to one of Baltimore’s top choice high schools ● Students posted approximately 17,000 service learning hours in school year 2013-14 ● Students organized to stop the building a waste incinerator to be built less than a mile from the school ● 60 families have been prevented from becoming homeless ● 89% of students indicated they learned a lot at school ● 95% of parents would recommend the school to others