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The Emerging Community School Concept in USA

From their colonial inception in America, schools have been connected to the communities they serve. As early as the 1640s, the leaders of Massachusetts colony legislated that towns' parents provide a teacher for the education of their offspring. During recent years, there is an emerging development of the community school. The community school serves as an open system, one in which the school seeks linkages with available services and activities in the surrounding community. Desired and available services tend to vary from school to school because each community is different and each school is distinct. Such services include those from social agencies, military and the police, legal services, connections to faith-based institutions and institutions of higher education, cultural museums, health services, and community businesses. During the 1980s and 1990s, the majority of schools implementing the community concept were those in less economically advantaged areas.

The community school concept offers a different picture of a school than the typical American school of the past 100 years. In a vivid description of schools in the second half of the 20th Century, Goodlad (1984) in *A Place Called School* depicts professional entities with front doors and classroom doors closed to the surrounding communities. This closed institutional approach is changing to one in which parents, businesses, social agencies, churches, and other groups increasingly operate in expanding circles, rather than a linear bureaucratic or top-down structure, with the public schools. Schools serve as a hub for these partnership services to children, youth, and families because children are required to be there for academic development. The number of school-community partnerships nationally is soaring as school leaders capitalize on the potential benefits that can be gleaned from bringing schools, parents, and community agencies together to help students academic and social achievement.