STATEWIDE

Community Partnership School Leaders Respond to Impact of COVID-19

Florida's Community Partnership Schools serve students and families who may struggle with food, shelter, mental health issues and job insecurity, and these challenges are being amplified by the COVID-19 crisis.

Community Partnership Schools have the "muscle" to address challenges caused by the crisis thanks to well-established partner networks and a dedicated CPS team. Each CPS team includes a director and staff who are now working virtually to meet the needs of their students and families.

"Community Partnership School director leadership is needed now more than ever," said Amy Ellis, director of the UCF Center for Community Schools. "They're adjusting to meet this new environment with innovative approaches and an even deeper resolve for togetherness."

She and her team also have shifted behavioral health counseling for students from in-person to telehealth sessions. They’re shifting Big Sister Big Brother mentoring for students to a virtual platform as well.

At Edward H. White Academy of Leadership in Jacksonville, CPS Director Remonte Green said he has "redeployed" resources. This includes using drive-throughs to distribute laptops and food to families, telehealth services for behavioral health sessions provided by the Children's Home Society of Florida, and a mobile unit for healthcare services. He uses a variety of tools to communicate about resources, including mass emails, Google Docs, Zoom and Skype.

Knowing the Community

"A lot of our families are living in immediate crisis," said Meagan Smithyman, CPS director for Sulphur Springs K-8 in Tampa. She knew one way to reduce stress would be to offer child care services to families. So Smithyman and a school partner located a nearby community space where they started hosting small groups of five-to-six students for sessions that included academics, physical activity, social-emotional learning, and a meal and a snack.

(continued on next page)
They used the sessions (when opened) to model healthy practices for community members. “We took temperatures before they came in, practiced hand washing, and ensured parents were sanitizing before they touched anything,” Smithyman said.

At Jones High in Orlando, CPS Director Tanika Cooper Bango has focused on technology. Students already had laptops, but some needed internet services or laptop repairs, she said. “We’ve been connecting them to resources, making sure teachers have what they need, and getting everyone acclimated to what virtual learning looks like.”

CPS Director Anna-Kay Hutchison at Sabal Palm Elementary in Tallahassee said her students “don’t have the ability to use a virtual platform for learning.” So she and her team are working to have school-work packets mailed to families, and they’re “including a CPS flier so they know we’re a resource.”

Collaborative Leaders
Last fall, Tina Baker, CPS director for Keystone Heights Junior/Senior High in Keystone Heights, worked closely with her CPS cabinet members “to establish a really strong community effort” that would connect low-income families with services. Their efforts resulted in the “Keystone SafetyNet Alliance,” Baker said, and now “we’re running on all four cylinders,” providing food to scores of Keystone students and families with a need.

In addition, Baker is working with CPS staff members to share information about wellness services and to keep homeless students informed. “My principal was so relieved,” she said. “It was one thing taken off his plate so he could focus on technology and getting teachers online.”

LaToya Jennings-Lopez is the CPS director at Howard Bishop Middle School in Gainesville, where many of the students live in nearby apartment complexes. She knew a lot of these students would need meals during the school building closure.

Jennings-Lopez compiled a list of the apartment office managers and their hours of operations and suggested to her principal: “Let’s do a food drop -off to the [apartment] front offices and then the people who live out there can go and pick it up.” She also suggested using this approach to drop off homework packets for the students.

Anticipating the Needs
The Webster School is located in St. Augustine on Florida’s east coast and was hit by back-to-back hurricanes a few years ago, said its CPS director, Alexius Ferguson. He helped connect people to resources then and knew the same help would be needed now but “done differently.”

“My team and I put together a resource guide to close the information gap — and the opportunity gap — for our family members and even our teachers,” Ferguson said. It identifies websites and contacts for a wide variety of food, learning, healthcare and other community resources. The team distributed the guide using email, Dodo messenger and the Webster PTO Facebook page, and Ferguson said he has heard it’s quite helpful.
Registered Community Partnership School Sites

UCF-CERTIFIED

- Evans High, Orlando (Orange)
- C. A. Weis Elementary, Pensacola (Escambia)
- Endeavour Elementary, Cocoa (Brevard)
- OCPS Academic Center for Excellence (OCPS ACE), Orlando (Orange)
- Gulfside Elementary, Holiday (Pasco)

IMPLEMENTATION SITES

- Mort Elementary, Tampa (Hillsborough)
- Edward H. White Academy of Leadership, Jacksonville (Duval)
- Sulphur Springs K-8, Tampa (Hillsborough)
- Howard Bishop Middle, Gainesville (Alachua)
- South Woods Elementary, Elkton (St. Johns)
- Webster Elementary (or “The Webster School”), St. Augustine (St. Johns)
- Wilkinson Jr. High, Middleburg (Clay)
- Crystal Lake Elementary, Lakeland (Polk)
- Keystone Heights Junior/Senior High, Keystone Heights (Clay)
- Sabal Palm Elementary, Tallahassee (Leon)

PLANNING SITES

- Arthur & Polly Mays Conservatory of the Arts, Miami (Miami-Dade)
- College Park Elementary, Ocala (Marion)
- Dodgertown Elementary, Vero Beach (Indian River)
- Eccleston Elementary, Orlando (Orange)
- NEW: Franklin Park Elementary, Ft. Myers (Lee)
- Gulfstream Academy and Early Learning Center, Hallandale Beach (Broward)
- Homestead Middle, Homestead (Miami-Dade)
- Jones High, Orlando (Orange)
- Manatee Elementary, Bradenton (Manatee)
- Miami Southridge Senior High, Miami (Miami-Dade)
- Orange Park High, Orange Park (Clay)

Community Partnership Schools are designed to maximize success both inside and outside the classroom and enhance the overall quality of life for underserved communities.

DUVAL AND ORANGE COUNTIES

Community Partnership School Students Are State Senate Pages

Four students from Evans High School in Orlando and one from Edward H. White Academy of Leadership in Jacksonville were selected for the 2020 Senate Page Program in Tallahassee. The prestigious program has a limited number of slots and a high volume of applicants from across the state. The pages spent a week at the state capital meeting with legislators, going on tours of the Senate, delivering mail, learning about the legislative process and participating in mock sessions where they role-played as senators.

Above: (left to right) Evans students Howard Williams, Daphnica Pierre and Dortazia Charles with Florida Sen. Bill Galvano. Below left: senior Bervens Belfinor from Evans. Below right: Ed White senior Antonio Grant was voted president of the 2019-20 Senate Page Program.

IMPACT!

In Lakeland, Crystal Lake Elementary’s clinic, operated by partner Central Florida Health Care, has served more than 1,300 community members and students since May 2019.

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HILLSBOROUGH AND ORANGE COUNTIES

Asst. Secretary of Education
Frank Brogan Tours CPS Sites

U.S. Asst. Secretary of Education Frank Brogan’s interest in school transformation led him to visit three Community Partnership Schools — Evans High School and OCPS Academic Center for Excellence in Orlando and Mort Elementary in Tampa — in February.

Top photo: Brogan (holding shirt) and the team at Mort Elementary
Left photo: Brogan (center) with UCF Center for Community Schools Asst. Director Donnie Hale (left) and OCPS ACE CPS Director Shannon Currie (right)
Right photo: Brogan (right) with students at Evans High School

STATEWIDE

Welcome New Community Partnership School Directors

The UCF Center for Community Schools recently welcomed 10 new Community Partnership School directors to the statewide network. They gathered March 6 in Orlando for the center’s Director Learning Exchange.

Left to right: Merchon Green, Dodgertown Elementary, Vero Beach Kea Cherfrere, Eccleston Elementary, Orlando Joselin Padron-Rasines, Gulfstream Academy and Early Learning Center, Hallandale Beach Renita Houston, Manatee Elementary, Bradenton Lauren Pfanenstiel, Orange Park High, Orange Park Angela Jackson, Franklin Park Elementary, Fort Myers Jason Jeanty, Arthur & Polly Mays Conservatory for the Arts, Miami Juan Amador, Miami Southridge Senior High, Miami Oscar Munoz, Homestead Middle, Homestead Tanika Cooper Bango, Jones High, Orlando

STATEWIDE

Center Capabilities Expand With New Staff Members On Board

The UCF Center for Community Schools has added four new staff members to help the center better serve the schools across the state. (Left to right) Donnie Hale, Ed.D., is assistant director of the center. Alex Gregory, Robert Palmer and Alyson Watson are bolstering the center in health care, education and university-assistance program management. Meet them here:
https://tinyurl.com/smaejlc
https://tinyurl.com/syksygw
Did You Know?

♦ In Orange County, there were big turnouts at OCPS ACE for MLK Day of Service Jan. 20, where students and partners beautified their community (with special thanks to Volunteer UCF, Habitat for Humanity, Parramore Kidz Zone and the City of Orlando) and at Evans for Trojan Service Week March 2-6.

♦ Ed White (Duval) partnered with Jacksonville’s Save Our Sons mentoring group and sent a group of male students to the Save Our Sons summit Jan. 24. The students engaged with local business professionals to discuss college and trade careers, business opportunities, and mental health empowerment.

♦ On Feb. 10, The Webster School (St. Johns) in St. Augustine had an official ribbon cutting for a new basketball court, thanks to the school district’s maintenance crew, Victoria Long from St. Johns Volunteers! and John Eaton from Flagler Health+.

♦ More than 250 attended Endeavour’s (Brevard) Girls to Women “Paint Your Future” event March 5. Among others, sections included clothing, shoes and accessories, fingernail painting, an empowerment video and food from Chick-Fil-A. All students painted a tile for the school’s butterfly garden.

PASCO COUNTY

Gulfside Elementary Earns UCF CPS Certification

The UCF Center for Community Schools conducted a certification readiness assessment at Gulfside Jan. 29-30.

Congratulations to Gulfside Elementary in Holiday! The school became the fifth UCF-Certified Community Partnership School in Florida Feb. 7.

Gulfside was established as a Community Partnership School in 2014-15. The school has been supported by committed partners and a highly invested district, principal and CPS director. The partners include Pasco County Schools, which gave $200,000 to complete the renovation of the school’s Hub. Another highlight: The school has multiple healthcare partners, which work well together to provide medical, dental and behavioral health services and educational programming focused on nutrition, fitness and produce gardening.

HILLSBOROUGH COUNTY

Sulphur Springs K-8 Brings Back, Energizes Its PTA

For the first time in four years, Sulphur Springs K-8 in Tampa has a Parent Teacher Association. In January, PTA officers were elected by more than 30 voting members and sworn in. The acting president and vice president have students in both middle and elementary grades, and they participate with the Community Partnership School Leadership Cabinet as parent representatives.

The focus of the PTA this year is to continue to engage parents, ensure that students are supported to reach their potential and do a bit of fundraising. Continued parent engagement efforts aim to provide volunteer opportunities that align with the school’s mission and interest of the community. Funds raised will support student academic success and sponsor family engagement events like the “Princess for a Day” ball.
DUVAL, ESCAMBIA, LEON, ORANGE AND ST. JOHNS COUNTIES

Success Stories Grow, Thanks to Community Partners

**Food Pantry Opens**

OCPS ACE in Orlando hosted the grand opening of The Lion’s Share Pantry Feb. 13, after serving more than 40 families since a soft opening in September.

During the soft opening more than 1,126 pounds of food were distributed to residents of the Parramore community. The school sends a special thank you to Second Harvest Food Bank and for the generous donation of $10,000 from the Ustler Group of Companies, Velocity RED and Allen Morris Group to keep the pantry stocked.

**Free Vision Screenings Bring Vital Enhancement to Students’ Lives**

Poor vision hurts academic success. That’s why three Community Partnership Schools — Sabal Palm in Tallahassee, Ed White in Jacksonville and C. A. Weis in Pensacola — held free vision screenings.

Ed White (left photo) worked with Vision is Priceless to screen 57.

About 75 percent of them received free eyeglasses.

Sabal Palm (right two photos) partnered with Miami Lighthouse and did 50 comprehensive exams on their vision bus. Thirty students (60 percent) needed and received eyeglasses free of charge.

At C.A. Weis, optometrist Mary Charbonneau and the Community Health Northwest Florida optometry team provide vision screenings each Friday, with full exams and free eyeglasses given later if needed.

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**In The News**

*Florida’s Community Partnership Schools continue to attract media attention.*

*Click on the links to read the full stories.*

**Dec. 11, 2019**

*Orange Park High School will adopt the Community Partnership School™ model with partnerships among Children’s Home Society of Florida, Orange Park Medical Center, Palms Medical Group, the Clay County School District and St. Johns River State College, reported in Clay Today.

https://tinyurl.com/wnxqjrv

**Dec. 20, 2019**

*Crystal Lake Elementary is making strides as Polk County’s first Community Partnership School, with Movie Nights, a health clinic, a growing food program and more.

https://tinyurl.com/tdopshe

**Feb. 4**

*Gulfside Elementary offers healthcare, clothes, dinners — and hope for other Pasco County schools, per the Tampa Bay Times.

https://tinyurl.com/yx2frqz5

**March 9**

*Preventative and routine medical services continue to expand at Crystal Lake Elementary, including flu vaccines and dental hygiene exams.

https://tinyurl.com/snw4aq3

**Behavioral Change**

For one child at The Webster School in St. Augustine, behavior issues, including throwing chairs, began in kindergarten and accelerated as he continued into first grade and beyond.

Through Webster’s Community Partnership School, he started seeing a Children’s Home Society of Florida counselor, and Community Partnership School Director Alexius Ferguson matched him up with a mentor. “We connected the dots and got him some of the services he needed,” he said.

The student’s new coping skills have made a positive difference that everyone can see, especially his mother. “It took a team of people to come in and sit down with him and make him see, aside from his mom, that people care,” she said.