Community Schools Partner to Supply Hurricane Relief

Multiple schools in Florida remain closed following the devastation of Hurricane Ian. Yet community schools across the state never stopped the vital work of supporting their students, families and communities.

As the storm made its way to Florida's coast, Community Partnership Schools offered guidance for hurricane preparedness and served as shelters for displaced residents. Once the hurricane passed, these community schools worked together with local organizations — including those through core partnerships with nonprofits, universities/colleges, school districts and healthcare organizations — to begin recovery efforts.

Located in the heart of Lee County, which was hardest hit by the storm, Community Partnership Schools Fort Myers Middle Academy (Lee) and Franklin Park Elementary (Lee) mobilized a network of partners to deliver much-needed aid to those affected. Thanks to their core partnership with United Way of Lee, Hendry, and Glades, the community schools will receive additional support through the SWFL Hurricane Relief Fund.

If you are interested in helping our Fort Myers Community Partnership Schools, go to collaboratory.org.

With sustainable support systems and partnerships built into the Community Partnership Schools’ model, communities are better prepared to assess the unique and changing needs of students and families, and address those needs with an eye on the futures of children and the community.

While the storm has passed, Hurricane Ian will have significant impacts on students and their communities beyond initial recovery efforts. Not only have students lost instructional time, but other factors will deeply impact students’ ability to learn. Losing access to food, water or housing, facing the loss of a loved one, trauma from a devastating event, along with other stressors, affect a student’s ability to reach their fullest potential. This is why community schools are integral in helping students and families to thrive.

Find resources and donate using this Hurricane Ian Resource Guide (updated regularly) at bit.ly/3VdcSUu.

Our thoughts are with all Florida communities impacted by Hurricane Ian, especially those in southwest Florida who were most severely impacted by the storm. I want to acknowledge our Community Partnership Schools for serving as the lynchpins of ready-to-mobilize community offerings otherwise unavailable in these times of Florida tragedy.

Specifically, I want to shout out our directors (and assistant directors). CPS directors are champions – meeting difficulty with determination, opposition with insight, need with empathy. In times of pandemics and major Florida hurricanes, CPS directors are our heroes – working hand-in-hand with networks of partnerships already formed, strengthened and sustained, so essential, basic needs of students and families are addressed.

Community Partnership School Directors and Assistant Directors,
You are appreciated. On the heels of national Community School Director/Coordinator Appreciation Week, I want to personally thank each and every one of you for your work. Your tireless efforts matter, not only in your school and community, but statewide. You make life better for students, families, communities and educators at your schools, but you also support each other in a way that makes the whole better – raising all Community Partnership Schools to higher levels.

We see you, and we thank you for continuing to actively embodying our CPS slogan: “Many are we, thriving as one.”

Dr. Amy Ellis, Director
UCF Center for Community Schools
Student Voice in Community Schools

Newly elected House of Courage President Carmelo Green shares his poster for Mort Elementary Student Advisory Council elections.

Through Student Leadership Councils (SLCs) and other programming, community schools in Florida are elevating students’ voices and empowering students to lead.

According to the Youth Voice Guide developed by the Institute of Educational Leadership’s Coalition for Community Schools, “Building youth leaders cultivates more inclusive decision-making in schools and helps to activate the next generation of leaders in our communities.”

During the 2022-23 school year, the SLC at Mort Elementary (Hillsborough) met weekly with the school staff and principal. Serving as ambassadors for the school and their peers, students also participated in a certification focus group, school videos and tours.

Carmelo Green, who was recently elected as president of the House of Courage, says students who ran for student council made posters and gave speeches. “While I still get butterflies before giving a speech, I’m excited to be the one who leads our meetings and school chant. I want to be a good influence and the person you can rely on for help.”

At Sabal Palm Elementary (Leon), the SLC helped with Murdock’s Market, stocking the food pantry with groceries and completing orders for families. Students met regularly where they learned more about the Community Partnerships Schools™ model, along with services offered at the school. In addition, council members visited the Florida Capitol and debated a mock bill in Senate chambers.

Through the Elite Ambassadors program, C.A. Weis Elementary (Escambia) offers an enrichment program focused on building social skills, enhancing community involvement, and maintaining healthy self-esteem for boys. Through this program, students learned social skills, including how to advocate for themselves. Since the program began, students have shown leadership and teamwork, along with an increase in positive behaviors and self-confidence. The program inspired this year’s Exquisite Ambassadors, a similar program offered for girls.

Community schools support the needs of the whole child with resources that redefine the whole child with support, enrichment and community partnerships. Through collaborations between students, parents, school staff, partners and community leaders, community schools in Florida are cultivating our nation’s next generation of leaders.

Fort Myers Middle Academy (Lee), in collaboration with the YMCA of SWFL, started Ripple Explorers, an after-school program offering activities like dog safety training, reading with therapy dogs, and a nutrition class.

At Sulphur Springs K-8 (Hillsborough), community organizations pulled together resources to build the Out of this World Incentive Room, where elementary students celebrate achievements in good behavior, exceptional attendance or meeting academic goals. Learn more at bit.ly/3fmrGbY.

Core partners United Way of Central Florida, Central Florida Health Care, Inc., Southeastern University and Heartland for Children held a school supply giveaway to ensure students at Crystal Lake Elementary (Polk) had supplies for a successful school year.

White City Elementary (St. Lucie) started Girls on the Run, an after-school program with curriculum to discuss important life skills while engaging in fun runs and other movement activities.

At Edward H. White Academy of Leadership (Duval), Girls Inc. brought in the Jaguars Foundation Director of Culture and Inclusion to speak to girls about local careers and opportunities in the sports and entertainment field.

Parker Elementary (Bay) received new refrigerators fully stocked with food and snacks to offer students positive behavior incentives and rewards thanks to donations from Lowe’s and other community members.

Twenty-five girls from Miami Southridge Senior High (Miami-Dade) joined the Young Ladies of Standard Club, where they selected teacher mentors they admired and identified as positive influences on their lives.

At Orange Park High (Clay), the Florida Blue Foundation provided Children’s Home Society of Florida almost $11,000 for mental health counseling and education programs for the school.

About 50 students each week received food through the Blessings in a Backpack program at The Webster School (St. Johns).

Doddertown Elementary (Indian River) partnered with Treasure Coast Girls Coalition and Boys to Men to Greatness, both after-school mentorship programs that provide students with mentors, academic support, enrichment and community engagement opportunities.

Gulfside Elementary (Pasco) secured $46,815 of support through monetary and in-kind donations from the YMCA Summer Camp.

Certification Corner

Congratulations to Wilkinson Junior High (Clay), Sabal Palm Elementary (Leon) and Keystone Junior/Senior High (Clay) for meeting each of the 12 rigorous standards to better serve students, families and their communities.

UCF certification represents years of intentional, dedicated work to build partnerships that align to student success and wellbeing — and all three Community Partnership Schools met the challenge.

Wilkinson Junior High

Keystone Junior/Senior High

Sabal Palm Elementary

DID YOU KNOW?

\[\text{Certification Corner}\]

\[\text{UCF-CERTIFIED COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP SCHOOLS}\]

\[\text{DID YOU KNOW?}\]

\[\text{Celebrating 3 Newly Certified CPS Sites}\]

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Data & Changing Needs of Students

To personalize supportive programming through evidence-based decision making, community school leaders need student-level data to analyze the impact of programming on individual students and families. A signed Data Sharing Agreement will allow community school directors to access meaningful data to understand the changing needs of students and families. With these insights, community schools will be better equipped to offer quality, coordinated and responsive services to their school communities.

According to a community school principal familiar with the data management system, “These reports provide robust information that can inform conversations at the community school, so we can find the right combination of services to move the achievement needle forward.”

A small selection of pilot community schools took part in a roll out of the data management system in FY2021-22, laying the foundation for future community school sites across the state. Community schools in these districts have access to student-level data through a secure, web-based platform called Learning Circle, which helps to collect, analyze and report on student, family and community engagement data. In addition, Learning Circle offers an Early Warning function, which helps identify students who may need support services as those needs arise.

Six school districts (St. Johns, Escambia, Lee, Leon, Indian River and Alachua counties) have signed Data Sharing Agreements, and more are planning to sign, expanding the positive impact on students, families and communities.

Principal & Director Institute

The UCF Center for Community Schools held the Principal and Director Institute in June at the Celeste Hotel, the UCF Center’s largest in-person event of the year. The institute brought together Community Partnership School (CPS) directors and principals from across the state to exchange best practices, lessons learned, and innovative strategies to better meet the social, emotional, and academic needs of students and their families.

The day before the institute officially began, directors and principals had a chance to tour any one of four community schools in the area, including Jones High (Orange), Eccleston Elementary (Orange), OCPS ACE (Orange) and Evans High (Orange).

The next day, the institute kicked off with discussions between each principal-director team to identify successes and challenges related to collaboration between their roles. Following the discussion, a panel of principal-director teams shared their own challenges and recipes for success as dynamic duos.

After lunch, Children’s Home Society of Florida shared approaches to increasing teacher engagement with the work of community schools. Principal-director teams continued the conversation in breakout rooms to discuss expanding their reach to teachers, feeder schools and the community.

Following the previous day’s institute, the UCF Center held the Director’s Institute to offer director’s an opportunity to reflect on the previous day and focus on the topic of certification. During this half-day gathering, directors from UCF-Certified Community Partnership Schools shared lessons learned from their certification experience, followed by questions from directors at implementation and planning sites related to their upcoming certification. In the final session, directors learned about approaches taken by specific CPS sites to address certification challenges, including ways to increase teacher retention, university partner involvement, and student representation. Mark your calendars for Friday, February 3, 2023 for the Partner Institute, where all core partners will gather to strengthen collaborations in support of their community schools.
Transition to FAST

What is FAST? At the start of the school year, the state began implementing the Florida Assessment of Student Thinking (FAST), a new progress monitoring system aligned to the state’s academic standards for grades pre-k through 10.

The UCF Center provides support to advance community schools by offering high quality and relevant research, best practices and informational resources. To help with the transition from FSA to FAST, the UCF Center’s technical assistance team developed a webinar for community school professionals. Watch the FAST Webinar at you.tube/IViAtbNUJc.