In 2013, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District and United Way of Greater Cleveland launched the community wraparound strategy, which uses schools as hubs for providing support to students, families, and residents in the city’s highest-need neighborhoods. This document reports on key findings from the program’s first five years. It is a condensed version of the full report, available online at wrap4CLEkids.org.

Cleveland’s wraparound schools follow a structure that has been supported by the National Center for Community Schools. It places students, families, and communities at the center of a network of support. “Wrapping around” them are professionals and organizations who help meet their needs — whether academic, social, or emotional.

As of the 2017–18 school year, there were 25 community wraparound schools in Cleveland, all located in neighborhoods where high concentrations of poverty have interfered with students’ ability to achieve academic success. A network of 16 nonprofit agencies oversee wraparound services in these schools, and each wraparound school has a full-time site coordinator. Private and public investors financially support the work.
Cleveland’s wraparound strategy has four main goals, with specific data measurements attached. Since the wraparound program began in 2013, schools have seen substantial improvement across these measures. Gaps between wraparound and non-wraparound schools have also narrowed significantly, helping wraparound students remain on pace with their peers academically, socially, and emotionally.

1. STUDENTS ATTEND SCHOOL EVERY DAY ON-TIME AND READY TO LEARN

One of the wraparound strategy’s central focuses is to make sure families have the transportation, child care, and warm clothing they need to make the daily trip to school. Since the current wraparound strategy began, student attendance in wraparound schools has risen, particularly at the high school level.

The wraparound strategy also prioritizes decreasing chronic absenteeism, or the proportion of students missing 10 or more days per school year. Wraparound high schools posted a dramatic improvement in this area, while wraparound K–8 schools saw a more modest improvement.

2. STUDENTS ARE ACTIVELY INVOLVED IN LEARNING AND THEIR COMMUNITY

Students must also have favorable conditions for learning in order to achieve academic success and reduce the chances they will drop out of school. To gauge how students view their school conditions, CMSD regularly surveys students on four measures: safety, support from adults (i.e., teachers and faculty), academic challenge, and perceptions of peers’ social and emotional learning skills. Wraparound schools have seen improvement across all four measures.
3. FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES INCREASE INVOLVEMENT IN CHILDREN’S EDUCATION, AND

4. SCHOOLS ARE ENGAGED WITH FAMILIES AND COMMUNITIES

Without the support and presence of their families and communities, students are unlikely to perform to the best of their academic abilities. Family and community engagement is measured in two ways. The first is the number of school-hosted family and community programs (such as food markets and activities linked to student learning); the second is the number of participants who attended those programs. On both measures, wraparound schools have seen dramatic increases since the strategy began.

The community wraparound strategy has also started to produce promising academic results. At the K–8 level, the Third Grade Reading Guarantee is a program to identify students from kindergarten through grade 3 who are behind in reading. Wraparound schools showing impressive numbers include Kenneth Clement Boys’ Leadership Academy, with 100 percent of 3rd graders passing the test two years in a row (2016–17 and 2017–18); Fullerton School of Academics, showing a 47 percent increase in the number of students passing the test since 2013; and Michael R. White Elementary School, with a 19 percent increase since 2013.

Graduation rate is a central factor indicating academic improvement at the high school level. In 2013, the graduation rate at wraparound schools was 57 percent, compared with nearly 78 percent at non-wraparound schools. By 2017, the gap had narrowed, with wraparound schools posting a graduation rate of 60 percent compared with the non-wraparound rate of 79 percent.
A Relationship Built on Presence

Brian Webster has become a talented reader of faces.

As site coordinator for Anton Grdina Elementary School in the Kinsman neighborhood, he sees hundreds of students and parents every day. But one parent, a mother of two in her early 20s, kept catching his eye. She never smiled. Not even once.

Experience told him not to ask her directly what was wrong — at least not right away. He knew such questioning could be viewed as intrusive. Instead, he simply made sure to be around a lot when she came by, in case she ever wanted to talk.

He also gave her two sons plenty of attention. He praised them for consistent attendance, joined them for lunches in the cafeteria, made sure they had access to tutoring when they needed it.

After a few months, the mother, Dianna Hogue, finally approached him. “You’re the bald-headed man my kids are always talking about, right?” she asked. “They tell me they like coming to school because of you.”

After a few more casual interactions, she began to confide in Webster — including that she’d recently lost her mother to cancer. She continues to struggle emotionally, but her guarded veneer has lifted.

Hogue herself credits not just Webster but the school’s whole staff. “I don’t even know what they do, but when I step in here it’s a different vibe,” she says. “The school changed me a person. I talk more.”

For Webster, stories such as Hogue’s tell him his work is making a difference. “You never know when and how your presence is going to help,” he says. “That’s how I see my job — just being around and being real.”

“Behind all the data, there sits a child. Every child has a story.”

— Eric Gordon, CEO, Cleveland Metropolitan School District

Learn More

To read the full community wraparound impact report, visit the interactive website: wrap4CLEkids.org

Cleveland Metropolitan School District: clevelandmetroschools.org

United Way of Greater Cleveland: unitedwaycleveland.org