

The Cambridge Handbook of School–University Partnerships

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Realizing Higher Education's Democratic Promise through University-Assisted Community Schools

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Democracy is seriously threatened throughout the world (Gorokhovskaia & Grothe, 2024). In the United States, chasm-like inequities, an armed insurrection at the Capitol, increased polarization and threats of political violence, and the election of a president who has made statements and engaged in behaviors that resonate with those of autocratic and authoritarian leaders all point to a system in crisis (Ellison, 2024; Kent & Ricketts, 2024; Pape, 2024). These developments are also a sign of deep and chronic problems, including the following:

1. increasing economic, political, social, educational, and health inequalities
2. increasing racism, antisemitism, Islamophobia, and xenophobia
3. increasing attacks on science, knowledge, and democracy itself
4. declining trust in nearly all major institutions.

Many factors, obviously, contribute to the present situation. Among them is the failure of universities to successfully do two of the primary things they are supposed to do: educate students to be ethical, empathetic, engaged, democratic citizens, and advance knowledge for the continuous betterment of the human condition (Benson et al., 2017; Daniels et al., 2021). Simply put, what universities do matters enormously, significantly determining the kind of society we have now and will have in the future.

Universities, particularly research universities, have become the most central societal institutions in the world (Bok, 1990). They possess enormous resources (most significantly human resources) and serve crucial, multifaceted functions in their communities and surrounding regions as anchor institutions – that is, enduring organizations rooted in their localities – including in research, service, housing and real estate development, employment, job training, purchasing, hiring, business incubation, and cultural development (Harkavy & Hodges,

2012). They often are in partnerships with government, the private sector, and community-based organizations to revitalize local neighborhoods and schools (Anchor Institutions Task Force, 2022; Walsh & Backe, 2013). As explained in this chapter, universities can play an important role as an educational change agent.

The schooling system increasingly functions as the core subsystem – the strategic subsystem – of modern information societies. Schooling, more than any other subsystem, as American philosopher and educator John Dewey emphasized, influences the functioning of the societal system as a whole (Cahn, 1981; Dewey, 1978b). Viewed systemically, schooling has on balance the greatest multiplier effects, direct and indirect, short term and long term. Restating these points somewhat differently, we strongly agree with the Chilean sociologist Eugenio Tironi that the answer to the question, What kind of education do we need? is to be found in the answer to the question, What kind of society do we want? (Tironi, 2005). Education and society are dynamically interactive and interdependent. If human beings hope to maintain and develop a particular type of society, they must develop and maintain the particular type of education system conducive to it. As Dewey in effect argued: no effective democratic schooling system, no democratic society.

In an 1899 speech at the University of California, William Rainey Harper (1905), who, as the first president of the University of Chicago, brought Dewey to Chicago from the University of Michigan, claimed that “[e]ducation is the basis of all democratic progress . . . the problems of education are, therefore, the problems of democracy” (p. 32). For Harper, universities are also the primary shapers of the American schooling system. In that same speech, he perceptively observed that “[t]he school system, the character of which, in spite of itself, the university determines and in a large measure controls. . . . [T]hrough the school system every family in this entire broad land of ours is brought into touch with the university; for from it proceed the teachers or the teachers’ teachers” (Harper, 1905, p. 25). Agreeing with Harper, we assert that higher education institutions powerfully shape the learning, values, and aspirations of students from kindergarten through graduate school (Benson et al., 2017; Huber & Harkavy, 2007).

For higher education institutions to make the contributions that they could and should, they must recognize that, as they now function, they, particularly research universities, are more part of the problem than part of the solution (Harkavy & Hodges, 2021). What is needed, among other things, is a major shift to a community-engaged, problem-solving approach to scholarship and learning (Daniels et al., 2019). By working collaboratively with their communities to solve locally manifested universal problems (e.g., poor schooling, eroding environments, inadequate health care, poverty, and high levels of economic inequality), institutions of higher learning will be better able to realize their mission of contributing to an optimally democratic society (Anderson, 1993; Harkavy, 2023; Harkavy et al., 2021). They can, we contend, best do this by working to create university-assisted community schools, which, we further contend, will help develop democratic students across the PK-20 spectrum.

Dewey, Democracy, and Community Schools

For Dewey, community schools were not an end in themselves, but a means for creating democratic, neighborly communities, which were necessary for realizing his vision of participatory democracy. Although Dewey never used the term participatory democracy, he described the concept when defining democracy as a "way of life" in which all citizens actively participate in making and implementing all the communal, societal, educational, and institutional decisions that significantly shape their lives (Dewey, 1998, p. 342). In *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey's major work on politics published in 1927, he claimed that participatory democracy was not only highly desirable as an abstract theory of human equality but realistically possible under certain conditions (Dewey, 1981). To be realized in practice, participatory democracy required the construction of democratic, neighborly communities that would function as the basic social units – the foundations – of advanced industrial societies (Benson et al., 2007). Dewey never developed, nor tried to implement, a comprehensive strategy and program to help develop and advance participatory democracy (Westbrook, 1991, pp. 317–318). In 1902, some twenty-five years before *The Public and Its Problems*, Dewey did, however, identify community schools as a practical means for creating "the neighborly community" (Dewey, 1981, p. 368).

Although he did not invent the concept of community schools, Dewey extended the work of other scholars and added his own distinctive interpretation. He envisioned neighborly organizations that would help educate democratic citizens by bringing together people of diverse backgrounds for continuous lifelong education and social interaction in collaborative ways that would surmount the barriers of race, class, and religion. He came to the community school idea largely as a result of his close association and friendship with Jane Addams and her colleagues at Hull House, the famous social settlement Addams and Ellen Gates Starr had founded on Chicago's poverty-stricken West Side. These theoretically guided, community-based, community-engaged, feminist settlement leaders observed that though there were very few settlement houses, there were very many public schools. Jane Addams in Chicago and Lillian Wald in New York City, as well as other settlement house workers, pioneered the transfer of social, health, cultural, and recreational services to the public schools of major US cities at the turn of the twentieth century. The practical activities of these passionate activists, and the powerful theories and insights they derived from their work, helped Dewey to understand the central role that local communities played in American society and also to see that public schools could function as strategic agencies to help develop participatory democratic communities (Knight, 2005).¹

¹ Jane Addams' contributions, of course, extend far beyond helping to develop the community school idea. Among other things, Addams was prescient in criticizing higher education's abstract, academic approach and increasing disdain for application. In an 1899 paper delivered to the American Academy of Political and Social Science, she argued that the settlement house, with its "attempt to test the value of human knowledge by action" and "effort to apply knowledge to life," was far superior to the university, which had lost its way through the "mere collecting and disseminating of knowledge" for its own sake (Addams, 1985, p. 78). See Addams (1985).

In 1902, inspired by Hull House and settlement houses in other cities, Dewey presented a significant, prescient address, "The School as Social Centre," at a National Education Association conference (Dewey, 1978b). Viewed in historical perspective, the talk clearly anticipated some of the community school movements that episodically rose and fell in the United States after 1902 and are now experiencing a resurgence (Blank et al., 2023; Coalition for Community Schools, 2020; Goldman, 2022; Kotting, 2022a, 2022b). The current community school movement builds on and extends Dewey's idea that since public schools "belong" to all members of the community, they should "serve" all members of the community – and are particularly well suited to function as neighborhood "hubs" or "centers," around which local partnerships can be generated and developed. When they play that innovative role, schools function as community institutions par excellence, providing a decentralized, democratic, community-based response to rapidly changing community problems. In the process, they help young people learn and develop skills through action-oriented, collaborative, real-world problem-solving (Benson et al., 2017).

Creating a community school, however, is not easy. Among other things, it requires, as Dewey recognized, far more resources than traditional schools. Universities, we maintain, are particularly well suited to be the lead partner in the creation, growth, and ongoing development of community schools.

University-Assisted Community Schools and School–University Partnerships

Ferrara and Jacobson (2019) cite the "university-assisted" strategy as one of many different models for community schools that have emerged in the last century. The key defining feature of a university-assisted community school (UACS) is that it engages the university as the lead partner, providing broadly based, comprehensive and sustained support for the community school. University-assisted community schools, like community schools in general, function as the hub for community engagement and democratic development, educating, engaging, activating, and serving all members of the community in which the school is located. More specifically, both community schools and UACSs include integrated student and family support services, expanded learning, family and community engagement, and collaborative leadership and practice. They also provide a focus on community-based learning and community problem-solving and connect after-school programs to school-day curricula.²

A unique aspect of UACSs is that they are designed to improve the learning and democratic development of both the public school and the university student. University-assisted community schools also frequently include a "community of experts" approach that connects the expertise within the university with the expertise outside its walls in order to help solve community problems and simultaneously contribute to knowledge (Cantor & Englot, 2013, p. 121).

² The core elements of a community school are largely taken, with slight modification, from Maier and colleagues (2017) and Blank and colleagues (2023).

To more fully understand UACS, it is useful to place it in context with other models of school–university partnership (SUP). For example, there are both similarities and differences between UACSs and the one-to-one model, which is one of seven SUPs identified by Slater and Ravid (2010). In the one-to-one model, a university faculty member and a school partner or community member choose to work together on often short-term research projects based on a school specific issue (Slater & Ravid, 2010, pp. 61–63; Slater et al., 2016, pp. 60–61). While a university-assisted community school can include examples of a one-to-one model, as a comprehensive university-wide approach, UACS necessarily involves much more than individual work with a school partner resulting in research findings.

University-assisted community schools also share features with a highly complex, multi-stakeholder, institution-changing model of SUP identified by Slater and Ravid (2010) – interagency collaboration. In interagency collaborations, the school, university, and one or more other entities work together on projects with the intention to not only innovate and produce outcomes, but also to create organizational change that institutionalizes the collaboration (Corrigan, 2000; Slater & Ravid, 2010). University-assisted community schools could therefore be considered a form of interagency collaboration. To develop and sustain UACSs, both the school and university – as well as community organizations – must undergo organizational transformation. In fact, the mutual transformation of the school, community, and university is a goal of a UACS partnership (Harkavy, 2023). The university, in this case, also acts as the lead partner, or the “agent of change” (Slater & Ravid, 2010, p. 182). A UACS is a unique form of interagency collaboration, however, in that members of the higher education institution and the school and the community strive to treat each other as ends in themselves rather than as means to an end. The relationship itself and the welfare of the various partners are the preeminent value, not simply developing a specified program or completing a research project (Harkavy et al., 2021).

Local context is, of course, critical for a UACS. Each higher education institution, public school, and community has unique needs, strengths, and resources. Based on the Netter Center's three decades of working with schools in our local community of West Philadelphia, as well as the experiences of colleagues across the country developing UACSs, we nonetheless suggest that the following components contribute to an optimally functioning university-assisted community school:

1. A central office on campus that coordinates university resources and promotes community-engaged scholarship. For this work to grow and be sustained, it must become part of the core operation of the higher education institution, and not remain the effort of a few faculty members. Students at all levels, for example, undergraduate and graduate, should be involved.
2. Academic partnerships that engage multiple university programs and departments and make connections between the university and school curricula through a common focus on helping to solve local community problems.

3. A principal who welcomes the partnership and conveys the UACS philosophy of collaborative learning and practice to the school faculty and staff, including through professional development activities.
4. A coordinator at the UACS who is the link between the school, the community, and the higher education institution.
5. UACS staff who are integrated into the school's operation, including its educational activities, so that planning for and provision of supports for students, teachers, families, and the community are as seamless as possible.
6. Family and community involvement through advisory boards or other mechanisms to help determine what supports are needed and how they should be provided.
7. Operation of the school before and after traditional school hours, including weekends and summers, for student, family, and community uses, such as adult education, recreation, and cultural events.³

To provide a concrete example of UACSs in practice, we now turn to the case we know best, the effort over thirty years and more by Penn's Netter Center to develop university-assisted community schools in Penn's local community of West Philadelphia.

Penn's Netter Center and University-Assisted Community Schools: A Case Study in Progress

The history of the Netter Center's work with West Philadelphia has been a process of painful organizational learning and conflict. The University of Pennsylvania (Penn) has only begun to tap its extraordinary resources in ways that could mutually benefit both Penn and its neighbors and result in truly radical school, community, and university change. The Netter Center's effort to contribute to that change has been consciously democratic and participatory, attempting to work *with* and *for* the community, not *on* or merely *in* it. Since its inception in 1992, the Netter Center has advanced two key strategies that continue to underpin its work with West Philadelphia, academically based community service and UACSs. Each is discussed in turn.

Academically Based Community Service

Teaching, learning, and research rooted in and intrinsically connected to local, real-world, collaborative, community problem-solving. Academically Based Community Service (ABCS) also emphasizes student and faculty reflection on the experience and the larger systemic implications (e.g., why poverty, racism, and crime exist). At Penn, ABCS has experienced considerable growth since the Netter Center's founding in 1992, when only four such courses were offered. Approximately 75 to 80 courses are now taught each academic year, enrolling 1,700–1,800 undergraduate and graduate students. Academically Based Community Service is a core component of Netter's other strategy, the UACS.

³ The components of a university-assisted community school are an update of a list that initially appeared in Harkavy and colleagues (2013).

UACS

To illustrate the UACS model, we present a case study of Andrew Hamilton School (Hamilton), a public K-8 school in West Philadelphia that has partnered with Penn's Netter Center since 2002 and welcomed its first full-time UACS site director/coordinator in 2017. In particular, we highlight the development of an edible greenspace, the Hamilton Garden Project, as a recent example that showcases key attributes of UACSS, including comprehensive integration of resources, school and university transformation, and schools as community hubs that engage students with community partners in local, real-world problem-solving.

Located two miles west of the University of Pennsylvania, Hamilton is in the Cobbs Creek neighborhood of West Philadelphia. The students are 93 percent African American and 100 percent economically disadvantaged (School District of Philadelphia, 2022). Hamilton works with many Netter Center initiatives, including:

- school-day programs such as literacy tutoring, physical education and recess support, school-based mental health, and STEM education
- after-school programs such as animal sciences, arts, coding, gardening, health sciences, nutrition, and sports
- summer enrichment programs
- activities for adults, including family and community members.

The Netter Center brings a wide range of Penn and community partners to Hamilton, including Penn Veterinary Medicine, Penn Athletics, and Children's Hospital of Philadelphia. Netter also supports and coordinates ABCS courses offered in Nursing, Education, Fine Arts, and STEM, as well as other fields and disciplines. For example, in an Earth and Environmental Science ABCS course, Penn and Hamilton students conduct research on local environmental conditions and utilize their knowledge and resources to create and distribute practical information on lead safety and air pollution reduction.

It was during one of these ABCS activities in Spring 2020, a month into the pandemic lockdown, that one of the Hamilton teachers, Ms. Bradley, showed her sixth grade classroom a video of Ron Finley, the "Gangsta Gardener" who built a community garden in Los Angeles. Inspired, the students shared that they wanted the unused, muddy, trash-filled plots of grass by the Hamilton parking lot transformed into a beautiful, safe, edible community garden. Ms. Bradley and Netter staff spoke to the Hamilton principal, who enthusiastically agreed to reimagine the space. The significant greening and redesign of the school grounds had the potential to mitigate multiple environmental injustices impacting the neighborhood, including high levels of heat, stormwater flooding, a lack of safe outdoor spaces, and a scarcity of accessible healthy food. Being located at a school, however, its greatest impact would be its ability to educate and empower the students with skills to combat these and other injustices (Baillie, 2023).

Penn faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students, from multiple schools, including the School of Arts and Sciences, Wharton School of Business, Weitzman School of Design, and Graduate School of Education, worked with

the Hamilton School leadership, School District of Philadelphia, Philadelphia Water Department, and local engineering firms to create a design and implementation plan for the school's outdoor space.⁴ Simultaneously, Hamilton's middle school classrooms revised their curriculum to include lessons connected to garden development facilitated by Hamilton teachers and Penn students. For example, students in math classes calculated volume and area to determine how much soil could fill a raised garden bed. They looked at data to make watering plans based on predicted monthly rainfall. In Language Arts, they wrote school newsletter posts promoting the future garden.

Building the garden began in summer 2021, spearheaded by a Penn graduate student. The Philadelphia Orchard Project, a local nonprofit, led the development of the orchard and food forest surrounding the school building. Middle school students participating in Netter's UACS summer enrichment program helped build beds, mix soil, weed, and plant seeds. Local neighborhood youth, seeing the activity outside the school, also joined. With one 50 ft. by 20 ft. plot completed by Fall 2021, the after-school Gardening Club began, bringing every age group at Hamilton to the garden to engage in all stages of food production, from seed selection to harvest distribution, and covering topics in STEM, social studies, and the arts. Penn students enrolled in ABCS courses in Nursing, Arts and Sciences, and Education learned about nutrition and the environment, through problem-solving learning focused on after-school garden projects. By Fall 2022, with all three plots developed, the garden produced over 450 pounds of produce in the 2022 growing season. Several related projects, involving Penn Architecture, Earth and Environmental Science, Fine Arts, and Annenberg School for Communication, are in progress as well.

Penn has also committed nonacademic resources to Hamilton. For example, the Penn Sustainability Office, housed in Penn Facilities and Real Estate Services, created an initiative with Penn Business Services that taxes the Penn community's air travel and applies it to a local carbon offset fund. The Philadelphia Energy Authority identified Hamilton's roof as a good candidate for solar, and due to the strength of the Hamilton–Penn sustainability partnership, Penn selected it as its first carbon offset project site.

Hamilton also exemplifies the growth and development of the Netter Center in recent years. Netter's work now includes approximately 3,700 children and their families at 8 UACS sites in West Philadelphia. Expansion to additional sites has resulted from interest and requests from principals, as well as new funding opportunities that arose from the Netter Center's positive track record in West Philadelphia (Harkavy et al., 2016). A Netter Center site director is based at a given school full-time and collaborates closely with that school and its community to determine activities that best serve their specific needs and interests. In addition to coordinating the programs, UACS site directors serve as liaisons between the university and the school, as well as between schoolteachers and the after-school program. Staff from the center's thematically-based programs—such as College Access and Career Readiness, Environment and Sustainability,

⁴ The Hamilton Garden Project's design and implementation plan won the Demonstration Project Category of the Environmental Protection Agency's 2020 Campus RainWorks Challenge, a national green stormwater infrastructure design competition.

Health and Wellness (Mental Health, Nutrition, Sports, Fitness), Humanities (Arts, Culture, Literacy), and STEM Education – also regularly work in the schools.

As it has grown and developed, the Netter Center has become increasingly involved in the direct implementation of programs. It employs a diverse team of fifty full-time staff to support its initiatives on campus and in the community. Staff and programming are funded through a combination of government grants, private gifts, and university support. Staff supervise and support the engagement of over 3,000 Penn students a year in Netter's programs through ABCS courses, work-study, internships, and volunteer opportunities. The Netter Center also hires over 125 part-time staff each year, the majority of whom are from West Philadelphia, to work in the center's grant-funded after-school and summer programs at UACSs. As the Netter Center has increased its focus on and capacity for implementing programs with community partners in West Philadelphia, we believe it has been able to develop more effective learning experiences for both Penn and K–12 students. Much more work, of course, remains to be done to create truly comprehensive UACSs.

National Adaptation of the UACS Model

From the early 1990s, a number of institutions across the United States began to express an interest in the UACS model being developed by the Netter Center and its partners. With private and governmental support, twenty-three adaptation sites were funded and provided with technical assistance. New foundation funding then supported seventy-five teams of university-community-school partners to come to Penn for training. An informal network grew through meetings, annual conferences hosted by the Netter Center, as well as the numerous site visits to Penn, and the work occurring around the country, much of which was documented in the Netter Center's *Universities and Community Schools* journal.

With the 2007 naming gift from Edward and Barbara Netter, a Penn alumnus and his spouse, the center's strategy for adaptation shifted from funding individual UACS partnerships to creating regional training centers based at higher education institutions that have demonstrated significant experience in and commitment to the work. Regional centers have been supported on three-year cycles at the University of Oklahoma-Tulsa (2008), Indiana University–Purdue University, Indianapolis (2011), the University of Connecticut (2014), the University of California, Los Angeles (2017), and Binghamton University, part of the State University of New York (2020). In response to the growing number of institutions of higher education that are engaged with community schools, a national UACS network was formed in 2015, with over seventy colleges and universities now participating. Colleagues share their work during monthly video conference calls on topics such as their institution's specific model, evaluation, and professional development, as well as how they might engage more of their university's resources with UACS sites.

The regional training centers have contributed to significant developments. Among them, Binghamton created what are, we believe, the first tenure track faculty positions dedicated to UACS.⁵ In May 2022, University of California, Los Angeles's Center for Community Schooling (which houses a regional training center and has been a key partner in growing the national UACS Network) was unanimously approved by the California State Board of Education to serve (with the Alameda County Office of Education) as the Lead Technical Assistance Center for the four billion dollar California Community Schools Partnership Program (Fensterwald & Xie, 2022; McDonald, 2022).

For the Netter Center, sharing our work also enables us to learn from and work with others, stimulate change in and across localities, and contribute to a movement to democratically transform universities, schools, and communities for the better.

UACS: A Practical Means to Reduce Obstacles to Democratic Civic Universities

Although the work described at Penn and the growing national movement for UACSs are indicators of genuine progress, Penn and other universities still have a very long way to go to comprehensively and effectively engage and align their various components and substantial resources in democratic, sustained, mutually transformative partnerships with their local communities. For higher education institutions to effectively function as democratic civic universities, we believe they need to reduce significant obstacles, including commercialism and commodification, misplaced nostalgia for traditional, elitist, "ivory tower" liberal arts education, and intellectual and institutional fragmentation. Overcoming these systemic barriers is not an easy task.

The neoliberal entrepreneurial university is a model that has gained increasing currency and power throughout the world, contributing to increasingly savage inequalities and a diminished sense of public purpose (Harkavy & Hodges, 2021). Education for profit, not virtue, students as consumers, not producers of knowledge, academics as individual superstars, not members of a community of scholars – all these developments reflect the commercialization of higher education, which contributes to an overemphasis on institutional competition for wealth and status and has a devastating impact on the values and ambitions of students (Bok, 2003). When institutions openly pursue commercialization, their behavior legitimizes and reinforces the pursuit of economic self-interest by students and amplifies the widespread sense that they are in college or university *exclusively* to gain career-related skills and credentials. Student idealism and civic engagement are strongly diminished when students see their universities abandon academic values and scholarly pursuits to function as competitive, profit-making corporations. Commercialism and the

⁵ From an email sent by Dr. Naorah Rimkunas, Assistant Professor of Community Schools at Binghamton University, SUNY, to the authors, March 7, 2023.

development of the entrepreneurial university foster an environment in which higher education is seen as a private benefit, not a public good.

Partly in response to galloping commercialism and narrow careerism, some make a case for a return to traditional liberal arts education – an essentialist approach with roots in Plato's antidemocratic, elitist theory of education (Mulholland, 2015). What is needed instead is, to quote Carol Geary Schneider, "a new liberal art" involving "integrative learning – focused around big problems and new connections between the academy and society" (Schneider, 2005, p. 13). The concept of a new liberal art resonates with Dewey's rejection of abstract contemplation and his call for an engaged, problem-solving approach to scholarship and learning. In *Reconstruction in Philosophy*, he wrote: "The social philosopher, dwelling in the region of his concepts, 'solves' problems by showing the relationship of ideas, instead of helping men solve problems in the concrete by supplying them hypotheses to be used and tested in projects of reform" (Dewey, 1978a, pp. 189–190).

"Communities have problems, universities have departments," stated a report published by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development titled *The University and the Community* (Center for Educational Research and Innovation, 1982, p. 127). Beyond being a criticism of universities, that statement neatly indicates another major reason why universities have not contributed to communities as they should. Quite simply, their unintegrated, fragmented, internally conflictual structure and organization impede understanding and developing solutions to highly complex human and societal problems. Colleges and universities need to significantly decrease the fragmentation of disciplines, overspecialization, and division between and among the arts and sciences and the professions, since these departmental and disciplinary divisions have increased the isolation of higher education from society itself. Compounding this problem is what might be called the "disciplinary fallacy" afflicting US universities – namely, the misconception that faculty members are duty-bound to serve only the scholastic interests and preoccupations of their disciplines and have neither the responsibility nor the capacity to help their universities keep their long-standing promise to prepare undergraduates for lives of moral and civic responsibility⁶ (Harkavy et al., 2021).

So, what is to be done to reduce the negative effects of commercialism and commodification, ivory tower nostalgia, and intellectual and institutional fragmentation? Simply put, universities need to work collaboratively with members of their local communities to develop UACSS.

Recommendations for Developing UACSS

Based on our experience at the Netter Center and the experience of our colleagues at other institutions, we offer the following recommendations for higher education institutions interested in starting UACS partnerships. The first step is to make a connection with a principal and teachers at a local school.

⁶ Stanley Fish is arguably the most outspoken proponent of the "disciplinary fallacy." See Fish (2008).

That connection can be made by faculty members and/or university staff. The project may begin small with one or a few faculty members connected to one or more teachers during the school day, after school, or both. Partnership activities can engage university students through volunteer opportunities, internships, federal work–study programs, and ABCS or related courses. Successful pilots between small groups of teachers, faculty, and K–20+ students help to increase the number of faculty and teachers engaged in collaborative projects over time. Being adaptable and flexible and responsive to the school's needs and culture from the start is essential for building a collaborative, trusting, and long-term relationship. The partnerships would ideally be coordinated by a center embedded within the university that can mobilize and engage faculty and students across the institution and ensure a sustained relationship with a local school and its community.

The benefits of developing UACSS in the university's local community are numerous. University-assisted community schools may serve as the catalyst for ongoing, continuous interaction facilitated through work in easily accessible locations. In doing so, UACSS become the anchor institution that enacts the community school strategy and builds the infrastructure to support its core elements. Relationships of trust, so essential for effective partnerships and effective learning, are built through day-to-day work on problems and issues of mutual concern. In addition, the local community provides a convenient setting in which service-learning courses, community-based research courses and related community-engaged scholarship in different disciplines work together on complex problems to produce substantive results (Quartz, 2020). Since it facilitates interaction across schools and disciplines, work in a university's local community also creates interdisciplinary learning opportunities. Given that the local community is a democratic real-world learning site where community members, faculty, and students learn together and pragmatically determine the results of common efforts and the impact of the work, UACSS can make a real difference.

A focus on developing UACSS locally is an extraordinarily promising strategy for realizing an institution's mission and purpose. When colleges and universities give very high priority to engaging with the community and actively solving strategic, community-identified, real-world problems, a much greater likelihood exists that they will significantly advance knowledge, learning and democracy. University-assisted community schools, as we have argued, can and should serve as a – if not, the – vehicle and organizing framework for bringing together university and community resources toward that end.

Conclusion

In this chapter, we argued that democracy is in crisis and that developing UACSS is an effective approach for higher education institutions to respond to that crisis. Placing UACSS in context with community schools and SUPs, we identified the core components of university-assisted community schools. To provide concrete examples of UACSS in action and its expansion across the country, we

highlighted the Netter Center's work to develop university-assisted community schools in West Philadelphia as well as its efforts to adapt that work at other institutions of higher education. Finally, we indicated how UACSS can reduce obstacles to developing democratic civic universities and democratic neighborly communities.

To summarize and conclude, we turn to one of John Dewey's most brilliant propositions: "Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly community" (Dewey, 1981, p. 368). He emphasized that democracy has to be built on face-to-face interactions in which human beings work together cooperatively to solve the ongoing problems of life. In effect, we are updating Dewey's theory and advocating the following proposition: Democracy must begin at home, and its home is the neighborly university and its local community and school partners working together to create and sustain UACSSs.

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