

Homes and Education: Better Homes Make Better Students

About Enterprise

Enterprise Community Partners is a proven and powerful nonprofit that improves communities and people's lives by making well-designed homes affordable. For over 35 years, we've brought together the nationwide know-how, partners, policy leadership and investments to multiply the impact of local affordable housing development.

Our model creates opportunity for low- and moderate-income families by providing capital to support the construction and preservation of affordable housing in neighborhoods that are accessible to quality schools, jobs, and health care.

By partnering with other organizations and using data-driven analysis, Enterprise ensures that capital, community investments, and technical assistance are tailored to community needs. With work in all 50 states and more than a dozen offices nationwide, Enterprise has the capacity and footprint to influence federal and local policy priorities.

Since 1982, Enterprise has demonstrated its mission to create opportunity by investing a total of \$28.9 billion and financing 380,000 affordable homes nationwide.

“Without a home, everything else falls apart.”

In Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City, writer and sociologist Matthew Desmond portrays families struggling to survive eviction, homelessness, and housing instability.

Learning in the Home Environment

According to the National Education Association, a home environment that encourages learning is more important to student achievement than is income, educational level or cultural background. Students who go to school “ready to learn” perform better academically and socially than those not given support out of school.

Research shows a clear link between housing conditions and student achievement in the classroom. Educators understand that students need to have a stable and safe place where they can eat healthy meals, get a good night's sleep and have a comfortable study environment so they can be rested and prepared to do well in school.



However, safe and affordable housing has become unattainable for tens of millions of Americans as wages have stagnated and housing costs continue to rise. Nearly 12 million renter households in America spend more than half of their income on housing costs, often forcing them to make painful decisions between making rent or buying food and medicine. These families are one illness or missed paycheck away from eviction and experiencing housing instability or homelessness.

Homelessness and housing instability can be caused by foreclosure, eviction, cost burden, and unsafe conditions. Children who experience housing insecurity or homelessness more frequently change schools and suffer from higher rates of absenteeism and weaker bonds with teachers and classmates. Transience in the classroom is also disruptive to both teachers and other students. Additionally, students who live in unsafe conditions, such as homes with asthma-causing mold or lead-based paint, are more likely to develop physical and behavioral health problems that negatively impact school performance.

Spotlight on Baltimore

Enterprise's Work to Help Students Thrive

Mentoring: Since 2003, Enterprise has operated a youth mentoring program in Baltimore. The children who participate are identified by the school principals as having the greatest need for a caring and stable relationship with an adult. Mentors from the Enterprise Women's Network meet with children twice a month, helping them build self-esteem, make healthy choices, and develop coping strategies for problems.

Community Planning: Over 48 percent of the Park Heights community lives below the poverty level, a result of low employment and educational attainment. The City of Baltimore's Master Plan includes redevelopment of the community. Enterprise is supporting the improvement of Park Height's eight elementary and middle schools as well as Head Start and other childcare facilities.

Early Childhood Education: The roles that parent support and home environment play in student success is as important as school quality. Enterprise's Home Instruction for Parents of Pre-School Youngsters program hires community members to make weekly visits to deliver curriculum and supplies to parents, role-play teaching techniques and provide family support. These efforts strengthen parents as "first teachers" and connect them to support services.

Speaking Up for Communities

Enterprise recognizes that families do not want to live where there are inadequate public schools but that quality schools rely on residential stability in surrounding neighborhoods and limited student transience. We work to rebuild communities by combining strategies for housing and community development with the improvement of local schools and youth outcomes.

We know that high-performing schools make stronger communities and that supportive home environments make better students. The housing and education sectors have a unique opportunity to leverage each other's work to address education and opportunity disparities in low-income communities. Through greater partnership, we can make the case for aligned federal policies that invest in the potential of low-income communities. Investments and policies that improve schools in low-income neighborhoods can result in greater residential stability, while more safe and affordable housing enables greater student stability and school performance.

The need for resources and innovative policy solutions that link education and housing has grown, while federal investment has shrunk. Congress needs to hear from all of us on the importance of increasing federal investments that leverage the connection between strong public schools and affordable housing. Through concerted advocacy, we can more effectively make the case for investments in programs that work and get to the heart of community challenges.

To learn more about how our organizations can work together, please contact Marion McFadden at mmcfadden@enterprisecommunity.org or Clay Kerchof at ckerchof@enterprisecommunity.org. Read about Enterprise's work and policy priorities by signing up for our daily newsletter, Community Developments, and bi-weekly rundown of federal policy news, Capitol Express. Follow Enterprise on Twitter @EnterpriseNow and @E_HousingPolicy.

