

Fort Drum Regional Full-Service Community Schools Consortium: Four Rural Local Schools Awarded Funding by U.S. Department of Education to Expand Community Schools and Enhance Student, Educator, and Family Support

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The U.S. Department of Education has announced \$63 million for new five-year Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grants to establish and support four area school districts. This federally funded grant of \$2,393,488 represents 30% of the total project costs. Belleville Henderson Central School received one of only five nationwide grants to schools for planning and development. The Fort Drum Regional Full-Service Community Schools Consortium grant will also serve staff, students, and families in the Copenhagen, LaFargeville, and Sackets Harbor Central School Districts. Only four other school districts across the nation were first-time grant awardees: Las Cruces Public School District 2 in New Mexico, Elkhart Community Schools in Indiana, Taos Municipal Schools in New Mexico, and Batavia City School District in New York.

Meeting the needs of the whole child is essential for academic growth and well-being, which is the goal of this new grant through local partnerships with non-profit, private sector, and community agencies. This Community Schools grant will fund a partnership among the four districts, Cornell Cooperative Extension and Jefferson-Lewis BOCES, to provide comprehensive, integrated services, including high-quality tutoring, mental health and nutrition services, after-school programming, and parent engagement.

"Community Schools are an essential component of accelerating our students' learning and supporting their social, emotional, and mental health, and deepening community partnerships. Community schools connect students and families with vital nutrition assistance, mental, physical, and other health services, and expand learning opportunities. We know that students learn best when there is a comprehensive and holistic approach to meeting their needs," said U.S. Secretary of Education Miguel Cardona.

This year's grant competition received the largest number of applications in the program's history, demonstrating the enormous need to address students' academic, social, emotional, and mental health needs. The new grantees are committed to implementing the four pillars of community schools: 1) integrated student supports that address out-of-school barriers to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and providers; 2) expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; 3) active family and community engagement; and 4) collaborative leadership and practices.

Jane Collins, Superintendent of Belleville Henderson CSD, Scott Connell, Superintendent of Copenhagen CSD, Jennifer Gaffney, Superintendent of Sackets Harbor CSD, and Travis Hoover, Superintendent of LaFargeville CSD, affirm that community schools are the cornerstone of our educational system. The grant awarded will empower us to provide our students with the necessary resources for success both in and out of the classroom. We express our appreciation for this chance to significantly impact the lives of our students and the community as a whole.



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