

# CHS in the News



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## Nathan Crabbe: Community partnership school deserves support

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Buried in the bill that directs state funding to private schools is some positive news for a new model for public schools.

Community partnership schools bring together local institutions to provide services for students and their families. The concept is that offering services such as health care and counseling at schools in lower-income neighborhoods puts students in a better position to succeed in the classroom and beyond.

There are 17 community partnership schools across Florida, including at Howard Bishop Middle School in Gainesville. Howard Bishop's community partners are the Alachua County public school district, the Children's Home Society of Florida, the county health department, Santa Fe College and the University of Florida.

Services such as counseling have been provided since the partnership was established in 2016, but much more could and should be done. An education bill passed in the recent legislative session and signed into law by Gov. Ron DeSantis, Senate Bill 7070, opens up that possibility.

The bill received attention for expanding private school vouchers, but it also creates state grants for community partnership schools. About \$7.4 million would be provided for grants if approved by DeSantis in the state budget.

Howard Bishop's dean, Latoya Jennings-Lopez, is taking over next month as director of its community partnership school. The new funding would pay for additional positions coordinating areas such as after-school programs and parental engagement. But the school's administration and

community partners must also provide additional support for the program.

Longer-established community partnership schools show the kinds of services that improve the lives of students and their families. One such school, the Academic Center for Excellence in Orlando, has a Boys and Girls Club, a health clinic and a preschool all located on site to serve students and others in the area.

These options should be explored at Howard Bishop as well as the elementary schools that send students there, Metcalfe and Rawlings. The Sun-sponsored Gainesville For All initiative established the Gainesville Empowerment Zone in the neighborhoods that include the schools in order to promote and support such efforts.

The time is right given both state and local funding possibilities. Alachua County voters passed the Children's Trust initiative in the fall to provide funding for children's services such as early childhood and after-school programs, as well as a school facilities initiative that would allow underutilized space at schools to be refashioned into other uses.

The Community Partnership School at Howard Bishop must truly be a community partnership in order to succeed. The school's administration, its partner organizations and other local groups such as GNV4ALL need to commit to working together for the benefit of students, their families and ultimately our whole community.

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