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AFT Innovation Fund

# Connecting Community in Rome, N.Y., and Beyond





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## OUR MISSION

The **American Federation of Teachers** is a union of professionals that champions fairness; democracy; economic opportunity; and high-quality public education, healthcare and public services for our students, their families and our communities. We are committed to advancing these principles through community engagement, organizing, collective bargaining and political activism, and especially through the work our members do.

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Since 2009, the American Federation of Teachers Innovation Fund, a project within the AFT Education Foundation, has made more than 80 investments across the country to local union affiliates, with the purpose of identifying, nurturing and promoting union-led innovations in public education. The fund's work aligns with the AFT's four pillars of powerful and purposeful public education: promoting children's well-being, supporting powerful learning, building teacher capacity and fostering cultures of collaboration.

## Background

This case study will focus on the community schools initiative launched in Rome, N.Y., and expanded regionally with support from the AFT Innovation Fund. The fund was created in 2009 to identify, nurture and bring to scale union- and educator-led innovations in public education. Since then, the Innovation Fund has made more than 80 investments across the country to support transformations in education—both large and small. The Innovation Fund’s work is fundamental to AFT’s efforts in ensuring that each child has a powerful and purposeful public education by promoting children’s well-being, supporting powerful learning, building teacher capacity and fostering cultures of collaboration.

In 2016, the Innovation Fund made a grant to the Rome Teachers Association to plan and implement a districtwide community schools initiative, building on the local’s initial effort at one school site. RTA members wanted to mitigate barriers to learning and expand opportunities to students and their families. They understood that in addition to a strong academic core, the non-academic parts of students’ lives needed stability and continuity. A part of this solution would be providing access to mental health, medical and dental services during the school day, all within the school building, to support Rome’s school-age children, teachers and families. This is where The RTA’s community schools vision begins to take shape.

To understand the union’s imperative to remove learning barriers and provide access to opportunity, it is important to put the situation in Rome in context. Rome’s trajectory is like many small cities in America—periods of economic and social success followed by declines as industries left. From the middle of the 20th century, the Rome Air Depot (RAD) was a booming epicenter of opportunity in the city. Owned and operated by the U.S. Air Force, the RAD brought myriad jobs to the area. Known as the Griffiss Air Force Base, or simply “the base,” the RAD contributed to the economic success and growth of the community. Unfortunately, the base was decommissioned in 1995, devastating the community. Rome continued to face declines in its traditional manufacturing, and residents faced increasingly painful change. Families experienced many stressors, including<sup>1</sup> economic insecurity, disappearing jobs, limited access to high-quality education, and a youth suicide rate that increased almost 60 percent between 2007 and 2018.

For Rome’s teachers and the RTA, these signs all pointed to a need for them to *do something big*. In response, RTA President Rob Wood and his colleague Joseph Eurto met with the district Board of Education to discuss possible solutions. They shared the needs of students and the community. The board was receptive and eager to help. This case study documents RTA’s journey to improve students’ educational outcomes and to support families’ health and well-being through what has grown into the Connected Community Schools (CCS) initiative.

The journey began in 2015, when Wood and then RTA Secretary-Treasurer Eurto attended AFT’s Center for School Improvement Institute (CSI), AFT’s premier team-based learning opportunity for strengthening labor-management-community collaboration. Here, they learned about the community school strategy. Upon returning to Rome, Wood and Eurto shared this information with the school board, making the case for implementing community schools. Soon after their conversation with the school board, Jessica Lattimore, a teacher at Bellamy Elementary, Rome Teacher Center director, and eventually RTA secretary, attended the AFT TEACH conference in Washington, D.C., where she gathered more information on community school initiatives across the country. Armed with data, research and examples, the founding team’s vision for Rome community schools was taking shape. The team, made up of teachers, administrators, and board members presented the strategy to the board, emphasizing the importance of true collaboration. They hoped not only to have the district and the teachers work in concert, but also to form new and lasting partnerships within the community. Recognizing that it was also important for this strategy to become operationalized through policy, the RTA drafted a community schools policy in collaboration with various stakeholders. It was adopted by the Rome school board in September 2016.

This newly formed founding team attended AFT’s 2016 CSI Institute so they could dig deeper into the components of “collaboration,” and apply them to their community school efforts. The team knew that bringing this vision to life would require *active* participation from teachers,

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<sup>1</sup> Dastagir, Alia. (2020). *USA Today*. <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/health/2020/09/11/youth-suicide-rate-increases-cdc-report-finds/3463549001/>

principals, parents, service providers and district officials. After the institute, in partnership with the AFT, the team held a community conversation at Rome Free Academy, the district’s high school; the team invited parents, community leaders, businesses and organizations to attend. One of the featured speakers was Ken Zarifis, president of Education Austin, AFT’s local affiliate in Austin, Texas, and a past community school grantee of the Innovation Fund. He joined the session virtually to share Austin’s experience in planning and implementing community schools. During this conversation, the team also discussed the four key pillars of community schools, as coined by the Learning Policy Institute: integrated student supports; expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities; active family and community engagement; and collaborative leadership and practices. The team also shared examples of how community members and other partners could support these pillars. Equipped with this knowledge, and the determination to do right by their students and community, Rome’s community school initiative became a solid collaboration that began to bear fruit when they took Rome’s initial efforts at Bellamy Elementary School to the next level of planning and implementation.

Rome wanted to bring this vision of community schools to the district, making sure to engage the broader community and educators together and have ownership of their version of community schools. For RTA, in addition to supporting students and families,

*“It was about giving teachers a voice in finding ways outside the box to support our students and bring in more programs, people and services from the community in a collaboration to support teachers and students alike,” Lattimore says.*

This framework—bringing together the village to raise the children—is a simple concept. Yet, however simple it seems in ideation, execution requires a concerted effort, with the entire community having a stake and a voice in the process to fully realize the tenets of the community school strategy. In spite of the long road ahead, Lattimore, Eurto, their colleagues and the community rose to the challenge.

## Connected Community Schools: Lessons Learned

By examining Rome’s journey, practitioners from across the nation can glean several lessons as they implement their local community school efforts:



Use technology to expand capacity and reach.

Start small, and build step by step.

Embrace the process.

Communicate, communicate, communicate.



The effort needs to be staffed by at least three or four people.

School boards, districts and the municipality must be aligned and “on the same page.”

Leadership matters—at all levels.



It is all about relationships.



The strategy provides flexibility and the ability to pivot as the needs change.

Teachers and school staff are critical in ensuring meaningful family engagement.



Teachers and school staff must be engaged from the beginning.

It has to be a collective community effort.

## What Is the Community Schools Strategy?

It's worth taking a step back to examine aspects of a community school strategy. It's a collaborative and effective vehicle for increasing educational equity to make a difference in the lives of children, families, educators and communities. Community schools purposefully partner and coordinate with community-based organizations, social service agencies, businesses, higher education institutions, health clinics and faith-based organizations, among others, to meet the academic and nonacademic needs of students and families. The community school infrastructure enables the coordination and integration of programs that enrich and support learning and instruction while meeting the needs of students, families and the community.

This strategy helps make it possible for educators to do what they do best, which is to teach, and for students to have the supports they need to learn and reach their full potential. All too often, well-intentioned programs come into schools only to provide isolated, temporary services that fail to support the real, sustainable progress of students and schools. School staff often are unaware of the partners who are working with their students, or to what end. This isn't just another program: It's a paradigm shift in the way we think about schools that goes well beyond just providing supports and services for students.

Key to the community school strategy is the site coordinator role. A site resource coordinator helps ensure that the services and community providers are working together, not duplicating efforts, focusing on the same set of results to ensure that students' social and emotional needs are supported and building on classroom instruction. Coordinators are the anchors for the community school. They build strong relationships with school staff, parents, administrators and the community. They leverage in-kind and monetary resources to meet the needs of students and families.

## The Beginning: Rome Community Schools

As Jessica Lattimore and Joe Eurto contemplated the creation of a community school in Rome, they attended conferences, such as the AFT TEACH conference, CSI, and national community schools conferences in New Mexico and Maryland, and participated in study visits. As a result, they formed a planning group and invited Bellamy's teachers, principal, a board member, and the district administrator to join them in developing a community school in Rome. The group created a plan to share with the district and also began to have conversations and communitywide meetings with the district, union members and other community members to share their vision and gain buy-in.

Rome's original community school plan was to have a districtwide coordinator to oversee, build and implement the community school vision with the goal being to phase out the position as the individual school site coordinators came on board to coordinate efforts at the building



level. It became increasingly clear that this system’s level coordination would be necessary if they were going to expand and deepen the strategy. After a year and a half of building awareness and relationships with educators, families, the community and policymakers, the RTA received an Innovation Fund grant to take its community school efforts districtwide. With this new funding, they decided to create a 501(c)(3) to serve the interests of all partners: the union, the district, the students and families, and the whole community.

It took six months for them to establish the 501(c)(3). “We used all of the resources at our disposal—we spoke with local lawyers, district officials, and other community school practitioners to solicit their input and guidance to figure out the best way to begin this venture,” says Lattimore. To form the 501(c)(3), they had to establish a board. Rome wanted the board to be a diverse group of committed volunteers—educators and non-educators alike, including representation from the union and community stakeholders. Finally in 2017, after months of legal processes, paperwork, board recruiting and planning, the Rome Alliance for Education (RAE), was granted its 501(c)(3) status. It was at this time that RAE began paving the way for their existing collaboration.

The 2016 grant enabled them to cover the salary of a program manager and a school site coordinator, as well as designate some funds for programming. In line with the community school pillars of “family and community engagement” and “expanded learning time and opportunities,” new programming included “homework diners” (modeled after the Albuquerque Community Schools homework diners), parent engagement nights, and their STEAM initiative. The site coordinator worked to ensure that the school was “open” to parents and community.



They forged relationships with community partners such as Mohawk Valley Community College, Eat Smart New York (now known as SNAP-Ed), Cornell Cooperative Extension and the Salvation Army, among others. Partners provided programming and hands-on learning and enrichment opportunities for students and families. Educators also led new programming, focused on STEAM instruction. The K-6 teachers at Bellamy Elementary school, along with the “specials” teachers (those who teach art, music, etc.) developed curricula focused on gardening and plants. At each grade level, educators created gardening lesson plans, allowing all K-6 students to have shared experiences. The younger students grew vegetables they were able to eat at snack time, others did outdoor and indoor gardening, and students were even able to partner with the State University of New York to grow microgreens and work on a business model.

The Bellamy team members met once a week as a professional learning community and conducted PD together using different topics based on grade level and curriculum planning. They held tech webinars on makers spaces, as well as on tech tools and materials to use in the classroom. They all attended project-based learning sessions.

As the overall initiative began to take root, it became clear to RAE that to achieve their outcomes, they needed additional funding and a dedicated director. They submitted another proposal to the Innovation Fund and received another round of funding, which helped them hire a full-time director in 2018 to run their community school efforts. They hired Melissa Roys, a professional with 25 years of service in mental health, community services and applied sociology. She had the necessary experience to expand their work.

Roys brought myriad connections, experiences, and ideas that would serve her well in her new role as executive director. Her experience in the mental health field and in working with community providers in the service field proved to be an invaluable asset. With Roys’ knowledge and the groundwork laid by the RAE, the founding team felt the stars aligning and their vision coming to life.

The first thing on Roys’ list was to create a citywide community school advisory board comprised of 50 service and community-based organizations and community

leaders, including county leaders. Acknowledging that planning efforts had already begun, she conducted a community needs assessment in Bellamy Elementary to support the school-site advisory team. A common thread among community school models, the needs and asset mapping process is designed to identify gaps and assets pulling from educators, families and the community. This process also allowed the RTA to hear directly from their members, in terms of needs and opportunities. Families received surveys asking them to share what they wanted to see take place in their school. The results from this data-gathering were used to inform partnerships and programming. The primary need that rose to the top of the list was support for mental health, which led to the opening of a satellite mental health clinic right inside Bellamy Elementary School and subsequently in four more buildings. Previously, the idea of placing external mental health professionals (e.g., social workers) in a school setting had been met with resistance, but RAE was able to show how this external assistance would supplement, not supplant, their counseling and social work team, allowing them to focus solely on the concerns present in school. The mental health and community providers would support the other social issues impacting student learning and health.

Additionally, a large percentage of those surveyed indicated a lack of insurance and dental services, which led to partnerships with Fidelis and Aspen Dental. Food insecurity came in a close third, as more than 80 percent of the enrolled students were eligible for the free and reduced-price lunch program. In response, RAE opened a small food pantry in Bellamy Elementary for students and families. A needs assessment at Gansevoort Elementary (also in the Rome school district), revealed similar results, leading to the creation of RAE's second food pantry. The needs assessments served as a solid road map for the strategy, ensuring that each additional step was clearly aligned with needs and assets in the community, and was accomplished in collaboration with and input from parents, school boards and school and district staff.

Soon after joining RAE, Roys reached out to longtime colleague Jane Vail, executive director of the Central New York Health Home Network (CNYHHN), a home health-care provider and care management coordinator across several counties in central New York. Vail had prior experience working for a local BOCES (or Boards of Cooperative



Educational Services) that provides shared educational programs and services to school districts within the state (see box on page 9) on a community schools initiative. Roys and Vail worked to establish a formal partnership between RAE and CNYHHN. Combining the network's infrastructure and RAE's community school footprint, this new partnership would become a foundation for building additional care coordination capacity to the community schools efforts in Rome and, eventually, beyond.

Peter Blake, superintendent of the Rome City School District, wanted to see Rome's community school efforts grow and benefit students and families in all 11 schools in Rome, but the district was facing financial shortfalls. Roys suggested that RAE develop a system to connect struggling students or families with resources—which would become known as LiNK. Their goal was to create something that could serve the whole school district by implementing a comprehensive system of touch points and services that were easy to access and use. LiNK connected students and families to educational supports such as tutoring and mentoring, but would also help mitigate issues such as food insecurity, housing instability, employment, as well as provide additional learning opportunities through after-school and school-break activities.

Interactions with parents and hearing about their struggles demonstrated to Roy that the district had no clear or identified method of addressing these struggles at the ground level. "It was then," Roys says, "that I realized we needed to develop something to speak to why kids are struggling and unable to participate in their education. We need to support the kids that sit and wonder where they will sleep that night or if they will have dinner, or

whether they should skip school the next day because they don't have clean clothes. Every student should be able to focus on, engage with and be excited about learning in the classroom without worrying about these issues." LiNK provided parents and students access to an abundance of services and supports in their community from various public agencies and other community-based organizations. With the assistance of Amanda Jones, the school district's director of counseling services and their liaison with RAE, an online form was created to serve as the LiNK referral. Jones was also instrumental in helping get buy-in and agreement from the counseling staff to use the LiNK referral system. Having a common and committed set of professionals in the schools as owners of the system avoided redundancy and would streamline the process.

## Systematizing LiNK

With the district's stamp of approval, RAE began to implement the LiNK system during the 2017-18 school year. Each school's community school site coordinator began to act as a conduit within the LiNK system—coordinating service providers, connecting students and families to the appropriate services, and assessing and addressing needs of the whole child. LiNK expanded from one school (Bellamy Elementary) to all 11 school buildings in the district. These services were already available in the community, but now LiNK provided a single point of access. Using the LiNK online form, district counselors, psychologists and psychiatrists, social workers, administrators, nurses, and other school-based service providers are able to submit referrals to a LiNK site coordinator for students or families. The site coordinators can more efficiently help families navigate the ever changing and often intimidating landscape of resources and services, which at the time of this publication has grown to a network of partnerships that exceeds 100 community organizations, agencies, and providers across multiple school districts and regions.

Today, the LiNK system continues to evolve and improve using things like custom HIPPA-compliant Google Workspace tools, through which it solicits



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**– Melissa Roys, Executive Director,  
Connected Community Schools**

feedback from students' family members and staff users. In addition to being a source for continuous improvement of LiNK itself, this feedback loop also demonstrates the tangible effects LiNK is having in the lives of students and their families. "LiNK is really good," says one grandparent who is raising her two grandchildren. "It's very easy to use, and we've benefited from school supplies, clothing and counseling. I just call [my site coordinator] and tell her what I need." Feedback from school staff using LiNK was also positive. Kareem Jones, a school counselor at Bellamy Elementary, is pleased that she no longer has to make, send, follow up on, and resend referrals to community agencies—saving a lot of time. In this way, the site coordinators, not the school staff, are now responsible for coordinating and connecting the referrals to supports and services.





## A New Era: Connected Community Schools

With the initiative's continued growth and success came a second formal partnership with Safe Schools Mohawk Valley in 2018. Anne Lansing, SSMV's executive director, who had a previous working relationship with Vail on the other community school initiative under BOCES, partnered with Vail again, this time in her new role as executive director of Central New York Home Health Network (CNYHHN). Together they successfully applied for the federal Safe Schools/Healthy Students grant, which helped establish and secure the safety and overall mental health of local youth. Lansing integrated direct services and supports to students at their school site—a key pillar in the community schools strategy. With the addition of Lansing, the initiative, and the shared vision between RAE, SSMV and CNYHHN led to a climate of compromise, partnership and teamwork. "I knew this would be an effort that was going to be focused on relationships new and old," says Roys. "It was rare if, between the three of us, we didn't have a connection to an aspect, resource, service or agency already."

The Rome Community School initiative was now gaining momentum and recognition. In August 2018, the initiative was rebranded from Rome Community Schools to Connected Community Schools (CCS). The rebranded

initiative continues to be housed within the RAE, to improve its access to funds, and to provide flexibility to make decisions beyond the parameters of federal grants, state education department regulations, and other restrictions that typically fall on schools.

As the community school efforts continued to evolve, teachers became more involved, beyond their instructional efforts. Teachers often spend their personal time and resources to support their students. Now CCS was helping alleviate much of this extra load. CCS opened its first Community Resource Hub at Gansevoort Elementary to keep a strong connection between teaching, learning and the supports community schools offer. Teachers have been huge contributors, financially as well as providing goods, to the hub. The hub is more than just a food pantry; it's a one-stop shop within the school that connects students and families to food, clothing, school supplies and snacks during the school day. Gansevoort also offered programming and educational opportunities at an Adult Learning Center, where parents and community members could use the computers for job applications, get assistance with resumes, and take classes from local community agencies on topics such as budgeting and banking, technology 101, and healthy cooking for families.



Around the same time, the nearby school districts of Waterville and Dolgeville Central began to notice that the CCS model was having a positive effect throughout the Rome community. Dolgeville’s awareness of CCS grew from a relationship between an embedded care

manager affiliated with CNYHHN, as well as a family school navigator with United Way. These two were working in tandem to meet the needs of the students as best they could within the limitations set by their programs’ deliverables and eligibility. For example, care management is only accessible to the Medicaid population who also meet other specific needs criteria. Waterville became aware of CCS due to their previous relationships with members of the CCS leadership team and from invitations to see the initiatives first-hand. It seemed only natural for these districts to reach out to CCS as a way to expand their community footprints.

In early 2019, CCS staff began meeting with school officials and union leaders from these districts. It became obvious that the same needs remained unmet, so with their third Innovation Fund grant (2019), RAE expanded the CCS initiative to both districts. The decision to support them aligned with AFT’s deepening efforts to support rural districts. Expanding the reach of their network of partnerships was a natural extension of CCS’s work.

In addition to their grants from the AFT, CCS leveraged three other funding streams: direct monies from a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) from the Department of Housing in Rome, a line item in the school district’s budget, and funding from the Community Foundation of Herkimer and Oneida Counties. As community school initiatives expand and mature, it is important for them to coordinate and leverage resources—both monetary and in-kind. This type of blended funding, leveraging multiple sources can help meet the needs of the school-community in a sustainable manner, without becoming dependent on one source. It also helps bring in other stakeholders to support the work. [source: <https://communityschools.futureforlearning.org/assets/downloads/Financing-Community-Schools-Brief.pdf>]

## The Pandemic

In Waterville, CCS kicked off with a community celebration and ribbon-cutting ceremony on March 10, 2020. Plans for a similar celebration in Dolgeville were underway, but the COVID-19 pandemic shut everything down. CCS sprang into action to coordinate with all three districts through the closures. All three CCS districts pivoted their work on providing social, mental, physical and other services to their communities’ families and students. Rather than back away from these challenges, they leaned in and expanded services.

To be responsive to changing needs, the CCS team formed a Community Response Team, to ensure food security and support for students and families through their network of providers. In Rome, with volunteers from the district and RTA members, CCS combined the existing two smaller food distribution hubs at Staley and Gansevoort elementary schools into one larger central community resource hub, at Staley. “When we really needed it,” says Melissa Roys, “the call was put out for help and, not surprisingly, union members staffed the hub, donated to it and raised money for it.”



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**– Randi Weingarten, AFT President**

There was significant demand for food during the pandemic. On the hub's first day of operation, food distribution was set to begin at 10 a.m., and almost 100 families had gathered well before. After only four hours, more than 1,000 families were served, amounting to approximately 12,000 pounds of food. The Community Resource Hub became the largest food pantry in Oneida County. Between March and December 2020, CCS distributed more than *1 million pounds (870,350 meals)* of food to families in need. To continue and deepen support, the RTA Children's Fund collected and distributed community and teacher donations of clothes, coats, boots and other gear. RTA members continue to be fierce advocates of the CCS initiative.

Also, in response to the pandemic, CCS created ConnectLine to take questions, as well as to assess and address community needs. As a supplement to LiNK, ConnectLine provided parents and community members direct access to the CCS team. In the first two months of the pandemic, ConnectLine received over 450 calls, with concerns of anxiety, mental health, community resources, food insecurity, unemployment, and general pandemic-related questions. CCS also implemented new means of all-digital, social-distanced engagement in the Connected districts. One such effort was their summer fifth-quarter Drop-In program which ran virtually during its third year of operation—summer 2021, by opening a YouTube channel, which hosted a variety of sessions, including everything from making crafts (all items for crafts were given to students in take-home packs), to scavenger hunts, work-out sessions, and naturalism and farmyard learning.

CCS continued growing during the pandemic. The advisory board grew to over 125 people, including agencies, service organizations, county divisions, faith leadership and residents. It also received an influx of community support, including financial donations from the local and state teachers unions, personal contributions from individual educators and other community members, and donations of food and household goods from businesses, such as Creekside Community Outreach in Waterville and Hannaford in Rome. Agencies like the Red Cross sent volunteers to assist with the community food giveaways. In all three districts, churches and community members became CCS supporters inspiring others to become involved. The communities joined forces, and their successes were made possible from the

## BOCES

In 1948, the New York State Legislature created Boards of Cooperative Educational Services (BOCES) to provide shared educational programs and services to school districts within the state. BOCES develop cooperative services agreements with service providers so that schools can be reimbursed (up to 80 percent) for their education-related expenses. Today, there are 37 BOCES across the state that partner with nearly all of the state's school districts to help meet students' evolving educational needs through cost-effective and relevant programs. A district superintendent is the chief executive officer of an individual BOCES. The superintendent is responsible for both the BOCES and its component districts, and also serves as the commissioner of education's representative to the region. The BOCES system is the technology backbone of its component districts, with a broad reach in educational systems throughout the state, and the leaders of CCS believe BOCES "matching service" can help sustain CCS as it grows.

goodwill and trust that had been built by CCS before the pandemic struck. These relationships will continue to be important even after the pandemic because the effects of trauma and food insecurity experienced in 2020 will linger for many years.

As AFT President Randi Weingarten says regarding CCS: "The relationships are there, the community engagement is there, the understanding, the funding formulas, are there. This effort has created *community* between community allies, parents, educators—all of them working together to solve community problems and to ensure that people can climb up that ladder." Having a common infrastructure across all three connected districts has allowed the CCS team to effectively meet the ever evolving needs of their communities.



## Connected Community Schools at Scale in New York State

In May 2021, the Connected Community Schools partnerships were able to secure a service agreement between NYS BOCES providing a novel avenue for school districts to drive aid on the project as well as sustainability. With this agreement in place, CCS is now able to provide support to families and students, across 1,000 square miles throughout the region. Since this agreement was signed, eight new school districts have committed to being part of CCS. As a result, CCS currently has three BOCES agreements covering 37 schools; all of these schools will have a full-time community school coordinator, will utilize LiNK, and will be connected to CNYHH. Each community school will also receive services through RAE and SSMV. “Being officially recognized through the BOCES was key for the financial sustainability of the community school efforts,” says Roys. CCS isn’t just expanding their service reach; they are also adding new services and ways to reach new audiences.

Moving forward, CCS will continue to build on the strong foundation it has established in addressing systemic change to support all students and families. With an eye toward the future, CCS will deepen its focus on inclusion, equity and diversity by operating in schools and opening doors to those who might not have access to local school systems. CCS will continue to provide technical assistance to districts interested in starting and scaling their own community school efforts. CCS will do all of this upon the bedrock of its modest, yet powerful notion of its founding: that collaboration among unions, educators, families, community members, school districts, and health partners can be a lifeline in times of need, and life changing for students who deserve all of our compassion and care.

# Connected Community Schools Timeline



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For additional information about Rome's Connected Community Schools, please access their 2019-20 annual report at <https://connectedcommunityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/10/CCS-Annual-Report-Booklet.pdf> or go to their website at <https://connectedcommunityschools.org/>.

For information about the American Federation of Teachers and the AFT Innovation Fund, please visit <https://www.aft.org/innovate>.





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