The Center for Cities and Schools was founded to research the synergy between cities and public education and to promote understanding and collaboration between educators and urban policy makers. It was officially launched in 2004 at the University of California Berkeley's Institute of Urban and Regional Development (IURD) in the College of Environmental Design.

The Center's work aims to make visible the diverse aspects of metropolitan life that are inseparable from academic development and learning. We do so through education, research, and direct service. Each area of work explores two interrelated questions:

- How can neighborhoods, cities, and regions promote high quality public education?
- How can public education promote healthy, vibrant neighborhoods, cities, and regions?

Schools cannot be the sole institution responsible for preparing future generations to be active, engaged, and healthy citizens. The lives of young people are shaped by their housing, health care, employment opportunities, and safety on the streets. To address the impact these urban realities have on student achievement, educational policy makers and schools need the support of other agencies and communities.

The Center's work focuses on local and regional issues in the Bay Area and California, as well as on national issues. Since 2004, the Center has launched a wide range of initiatives. These include: creating interdisciplinary courses and areas of study between the UC Berkeley College of Environmental Design and the Graduate School of Education; conducting a state-wide study on school siting and community development; and developing a set of tools designed to support collaboration between urban policy makers and educators.
The Challenge

The importance of an effective school system is common sense to policy makers and lay people alike. Yet, while nearly 90% of our nation’s children attend public schools, there are currently few avenues and little institutional infrastructure enabling urban leaders and educators to come together toward mutual goals of improving cities and schools.

Urban and metropolitan areas are stratified socially and economically. As federal government programs and policies aimed at breaking decades of inequality and social injustice continue to decline, cities must innovate to address the diverse needs of their communities, especially for young people. But our nation’s public schools suffer from declining resources and rapidly increasing demands for improved academic performance. Joint planning between urban policymakers and educators is hampered by institutional structures not designed for the task and by employees trained in disparate disciplines speaking different languages. Today, the historic disconnect is being confronted by rapidly changing conditions both within education and in metropolitan regions.

Research shows that urban contexts and environmental decisions have important, under-acknowledged impacts on schools and school quality. These unintended and inter-related consequences include:

- Re-segregation of schools, both racially and economically, caused by housing policy and market trends, and
- Isolation of schools from civic institutions and thus lost and/or duplicate resources,
- Lack of awareness and understanding of the community-based context in which the school exists and engages.

Center’s Core Beliefs

The driving assumption of the Center for Cities & Schools is that high quality education is essential for urban and metropolitan vitality. Urban policies must support educational reforms and educational reform must support urban policies.

The Center’s work in education, research, and collaborative practice is guided by three core beliefs:

- **Planning:** The built environment impacts educational quality.
  
  Housing, land use, school facilities and transportation shape the nature and quality of public education and must be talked about in relation to schools and educational quality.

- **Education:** The quality and nature of public schools impact urban and metropolitan vitality.
  
  Schools that are socio-economically diverse, with rigorous curriculum relevant to all learners, and public policies connected to local planning efforts help revitalize their urban environments.

- **Governance:** Collaborative and participatory institutions sustain systemic reform.
  
  To improve both cities and schools, breaking down the institutional and disciplinary barriers between city planning, education, and other related fields is necessary. Alternatives to traditional silo governance approaches are needed that both require and promote interdisciplinary collaboration and engage students and families as critical participants.
Strategies

Education, Research, & Collaborative Practice

To both share our knowledge and learn from others, the Center partners with many local and national organizations to perform a range of activities aimed at addressing the challenges previously described. This work includes education, research, and direct service.

Education

UC Berkeley Courses

- Cities, Regions and Schools: Planning for the Next Generation
  This interdisciplinary graduate course brings together students of different disciplines (planning, education, design, journalism, policy, and others) to examine the ways in which the metropolitan and urban environment impacts public education.

- Neighborhood Planning with High School Youth: The Y-PLAN (Youth — Plan, Learn, Act, Now!)
  This is an award-winning course where undergraduate and graduate students in urban planning, design, and education learn how to engage youth as genuine stakeholders and participants in local planning projects.

Center Symposia

Each semester, scholars join policy leaders to discuss topics at the intersection of planning and education. The fall 2005 forum featured Emeryville City Manager John Flores and Emery Unified School District Superintendent Tony Smith who presented on their innovative effort to redesign their school district as a “Center for Community Life.” The spring 2006 forum, offered in partnership with the Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program and Bay Area LISC, will explore the relationships among education, housing and development. Summaries of our forums can be found at citiesandschools.berkeley.edu

Research

- The Social Environment
  Mobility, Housing, & Academic Development. Since 1998, more than 700 Bay Area children have been relocated as a part of the HOPE VI Urban Revitalization program. Little to no attention has been paid to the impact of this relocation on the education of the children or on the schools they have attended. In collaboration with housing authorities in Richmond and Oakland, the Center is assessing the effect of the HOPE VI housing policies on families’ and children’s educational experience.

- The Built Environment
  Planning & Siting New Public Schools in the Context of Community Development: The California Experience. Since 2002, California has passed over $20 billion in state school facility measures. This research takes a case study approach to understanding the planning and siting of new public schools in built-out urban areas. It looks specifically at the land use “silo planning” practices endemic to school districts and cities. The study illuminates examples of coordinated planning efforts in the current era of overcrowded schools, aging infrastructure, shrinking fiscal capacities, and changing demographics.

- The Natural Environment
  The City Watershed Education Project. Technology is becoming an increasingly important tool in engaging both adults and youth in understanding the natural environment. The City Watershed evaluation studies how the UC Berkeley’s Interactive University Project works with UC partners across the campus, Bay Area high schools and environmental non-profits to use technology to protect the urban watershed.

Collaborative Practice

- Social Enterprises for Learning (SEfL) Projects
  To enable local schools to engage directly with their broader neighborhoods and cities, we partner with teachers in San Francisco and Oakland, California to develop Social Enterprises for Learning. Such projects “turn schools inside out” where the community becomes a text for learning, local resources are brought to classrooms, and learners contribute to their neighborhoods.

- The National Youth Leadership for Change Initiative (YLC)
  In partnership with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development, and many community organizations, the Center created the Youth Leadership for Change initiative focusing on creating healthy and sustainable public housing communities. Using video, radio, and other media as tools for social change, over 500 participants from 47 cities have been involved in YLC starting local youth councils and a wide range of youth programs and projects.

- Training and Professional Development
  CC&S faculty and staff provide professional development to educational, community, and urban leaders in areas ranging from community-based teaching and learning to joint-use planning.
Collaborative Approach

The Center's education, research, and collaborative practice aims to be as seamless and integrated as possible. For example, the Center's direct work with city leaders, community organizations, and schools identifies key issues that need to be better understood through interdisciplinary research. Our research informs our educational programs. We incorporate information and insights resulting from studies in the Center's classes as well as local and national public forums.

Partnerships

Developing strategic partnerships, both locally and nationally, is central to the Center's operational approach and ability to realize our goals. They include:

Bay Area and California

- California Department of Education, School Facilities Planning Division
- California Public School Districts, including Berkeley, Emeryville, Oakland, Richmond, and San Francisco
- Community Organizations
- Housing Authorities, including Oakland, Richmond, and San Francisco
- Local Initiatives Support Corp. (LISC), Bay Area
- Public Officials, including Oakland City Council

National

- Brookings Institution Metropolitan Policy Program
- 21st Century School Fund
- U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD)
- Fannie Mae Foundation

Theory of Change

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<tr>
<td>The physical environment, e.g., housing and school facilities, impacts quality education</td>
<td><strong>Education</strong>: Provide interdisciplinary courses and public forums</td>
<td><strong>Education and city planning professionals better prepared to collaborate effectively</strong></td>
<td>Urban and metropolitan communities and public education create integrated and mutually beneficial policies, practices, and governance systems, enabling all students – from all communities – to participate and excel in our economy and democracy</td>
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<td>The quality and nature of public schools impact urban and metropolitan vitality</td>
<td><strong>Research</strong>: Critically assess evidence on the linkages between education, housing, facilities, and neighborhoods</td>
<td><strong>Publish and disseminate research findings informing effective urban and metropolitan policymaking</strong></td>
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<td>Collaborative governance structures sustain systemic reform</td>
<td><strong>Collaborative Practice</strong>: Build capacity for students and schools to partner with cities/urban leaders in shaping social change</td>
<td><strong>Urban and metropolitan policies incorporate high quality education into planning and decision making</strong></td>
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Driving Assumption: High Quality Education Is Essential for Urban and Metropolitan Vitality

Sponsors

- Annie E. Casey Foundation
- Robert Wood Johnson Foundation
- San Francisco Foundation
- Stuart Foundation
- City of Oakland Housing Authority
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