



JOINT USE SCHOOL PARTNERSHIPS IN CALIFORNIA: STRATEGIES TO ENHANCE SCHOOLS AND COMMUNITIES

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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School facilities and grounds are integral components of public infrastructure that provide students with space to learn, socialize, and exercise. However, once the school day is over, many school grounds and facilities sit empty during evenings and on weekends. As interest grows in addressing pressing concerns such as childhood obesity, lack of recreation/open space, suburban sprawl, and the need to efficiently use limited public resources, many consider joint use of school facilities as one strategic approach to help address these issues. While developing the partnerships and agreements necessary to offer additional programs and services on school grounds – and in some cases construct new facilities to house them – is not simple, school districts and local jurisdictions throughout California are working together to accommodate school and community needs. This report provides an accessible, detailed discussion of what joint use is, why local entities partner, and how these partnerships are formed and implemented.

Broadly defined, joint use is an agreement between a district and another public or private entity where facilities, land, utilities, or other common elements are shared between two or more parties on site. However, joint use is a flexible term and each locality's concept of it can vary. How joint use is defined or described can have an impact on how a joint use program or facility is funded or administered. Local entities in California pursue joint use partnerships for a variety of reasons including the availability of state-level joint use funding, realizing construction or operational cost savings, and school board philosophy or direction.

There is significant variation across California in how joint use partnerships are implemented. Each community may address a specific local need by sharing resources and responsibilities and creating a unique joint use program and/or facility. This report looks at three joint use case studies:

1. San Francisco Unified School District's partnership with the city to open up existing school yards to the general public on weekends,
2. Garvey Elementary School District's partnership with the City of Rosemead to build two new gymnasiums at existing school sites, and
3. Clovis Unified School District's partnership with a local community college district to construct and operate a child development center.

The cases illustrate how joint use partnerships are created and maintained in different contexts within California.

Drawing from the case studies and existing research, several key lessons emerged:

Lesson 1: Building sustainable and trusting relationships is essential

Lesson 2: Liability concerns are surmountable, and

Lesson 3: Leaders must craft joint use partnerships that address explicit local needs.

We conclude with seven recommended steps to crafting effective joint use partnerships:

1. Identify a local need that a joint use partnership might address,
2. Identify essential joint use partners,
3. Develop a positive, trusting relationship with partners,
4. Build political support,
5. Build a joint use partnership within the context of the local community,
6. Formalize the partnership, and
7. Foster ongoing communication and monitor the progress and impact of the joint use agreement/program.

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