

COMMUNITY SCHOOL: WHAT IT IS - AND WHAT IT ISN'T

Understanding what the Community School model means for Peace River Elementary

Peace River Elementary: A United Way community school. SAME SCHOOL. MORE COMMUNITY BEHIND IT.

There have been questions about what it means for Peace River Elementary to become Charlotte County's first United Way Community School. Here's the most important thing to know:

Peace River is still Peace River Elementary. It is still a Charlotte County Public School.

It is not a charter school, not a new school within the school, and no outside organization is taking it over. A Community School brings the school and community closer together. It connects students, families and staff with resources, relationships and opportunities already available throughout Charlotte County - and brings community partners together to help identify and fill gaps.

THE CONNECTION POINT

A full-time United Way Charlotte County Community School Coordinator will work on-site at Peace River Elementary. The UWCC employee will work closely with school leadership, staff and families to understand needs, connect people with resources and coordinate community partners around the school.

WHY PEACE RIVER?

Peace River is where we begin because the school represents both significant need and tremendous opportunity. It has dedicated educators, engaged families and tremendous potential. Starting with one school allows us to listen, build strong relationships, learn what works and develop the Community School around the needs of the people who are actually part of the school.

MYTH

A Community School is a new school or a "school within a school."

A Community School does not replace or change the existing school. Peace River remains part of Charlotte County Public Schools, with its existing teachers, staff and school leadership.

What changes is the network of support surrounding the school. Stronger connections among the school, families, United Way and community partners make resources and opportunities easier to access.

Same school. Same educators. Same school community. More community behind it.

MYTH

The Community School will bring a bunch of new programs into Peace River.

The goal is not to create another layer of programs. Charlotte County already has tremendous resources - nonprofits, businesses, healthcare organizations, volunteers, programs and services.

The Community School helps connect those existing resources to the people who need them and identifies where additional support may truly be needed.

We're not replacing what's working. We're connecting and strengthening it.

COMMUNITY SCHOOL: THE FACTS

MYTH

A Community School is a community center for everyone in Charlotte County.

The Community School at Peace River Elementary is focused on serving Peace River students, families and staff. The goal is to connect those families with resources, services and opportunities based on the needs of the Peace River school community.

As the Community School model grows, the vision is to bring this approach to additional schools across Charlotte County, creating stronger support around more students and families over time.

Peace River is where we begin.

MYTH

United Way is taking over Peace River or its programs.

United Way Charlotte County is not taking over the school. The Community School is a collaborative effort involving Charlotte County Public Schools, Peace River Elementary, United Way Charlotte County and community partners.

United Way's role is to convene, connect and mobilize. A full-time UWCC Community School Coordinator will work on-site at Peace River, alongside school leadership and staff, to connect people with resources, coordinate partners and services, identify gaps and mobilize community support.

Instead of expecting families or school staff to figure out who to call, the Coordinator helps connect the dots.

This is something we build together. Everyone has a role to play.

MYTH

A Community School is mainly about providing food, clothing and other basic needs.

Meeting basic needs is an important part of the model, but the vision is much bigger. Depending on priorities identified by the Peace River community, connections may include academic enrichment, health resources, mental health support, financial stability, mentoring, family engagement, volunteer support, enrichment activities and more.

And community includes the people who work at Peace River. Supporting teachers and school staff helps create a stronger environment for the students and families they serve.

The goal isn't simply more services. It's a stronger, more connected school community.

WHAT WILL A COMMUNITY SCHOOL LOOK LIKE AT PEACE RIVER?

It will grow over time based on the voices and needs of students, families and staff. Some work may be visible - community partners at the school, family activities, volunteer opportunities or new resources. Some will happen behind the scenes as the Community School Coordinator helps organizations and resources work together more effectively.

LEARN MORE

Explore the Peace River Elementary Community School: unitedwayccfl.org/PRES

Watch the Community School video: youtu.be/nL3ixlCf4zo

Read the [official announcement](#)

In Service,

Angie Matthiessen, MSW

CEO | UnitedWayCharlotteCounty

