

CASE STUDY

Cultivating Social Health Through Resources, Internships, and Relationships

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For more information about implementing wrap-around school models, see [this guide](#) in our series *Promising Practices from Washington State*.



CASE STUDY SCHOOL

The practice described in this guide is based on the experience of Lumen High School (Lumen). Lumen is located in Spokane, Washington and serves teen parents in 9th to 12th grade. The public charter school opened in September 2020. In the 2023-24 school year, 32 students were enrolled; 88% of students were low-income, 16% were homeless, and 59% were unaccompanied minors. For a detailed school profile, see [appendix A](#).

Lumen High School's comprehensive strategy for promoting social health addresses essential needs among its population of teen parents. Lumen students face many challenges in addition to being teen parents. Among the student population in the 2023-24 school year, 59% were unaccompanied minors, 17% were involved in the juvenile justice system, and 16% were homeless. Many students have to navigate employment, court systems, and housing applications, in addition to juggling a student workload and childcare. By providing access to essential resources, Lumen gives students the ability to stabilize their lives and stay in school.

"The percentage of students we have that are unaccompanied is really high," said Lumen's social health coordinator. "Our students, because they are pregnant or parenting, heavily rely on community resources for education, services, or tangible things, and it takes a ton of time to identify, connect with, and mobilize those resources."



SCHOOLS CAN PROMOTE SOCIAL HEALTH BY:

- Facilitating access to resources and services,
- Supporting students and families in building community relationships, and
- Cultivating knowledge and competencies so students can access resources and community relationships on their own.

By using all three approaches, schools improve student academic outcomes and establish a foundation for long-term physical, mental, and relational health.¹

Lumen Supports Students

Resources

The school's social health initiative provides resources for students to address their needs both in and out of school, allowing them more time to focus on academics. "When we started planning our mission, it was like 'How do students not have to choose between being a parent and being a student?' Which led us to think we have to have a school that supports the whole student," said Lumen's founder.

In order to do that, Lumen offers extensive on-site and off-site resources that enhance its students' quality of life. Many resources assist students with teen parenthood: on-site baby clothing, free childcare, support for infant health, and parenting classes. Other resources are aimed at helping a student demographic that struggles with food insecurity and access to essential needs. The school partners with organizations to provide a food bank, medical services, and access to mental health professionals. Some organizations push in to offer services like legal assistance for students or cultural competency training for teachers.

The model benefits both Lumen and community organizations. For community organizations, these partnerships facilitate access to under-served students, allowing them to better reach their target population. Because of this mutual benefit, most community organizations offer their services to Lumen students for free.



1 Bethell, C. D., Garner, A. S., Gombojav, N., Blackwell, C., Heller, L., & Mendelson, T. (2022). Social and Relational Health Risks and Common Mental Health Problems Among US Children: The Mitigating Role of Family Resilience and Connection to Promote Positive Socioemotional and School-Related Outcomes. *Child and Adolescent Psychiatric Clinics of North America*, 31(1), 45–70.

Galindo, C., Sanders, M., & Abel, Y. (2017). Transforming Educational Experiences in Low-Income Communities: A Qualitative Case Study of Social Capital in a Full-Service Community School. *American Educational Research Journal*, 54(1_suppl), 140S-163S.

Internships

Lumen's internship program is also a part of its social health initiative. The program places eligible students in part-time, paid positions with local businesses one day per week during a time dedicated to electives or internships. The student-internship relationship can be beneficial for the intern and employer. Students accumulate work experience and may find a greater sense of connection to their local region. Local businesses have the opportunity to invest in the workforce, practice their values, and contribute to the health of their community.

"I'm a small business in the heart of downtown and I feel really strongly about building community and support with other organizations in proximity to my business," said a local business owner and internship site.

Lumen has also partnered with a non-profit organization that offers career exploration programming. The non-profit visits with students to identify job interests, prepare for interviews, and network with community businesses.

LUMEN HIGH SCHOOL TACKLES STUDENT NEEDS ON THREE FRONTS:

1. **A full-time school social worker** helps students navigate in-school and outside resources to address housing needs, legal issues, food insecurity, and financial concerns. She also helps students build relationships and cultivate resource navigation, time management, and self-advocacy skills.
2. Lumen has a suite of **in-school resources**. These include food, baby clothing, childcare, access to WIC (the USDA's special supplemental nutrition program for women, infants, and children), a community nurse, and mental health support. Other community organizations **push into the school**, providing students with classes in parenting and career exploration, counseling services and trauma support using partnerships with universities and local organizations. See [appendix B](#) for a full list of partners.
3. **Lumen's internship program** connects students with paid internships that help them explore career paths and develop professional skills. The internship coordinator works closely with industry partners, helping students build supportive relationships within their internship site. While not typical of wrap-around school models, internships are central to Lumen's social health initiative because they are another avenue for students to build social support and social capital in their local community.

Knowledge, Skills, and Relationships

Lumen uses a full-time school social worker as their social health coordinator. Her presence significantly reduces the time it would take for students to navigate resources and communicate with government agencies on their own. She meets with four to six students per day to assist them with phone calls and paperwork, while coaching them on the process so students build self-advocacy skills and confidence.

At Lumen, the social health coordinator coaches students using an “I do, we do, you do” model. For example, she might show a student how to navigate the state’s [Women, Infants, Children](#) (WIC) site and then call a provider, putting the call on speaker phone so the student can hear the conversation. Once the call is over, the coordinator discusses it with the student, making sure to speak to why she handled the conversation the way she did. In the future, she will navigate the WIC site with the student. Finally, the student will take the lead on navigating the website and making phone calls, with the coordinator present to provide support and feedback.

Community partners also help students build knowledge and skills. The nurse said that students often stop by between classes and during lunch to ask questions, share concerns, or simply connect. Said one on-site health care provider, “That has been a big piece for me, talking to them about what’s gonna happen when they go to the hospital. Questions to ask when they go to the doctor. When they go to the doctor and they hear something scary, helping them understand what that actually means... The whole thing is not somebody trying to take away their autonomy and hurt them, not everyone in the healthcare system is like that.”

In addition to meeting student needs, Lumen’s many partnerships serve to build social support and social capital for students. Explains another on-site health provider: “They pop in, they say ‘Hi,’ and they tell us about how their week is going. So, we also kind of serve as another safe person to counsel them and a safe space to talk about anything.” Said the staff person of an organization that comes to Lumen several times a week, “I think it’s more comfortable for them to come to us since we’ve built that connection with them and it’s more personal than just going to their pediatrician.”

Cost and funding

Lumen’s social health initiative is relatively affordable considering the number of services it offers. (See [appendix B](#) for a full list.) The cost equates to a conservative estimate of \$3,800 for each of the 30 enrolled students. Lumen’s initiative is more expensive than it would be for most other schools because of Lumen’s internship program, intensive wrap-around support, and its small size. We estimate [\\$735 per pupil](#) for a typical model.



Most of these costs are covered through grants. The initiative uses the equivalent of a full-time social health coordinator and a part-time internship coordinator. The cost of these roles is offset through two federal grants and a Communities in Schools grant, which means that staffing costs do not come out of Lumen's general operating budget. Only four of the 17 partnership organizations come at a cost to Lumen. Two of these are local, Black-led organizations that offer parenting education and staff training. Other partnerships cost money on an as-needed basis, like a GED service for students who have too few credits to earn a high school diploma.

Lumen's model serves all enrolled students, although other schools may want to focus their initiative on a subset of students and families. A targeted approach can make social health more affordable and sustainable.

Lessons Learned

Lumen's social health initiative has been in place since the school opened its doors in 2020. Over time, the school has learned important lessons and adjusted its approach.

Collecting data

In the 2023–24 school year, Lumen started to collect systematic data on student needs and resource use. The social worker created [an inventory](#) to collect information from all new and returning students. Information about student needs are put into [Supported School](#), a free MTSS (multi-tiered system of supports) app that compiles the data and helps the social health coordinator determine which interventions may be most helpful. She also uses the app for two-way communication with other school support staff. Staff can see what resources students are accessing, and they can also alert the coordinator of issues as they arise.

Incorporating Input

Lumen believes that the voice of students is critical for building a social health initiative. Over time, the school has become more intentional about seeking and integrating student input. When the school is considering adding a new community partnership, they bring students together to talk about the opportunity. The school asks students how they feel about forming certain partnerships and whether they find the proposed programs to be beneficial or not. At a small school like Lumen, they can do this during morning meetings.

"We created a safe environment so if the group is not aligned with our goals, we can act as a buffer," said the school's leader. "Or we can ask our students if they want a group back and want to have that partnership."



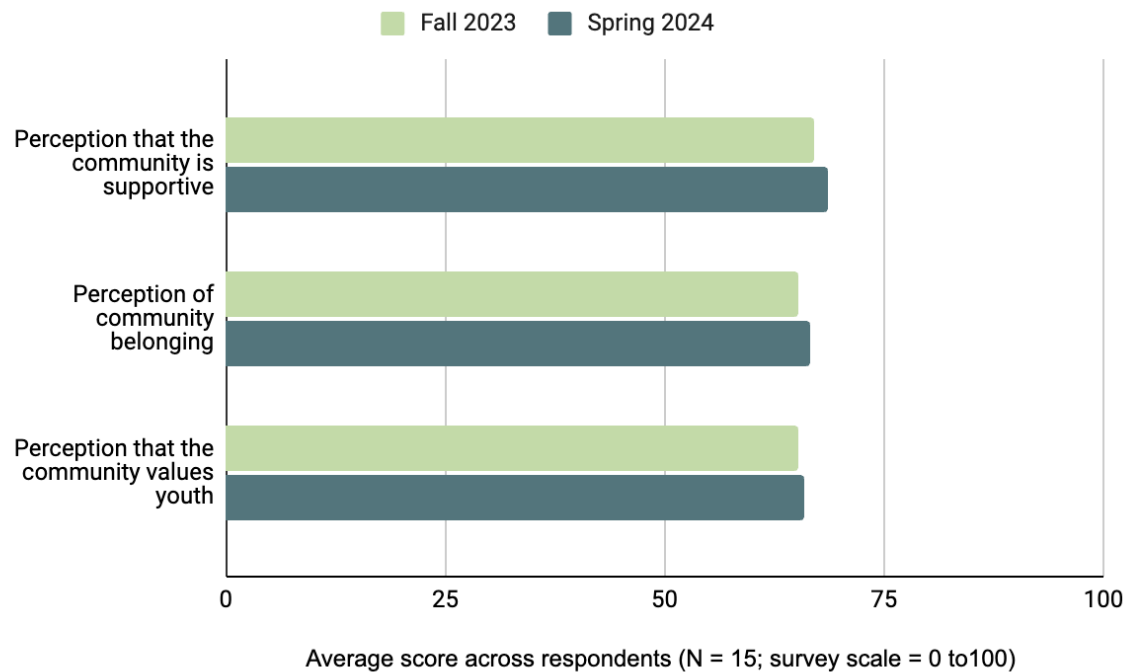
Including Social Health in School Curriculum

Three years after launching their social health initiative, Lumen High School moved to a project-based instructional model centered around community issues. Students select projects from a list their teachers create each term. Students then work as a class on one project per semester. A recent project focused on opioid addiction. Students created proposals, like a clean needle exchange program, and then called local politicians to try to get traction for their idea.

Effects on Students

Although the change is modest, there was improvement in student perception of their local community over the 2023–24 school year,² as shown in figure 1. This includes the perception that their broader community is supportive and a place where they belong.

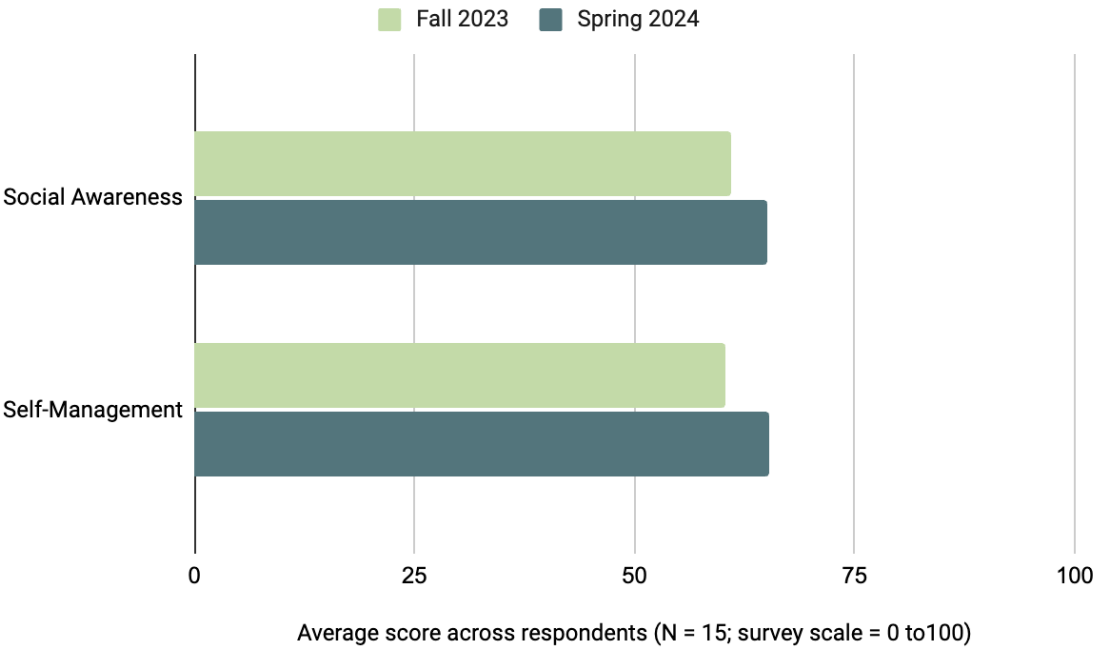
FIGURE 1: *Student perception of the community showed modest improvement over the 2023–24 school year*



2 Results based on [Flourishing Life](#), a survey administered in the 2023–24 school year to help Lumen track student well-being and the cultivation of social, emotional, and academic skills. The survey was administered to a total of 34 students during roughly three time periods: October, February, and May. We used only two time periods to descriptively report student progress across the Flourishing Life domains over the 2023–24 school year. Fifteen students had two survey time points that were four or more months apart. Thus, we only included those 15 students in our analysis. The survey has 88 items across 12 sub-scales. We selected the subscales that best aligned with the practice under study. The line items in our charts are subscales made up of individual survey items.

In addition to its social health initiative, Lumen also rolled out a new mentoring program and revised its restorative discipline approach in the 2023–24 school year. We can’t attribute changes in social-emotional skill development to the social health initiative, but it may have contributed to improvements that occurred over the school year (shown in figure 2).

FIGURE 2: *Student social awareness and self-management improved over the 2023-24 school year*



In focus groups, Lumen’s social health initiative was the first feature that students praised. When asked what they liked about school, a student said: “They help you with everything, like doctor’s appointments. Just last week they took me to my son’s doctor’s appointment. It’s amazing.”

Students said service access was an important part of helping them stay engaged at school: “It means I don’t have to worry, stress, about the money. And when I’m stressed out, that’s when I tend not to do school.” Reflecting on what they had learned since coming to Lumen, another student said, “It’s okay to ask for help.”



APPENDIX A:

Profile of Lumen High School

Location: Spokane, Washington

Founded: 2020

Level: High school with on-site daycare/preschool

Type: School for teen parents

ENROLLMENT

	2022–23 SY	2023–24 SY
Number enrolled	36	32
Students with disabilities	28%	12.5%
Multilingual learners	0%	3%
Unaccompanied minors*	50%	59%
Foster youth*	8%	2.3%
Juvenile justice involved*	No data	17%
Low-income students	92%	88%
Homeless students	36%	16%

Source: Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [school report card](#); *school social worker for data on unaccompanied minors, foster youth, and juvenile justice involved youth

STUDENT RACE/ETHNICITY

	2022–23 SY	2023–24 SY
American Indian or Alaska Native	6%	13%
Asian	0%	3%
Black or African American	6%	3%
Hispanic or Latino	14%	19%
Native Hawaiian or Pacific Islander	0%	6%
Two or more races	22%	19%
White	53%	37%

Source: Washington Office of Superintendent of Public Instruction [school report card](#)

ACADEMIC PROFILE

	2022–23 SY	2023–24 SY
Attendance	50.85%	51.01%
GPA for all students*	1.49	1.17
GPA for regular attenders†	2.89	2.53

Source: School attendance files and transcripts

Notes: *Average student GPA was 1.48 prior to attending Lumen. Grading policies changed in the 2023-24 school year.

†Regular attenders are defined as students who attend at least 65% of the time.

STAFFING PROFILE

Administrators: 2

Teachers: 4

Push-in and small group academic support staff: 2

Social Worker: 1

School Counselor: 1

Internship Coordinator: 1

On-site community organizations: 5

APPENDIX B:

Lumen High School Community Partners

Lumen high school has three types of community partnerships: on-site, push-in, and off-site. In the 2023–24 school year, they worked with 17 community organizations, excluding internship sites.

Community organizations are regularly on-site.

With this type of partnership, a community organization has a physical presence on the school campus. The organization may be on-site daily, weekly, or monthly.

Lumen High School has the following organizations on-site:

- **An early learning center.** [GLOW](#) provides free care on-site for the children of Lumen’s teen parents and also serves staff/teachers and community members.
- **Mental health services.** The school maintains an office for on-site [mental health services](#) provided by the Washington State Healthcare Authority. Providers have a regular, weekly schedule.
- **Physical health services.** CHAS provides health services including emergency care, problem-focused visits, preventative care, and wellness visits for students and their children. CHAS provides medical services two half days a week.
- **Food security services.** WIC is on-site one day a week and is available by appointment. WIC provides access to fruit, milk, and other food for students and their families. There is also a backpack program through [Bite2Go](#) for students to bring food home in the evenings and over the weekend.
- **Baby clothing for students’ children.** A baby boutique has donated baby and toddler clothes and is open every day within the school building.

Organizations push-in with materials, resources, training, or programming.

With this type of partnership, organizations do not have a regular, physical presence at the school. This is a good option when organizations mainly provide temporary services, like material goods or training.

The following organizations push into Lumen High School:

- **Anti-racism training.** The [Carl Maxey Center](#) provides training to teachers and staff.
- **Trauma support groups.** [Lutheran Community Services](#) offers support and art groups for students who have experienced trauma and sexual assault.
- **Childcare training and resources.** This is offered by [Sleep Safe](#) at no cost to students.
- **GED training.** This is only available on a per-student basis to students who are about to age out of the public school system, which means they will not be able to obtain a high school diploma. It is offered on a per-student basis by [Next Generation Zone](#).

- **Career exploration.** The nonprofit [Slingshot](#) comes weekly during the elective block to help prepare students for internships.
- **Child development support.** This is offered by a local parenting lab, which supports active play with children.
- **Parenting training.** [Shades of Motherhood Network](#) is a local nonprofit that comes to the school one to two times a week.

Organizations are available off-site through a referral process.

With this type of partnership, the social health coordinator cultivates relationships with external organizations that do not have a presence at the school. The social health coordinator takes a hands-on role in helping students or families navigate these resources and relationships.

The following organizations are off-site resources for Lumen High School:

- **Legal aid** through [Spokane Free Lawyers and Legal Aide](#), an off-site resource that offers free legal aid.
- **Housing** services.
- **State agencies** like the Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP), Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF), and the Washington State Department of Social and Health Services (DSHS).
- **Local homeless shelter** serving teen parents, [Alexandria House](#).
- **Paid Internships** through local businesses. The school matches a student with a paid internship (at least minimum wage). Students attend their internships Wednesday afternoons and receive school credit.

About the Project

Project Description

This guide is part of a two-year participatory evaluation that concluded in May 2024. We worked with Washington State public charter schools Lumen High School and Catalyst Public School. The evaluation started with a single question: “What is working in your school?” Researchers Georgia Heyward and Sivan Tuchman worked closely with school leaders to identify promising practices and create research plans to study implementation and outcomes. The result is [six guides](#) for each of the practices identified:

- Collaborative Conversations: A Skill-Building Restorative Practice
- Co-Teaching for All: Using Two Educators in a Classroom to Individualize Learning
- Cultivating Connection: How to Design and Implement School-Based Mentoring
- Social Health: A New Model for Wrap-Around School Services
- Station Rotation: Grouping Students for Individualized Learning
- Summer Professional Development: Creating a Foundation of Teacher Relationships

We also produced a [summary report](#) identifying how schools and systems can create learning environments that promote whole-school well-being. See that report for a full description of the research methodology.

Authors

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