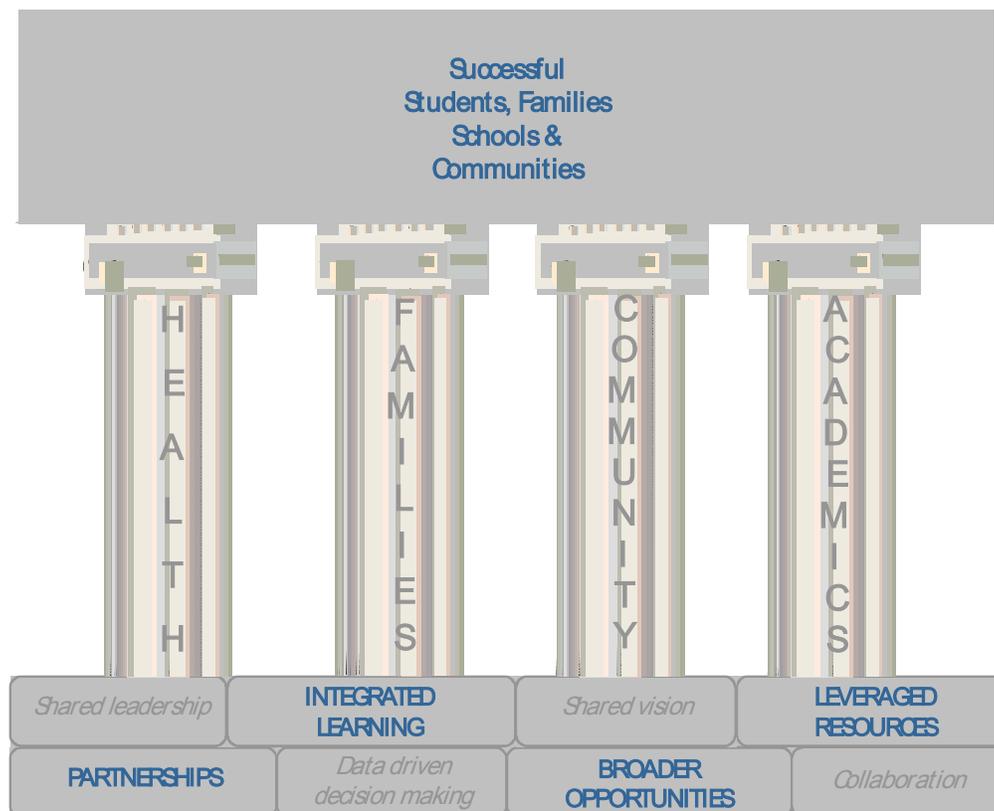


The Federation for Community Schools

Community School Transformation: A Guide for Schools, Districts, Parents, and Community Members

Working Together to Improve Outcomes for Students, Families and Communities



Community School Transformation:

A Guide for Schools, Districts, Parents, and Community Members

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COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: THE FUTURE OF EDUCATION

Most schools and communities in the United States and beyond face a common challenge: families, community members and educators want the best education available to children and look for ways to meet children's non-academic needs. Schools and students also benefit from involved families and community members, two proven avenues for improving student achievement.

The **community school** framework provides an effective and proven structure through which schools improve academic outcomes, meet the developmental needs of all children and become a true resource for families and community members.

What IS a Community School?

A community school is a partnership among community stakeholders, parents and schools focused on supporting student development, improving student outcomes, supporting families and developing strong communities. When schools, families and communities work together, every component of this partnership can be strengthened and engaged. In addition, community schools organize resources around the holistic development of young people in a student-centered environment (i.e., the school). Community resources are more effectively and more efficiently used because schools and service providers can coordinate their interventions to deliver stronger outcomes and improve accountability for public and private funds. Students and families are more successful and the whole community benefits from partnerships that support the development of all.



Afterschool academic time

Given how practical and powerful the community school model is, many schools have already begun the journey toward becoming community schools. The first step is to recognize that schools cannot do everything that they are being asked to do alone. They need to forge partnerships with communities in order to “do it all.”

Students come to school with a range of capacities and challenges. Strong schools recognize the importance of partnering with other organizations to ensure that all students' developmental needs are met. By building strong partnerships among schools and service providers, community schools deliver a more integrated approach to student and family development. In addition to forging partnerships to meet non-academic needs, community schools also actively support academic development by coordinating and aligning programs and outcomes with classroom learning, and therefore support student success.

Most simply put, community schools work because they follow the ABCs.

ABC's of Community Schools:

- A** = Align out of school time with class learning
- B** = Bring communities, families and schools together
- + **C** = Coordinate resources for children and families
Success for children, families, schools and communities

Community school – A definition

A **community school** is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and community resources. Working collaboratively, schools, families and community partners organize resources according to the interests and needs of local students and their families. Programs and services are delivered at and around the school before, during, and after the traditional school day and align outcomes with the academic curriculum and all areas of student development.

Source: *The Coalition for Community Schools*

Community schools are like many other high-quality schools. Beyond a focus on core academic instruction, high-quality schools ensure that barriers to academic success are identified and removed. A community school creates partnerships to do just those things – to strengthen academic performance and eliminate barriers to learning.

Community school programs are coordinated along four pillars of support:

1. **Academic Development** – A community school offers programs and services to ensure that academic remediation, academic support and academic enrichment are offered *in addition* to a *strong core instructional program* taught by high quality motivated teachers. Academic, cultural and arts-related programs are aligned to classroom learning, and enhance--rather than duplicate--children's classroom experiences.
2. **Healthy Minds & Bodies** – A community school ensures that physical, mental and social emotional developmental needs are addressed through curriculum, services and programs. Mental and physical health-related barriers to learning are removed. Students and families have information and tools to achieve optimal health.
3. **Family Support & Engagement** – A community school recognizes parents as important resources, and pays attention to creating a positive, welcoming and supportive school climate and to providing a range of opportunities for parental involvement. A community school provides programs and services that support parents' capacity to be advocates for their children's success. This sometime means offering programs and services directed toward parents' needs. It can also mean recognizing that parents often have the capacity to bring skills and resources to the community school partnership.
4. **Community Engagement** – A community school is actively engaged with the community and provides services, programs and supports for community members. It serves as a resource for community learning and partners with the community provide resources that support student and family development.

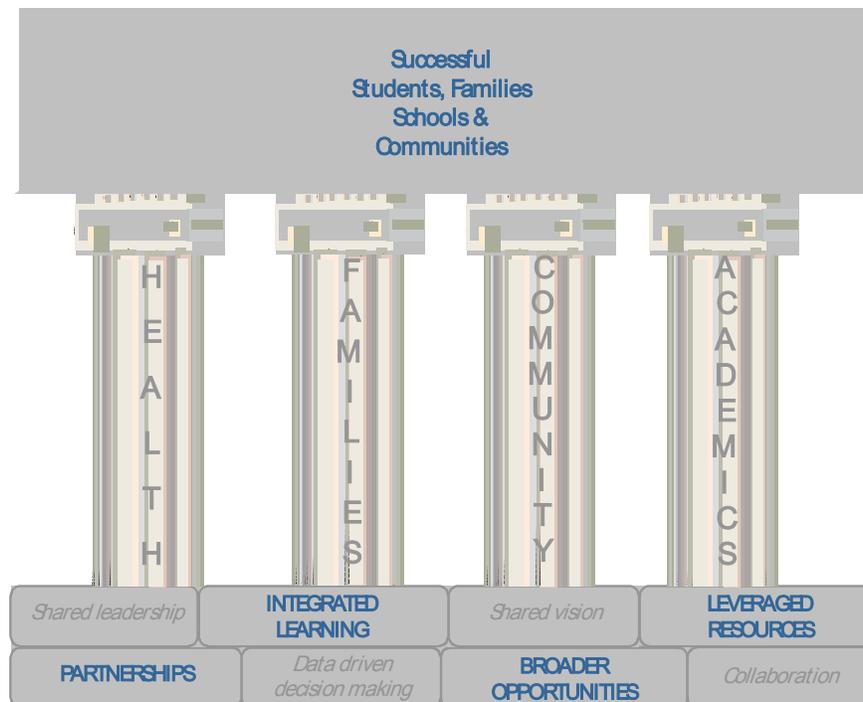
Underpinning the programmatic pillars are guiding principles, common to community schools. Community schools:

- Foster strong partnerships
- Share accountability for results
- Set high expectations for all
- Build on the community's strengths
- Embrace diversity
- Avoid cookie-cutter approaches
- Follow the ABCs – (align, bring together and coordinate)
- Plan for sustainability

Local leaders use these principles as benchmarks against which to measure the “readiness” of the schools in their communities, determine if schools already function as community schools, and evaluate/identify opportunities for further development. Some key questions to assist with this examination include:

- How successful are the school and school community at ensuring students are achieving developmental milestones?
- Are other human development and support systems in the community effective in addressing student and family developmental needs?
- How well do the systems that are in place coordinate and align their resources and services to ensure maximum effectiveness and efficiency?
- Do families and residents have easy access to all programs and services that are designed to enrich and support their development?

Community school leaders, practitioners and supporters have identified the Parthenon as a symbol of strength and longevity and a model through which to articulate community school components. The Parthenon provides a visual depiction of how all of these “pieces” fit together and work in concert to yield strong outcomes for students, families and community members.



It is helpful to keep a few things in mind as this development begins. First, there is no “one right way” for a community school to look – community schools “look” however they need to look to meet their unique student, family and community member needs. Similarly, there is no one right way to create a community school, but there are some guidelines, frameworks and processes that contribute to a more efficient developmental process. These guidelines and frameworks take into account best practices and lessons learned from schools in Illinois and across the country who have undertaken this transformation.

Moving into Community School Development

When a group of people comes together to begin the process of developing into a community school, it is imperative that the group consider if all “voices” are at the table. The team ideally comprises representatives from all of the different groups that will be instrumental in – and will benefit from – community school development. This includes school leadership, staff members, community representatives, parents and even students. Together this team explores the idea of developing a community school, starting with assessing the current level of community school development. Many schools and partnerships operate as community schools on some level, without attributing their work to the community school model. By assessing the current level of community school development, teams can identify work on which to build. This team also can comprise the advisory board, as the development moves further along.

COMPONENTS OF A STRONG FOUNDATION

Many teams, as they begin this work, discover that some of what's needed to facilitate community school development is already in place at the school or in the community. This guide is designed both to support teams who are "starting from scratch," and to enable teams that have identified some work already underway to build upon these foundations (see the Parthenon diagram in the previous section).

Teams are advised to remember that:

- No two community schools are identical – each is created based on the needs and available resources in school/community.
- The process of becoming a community school is developmental – as stakeholders better understand the community school's potential to meet needs, they can identify increased opportunities for children, families and community members.
- Consistent involvement of stakeholders and consistent opportunities to reflect on and learn from development and program implementation will help ensure growth and success.

However, all successful community schools begin with a strong foundation. In their zeal to begin programming, many new community school partners skimp on the construction of a strong foundation for development. They skip pieces of the foundation, or build them too quickly to jump-start community school transformation. This can have longer-term repercussions, in the form of more time spent later addressing these fundamentals, human resources, and team relationships. The challenges that arise in the absence of any component of the foundation will often bring a halt to development. The time it will take to sort out the problem, identify potential solutions and then create a plan for corrections to the system can be great. The time it will take to put the stones of the foundation solidly and securely is far less by contrast.

The components of the community school foundation are:



Intergenerational computer class

*Shared leadership
Integrated learning
Shared vision
Leveraged resources
Partnerships
Data-driven decision making
Broader opportunities
Collaboration*

The following sections will explore each in more detail.

FOUNDATION: SHARED VISION

The shared vision is key to a sustainable community school.

“Few if any forces in human affairs are as powerful as a shared vision.” (Peter Senge, 1990)

The advisory board’s first order of business is to develop a shared vision for the community school. This vision should describe the group’s shared hopes and dreams for how they want the community school to serve students, families and community members. In other words, the group outlines what success would look like for every student by the time he or she leaves the K-12 educational system.

In order to be successful coordinating the resources available to support student development, the gatekeepers of those resources must share a common vision for how resources should be used to address needs. Without this common vision, resource allocation can become increasingly complicated.

Whether teams are beginning community school development with a grant that will be allocated to various providers to address student, family and community member needs, or the team is starting off by organizing and coordinating resources that are already being used in the community by bringing them into the school, a shared vision for the outcome(s) of those resources will ensure a smoother implementation of programs and services, and a higher degree of coordination and collaboration among programs and partners.

A strong shared vision:

- Reflects the opinions and beliefs of community school stakeholders.
- Provides direction and guidance to planning.
- Becomes integrated into the implementation process.
- Is meaningful to community school adult stakeholders and students alike.

FOUNDATION: PARTNERSHIP

Community schools begin with partnerships to increase schools' traditional capacity to address the broad variety of issues that affect students' academic success at school. These partnerships are inclusive, rather than exclusive, and bring to the table all the different systems that support and enhance student development. By tapping into the resources of the local community, community schools increase access to different areas of expertise. For example, the school may be a traditional source for academic development, and a social service agency can offer mental health and socioemotional supports to address barriers to learning. Parents, schools and the community share responsibility for the successful development of children, and the community school framework is built upon these systems acting in partnership to meet family and community needs.

Working with a Lead Partner

There are many pathways toward successful implementation of a community school model. Some funders require, and some schools may choose, to work with a lead partner agency (LPA). An LPA is generally a community-based organization that brings expertise to the table that will benefit community school development. The LPA helps to meet specific student needs and often also has expertise in implementing the community school model. The LPA can be a social services organization, a community development organization, or another community-based non-profit. The planning group, which at this point may well be considered the advisory board, can work with school leaders to decide whether to engage a lead partner and what kind of lead partner would be appropriate.

Some benefits of working with an LPA include:

Capacity to bring a network of partners to the table – this could mean bringing a range of services to the school (health services, mental health services, arts, recreation, enrichment and more) or bringing additional partners to contribute to community school development.

Expertise in seeking out and managing complex funding streams – many community-based organizations have experience writing and managing grants, overseeing state or Federally-funded programs and sourcing financial resources to develop programs.

Knowledge or skill base to address particular needs of the school and community population – for example, if the first assessment that the advisory board conducted identified substantial mental health needs among the student population, then partnering with an LPA with expertise in providing mental health services might be beneficial.

Added perspective on organizational development or human development – this may provide a richer understanding of the school/community than the school could have on its own.

Shared leadership and collaboration – skills that could, for example, support community engagement in and with the school.

Working Without a Lead Partner

In some communities, schools have chosen not to identify a lead partner. In these situations, schools often have already established strong collaborative relationships with businesses, community organizations, human service providers and other potential program providers. Such schools already have an “open door” policy and have recognized the benefits of building partnerships to address student developmental needs. In other districts, a department within the school district administration itself acts as a “lead partner,” bringing partners and resources together at one table. In these communities, community school development occurs by deepening and formalizing partnerships that already exist.

When considering whether or not to work with a lead partner, schools and teams may consider some key questions, such as:

- Does the school (and/or district) have strong collaborative relationships with businesses, community organizations and other community resources?
- What is the history of partnership among schools, community organizations, families and other entities?
- What is the nature of partnerships between the school and other organizations in the community?
- Are there structures in place at the school district level to support the development of deeper partnerships?

Non-traditional Partners

In areas in which there are fewer potential partner agencies, some schools work with “non-traditional” partners such as banks, other local businesses, park districts and parent groups to build community schools. The absence of an obvious lead partner agency should not discourage schools from developing into community schools. Rather, creative problem solving and outreach to local businesses and other community organizations – like the park district – can yield strong partnerships that enable schools to meet their constituents’ needs.

Questions to consider regarding partnership:

- What partners are currently working with the school, and/or with other schools in the community?
- Is there potential for strengthening those partnerships? For expanding them to other schools?
- What issues have the greatest impact on student/ family success?
- Who (or what organizations) in the community could bring expertise in these areas?
- What community resources could have greater impact on students if they were partnered with the school?

Community schools also create a network of community partners that work with the school to meet student, family, and community member needs, using the school building as the hub, and thereby expanding the reach of community-based organizations.

FOUNDATION: SHARED LEADERSHIP, DECISION MAKING AND THE ADVISORY BOARD

Shared leadership and community ownership are both crucial to developing and sustaining community schools. The advisory board is a cornerstone of the foundation of community school development. The advisory board comprises key leadership in the school and community, both formal and informal, and often grows out of the original community school planning team (see above).

The **advisory board** (sometimes referred to as the oversight committee or collaborative, governance team, among other terms) is a diverse stakeholder group organized to oversee the transition of a traditional school to a community school and the development and sustainability of the community school.

Membership could include:

- **people who will work directly with the community school programs**
(School faculty – school non-academic support staff – social service providers – community organizations – arts-based organizations – health care providers – recreation services)
- **people who can support the delivery of programs and services through the identification of resources and in-kind support**
(Business – law enforcement – government representatives – community foundations)
- **people who have a clear understanding of student and family needs and resources**
(Parents – students – churches – child care providers – teachers)

Research and best practices demonstrate that schools working in partnership with parents can create to better outcomes for students. As such, a diverse group of parents should be included on the advisory board, representing different grade levels, backgrounds and socio-economic representations of the school/community.

School staff are an integral part of the advisory board. Curriculum leaders from the teaching team can provide valuable input. Teachers who engage with students beyond the classroom are also good to consider. Many schools find that including engineering and food service staff helps to alleviate challenges that arise when the building is open during non-traditional hours.

The advisory board is often convened by the school and (if applicable) the school's LPA. Conveners seek to bring a diverse range of experiences, perspectives and areas of expertise together on the advisory board, so the group can develop a comprehensive understanding of student and family needs and available resources. It is also important that the advisory board conveners provide clear information about the expectations of participation – for example meeting commitments and outreach expectations.

The advisory board is initially a planning team, responsible for developing the plan for implementing programs that will 1. meet identified student, family, and community member needs, and 2. create learning and support opportunities in the school beyond the traditional school day. Once implementation begins, the advisory board becomes a governing team to oversee the transition from a traditional school with programs to a community school.

The advisory board is developed by school principal, agency partner, parent leader, resource coordinator (where applicable). The advisory board numbers 12-20 people.

Membership (could include):

School representation:	Family Representation	Community Representation
Principal Teacher(s) Social Worker Engineering Staff Food Service Staff	Parents Grandparents Students Guardians	Health Services Mental Health Services Arts and Recreation Youth Development Organizations Social Services Local Business Leaders Churches or other faith-based organizations Law Enforcement

Early Tasks:

- Identify shared beliefs and values, agree on a common definition of the goal of student success
- Discuss and decide group norms, decision making processes, meeting times, and expectations for participation
- Develop a shared understanding of the task of becoming a community school
- Conduct both needs and resource assessments of families/parents, teachers, community members and students
- Analyze data and begin to develop outcomes for programming relative to the needs the team seeks to address
- Create an Implementation Plan that includes early program ideas, a plan for monitoring programs, a plan for evaluating programs, and a plan for using evaluation data to drive program decisions
- Create a marketing plan
- Develop the Resource Coordinator Job Description
- Plan and conduct a search for the Resource Coordinator

Ongoing Tasks:

- Monitor progress toward agreed-upon outcomes
- Decide what programs and services will occur in the community school
- Hire Resource Coordinator and/or other key personnel
- Select and change providers as needed
- Engage other stakeholders on an ongoing basis
- Address specific challenges to community school transformation as they arise
- Call for and advocate for policy changes in key institutions to support community school development
- Develop long-range funding and sustainability strategies
- Celebrate successes

Ongoing Advisory Board Roles

It is critical that the advisory board stay engaged with the community school transformation even after the resource coordinator is in place and programming has begun. Oftentimes, community school planners don't see a role for themselves after implementation begins – even principals and partners may step back after the resource coordinator has been hired. However, program implementation is only the beginning of the transformation of a school into a center of community. Without the continued involvement of and support from the advisory board, this work can slow down or grind to a halt. Fostering student development and family and community engagement is an ongoing process. With increased involvement comes increased

investment and shared ownership. It is through these processes and developmental stages that the school becomes a true hub of the community – a community school.



Leadership team at Burroughs Elementary School

Ongoing roles of the advisory board members include providing support, feedback and work around several key areas of community school development and sustainability. Advisory board members support and influence development in the following ways (among others):

Policy: Becoming a **community school** means that the school transforms into a different institution. Lead partners will also discover that working in and with a school through this transition changes their organizations as well. This new, dynamic organization benefits from separate policies and practices. Community school sustainability requires thinking through the policies that help manage development, operation and ongoing success – a major role for advisory board members. Regular communication between the school, the lead partner and the advisory board is necessary to identify policy needs, and design policies that will enhance outcomes.

Program Observation and Monitoring: It is critical to ensure that program providers are delivering the outputs that their program proposal identified and regularly monitor progress towards goals. Community schools establish processes to monitor programs, gauge providers' capacity to work with students and determine if providers follow school policies/protocols, etc. Resource coordinators also work to ensure that program outcomes are aligned with student development needs as they were identified in the needs assessment. They monitor this progress in conjunction with the advisory board to also determine if program outcomes are connected to curriculum goals and outcomes of the school. Program quality issues can be managed through evaluation and program monitoring. Advisory board members and school staff can work together to ensure high quality programs by developing and operating a program observation and monitoring protocol.

Data management: The assessments that initiated the community school development mark the beginning of an ongoing data cycle used to manage and develop the community school. The advisory board has an important role in planning, designing, implementing and analyzing data to ensure their ability to create positive community school outcomes. Data from program evaluations, program monitoring, attendance, student outcomes and other needs assessment are all part of the ongoing data cycle. Board members should work with the leadership to determine how data will be gathered and what their role is in supporting the ongoing data management cycle.

FOUNDATION: BROADER OPPORTUNITIES

Community schools create broader opportunities for students to access programs, services, and resources critical to learning and positive youth development. As a component of the foundation, “broader opportunities” remind community school practitioners that a community school also creates partnerships that enhance learning and engage stakeholders as life-long learners. This happens in three ways:

1. **Access** to a wide-range of learning opportunities
2. **Enrichment** programs, resources and activities for all stakeholders
3. **Balance** among different types of activities

1. **Access** – for many students in the school, opportunities like arts, sports and recreation are limited due to a number of factors. Some families do not have resources to provide these experiences for their children. Some communities do not have a variety of programs available. Even if programs are available, students may be limited by their skills or their own perception of their skills and therefore do not take advantage of these resources. Community schools bring these programs and services into the school and provide access to these programs for a larger number of stakeholders. By building partnerships, community schools can engage community providers to co-locate services at the school. Access is also important for adult programming. Parents and community members often benefit from GED, financial literacy, job skills training, ESL, and a variety of other learning opportunities. When these programs are accessible at the school, adults become more comfortable in the school environment and are more likely to serve as resources of support for student learning as well.
2. **Enrichment** – Community school programs enrich student learning by offering clubs and programs that are academically focused but do not require that students are leaders in or excel in those academic areas. Consider Science Clubs, Spanish Clubs, Math Teasers, and Community Service Clubs – these are all opportunities that can broaden and deepen students’ learning experiences. When these kinds of programs are offered during the afterschool hours and on weekends, program providers can bring these academic topics to life by engaging students in fun projects that do not necessarily feel like academics or “school” but enrich the learning experience all the same. Resource coordinators reach out to local resources like museums, YMCA, Boys and Girls Clubs, and more to bring services and programs into the school and to arrange field trips that will enrich student learning.
3. **Balance** – Creating balance in the school day is another way the community school can “broaden opportunities” for students. Schools today are measured by and therefore, to a large extent, driven by assessment-based accountability standards. For this reason, teachers often do not have the opportunity to include activities and exercises in the regular school day that makes learning “fun,” and students often do not have the opportunity to participate in enrichment, physical education, and “leisure” activities (among others). The community school broadens learning by delivering programs and services that build on what is happening during the school day to make learning “fun” and more engaging for students. If the school day and the afterschool programs are well integrated, students will not recognize a difference but see the school day as seamless set of learning opportunities.

FOUNDATION: LEVERAGED RESOURCES

When community schools create a network of partners throughout the community, bringing programs, services and resources in to the school, the community schools act to leverage existing investment in community assets. By doing so, community schools are able to both extend the reach of community-based organizations and their funded programs, and are also able to link students, families, and community members to resources, programs, and services meant to meet their needs. In addition, these partnerships and expanded program “reach” serve to maximize existing investments – instead of “purchasing” programs and services, community schools seek to create mutually-beneficial partnerships with community-based organizations already providing needed programs and services.

It is through these networks of partnerships that community schools leverage investments. Roughly \$1 invested in a community school yields a \$4-\$7 return on that investment in the form of programs, services, and supports that the school, its students, their families, and members of the surrounding community would not otherwise access. By reaching out to the community around it, by creating partnerships with community-based organizations, and by understanding how the assets in a community can be used to meet student, family, and community member needs within the school walls, community schools efficiently and effectively make use of the available resources and existing investments in the community.

When these existing investments are maximized, and these mutually-beneficial partnerships are forged, community schools serve to broaden access to opportunities for students, families, and community members.

Community schools also work to create broader opportunities for students, families, and community members by maximizing the out-of-school time and the school building as “time, place, and space” for activities ranging from academic enrichment (such as chess clubs, science clubs, tutoring) to cultural enrichment (art classes, dance classes, drumming, music, chorus, history) to adult learning (ELL classes, GED classes, women’s writing workshops, soft job skills training) to health and wellness activities (organized PE and sports teams, adult fitness classes, family nutrition programs, healthy snack).

Both broader opportunities and leveraging existing investments/resources to meet needs serve to remove barriers to student and family success, and promote positive youth and adult development.

FOUNDATION: COLLABORATION

At all levels – from government agencies to community organizations to school staff – people seek ways to combine their individual efforts into more holistic, coherent and effective strategies that cross traditional boundaries of expertise, funding, responsibility and accountability: they seek ways to collaborate.

The *Webster Collegiate Dictionary* defines “to collaborate” as meaning “to labor together, to work jointly with others; to cooperate with an agency or instrumentality with which one is not immediately connected.”

In a community school, this definition is only a starting point; in a community school, collaboration:

- is a strategy through which schools, community organizations, agencies, parents, and institutions integrate their organizational and human resources in pursuit of common goals that cannot be fully achieved by any one entity alone;
- is a way of thinking about or defining issues, problems, solutions, and goals, particularly the power of synergy;
- requires systemic and normative change on the part of all participants in the effort, and;
- is as much an attitude and a belief system as it is an organizational or operational process.

Some tips for working collaboratively:

- The Law of Synergy: the whole is greater than the sum of its parts.
- Each stakeholder in the community school has a unique perspective, strength, skill or capacity to bring to the table. Successful collaboration depends on creating an environment that encourages and allows all stakeholders to bring their best to the effort.
- There must be a consistent commitment to collaboration, and stakeholders should have access to multiple points of involvement. Once teams have agreed to work collaboratively, collaboration is considered with each decision, strategy, implementation and outcome. Involvement is real and meaningful in collaborative relationships, as tokenism will not advance collaboration.
- Working collaboratively requires changes in the norms, patterns, habits and practices of each stakeholder. Traditional rules, roles, relationships, responsibilities and rituals will be challenged, adjusted and recreated. Working collaboratively is like learning a new skill, which takes practice. Collaborative partners learn to support one another through these changes and discuss the inevitable challenges that will arise to find reasonable solutions. Collaborative teams are also realistic and recognize that every small decision cannot be made collaboratively. However, collaborative teams do recognize that vision, goals, strategies, implementation and evaluation are shared. The success of a collaborative plan relies on the involvement, engagement and ownership of all stakeholders.
- Understanding how groups function is critical. All groups go through developmental stages. Every group that is working collaboratively should be certain that members understand group development and are able to discuss and process stages that they can identify and work through. Groups often mistake normal developmental tasks as problematic, and move away from rather than confront them. Building time into group meetings to work through developmental challenges goes a long way towards fostering collaboration and trust.
- Sharing accountability is essential. When stakeholders collaborate to develop a robust community school, success depends on the involvement and ownership of all stakeholders. Although degree of involvement and level of expertise may differ, all must take ownership in the success of the overall work. Shared accountability also relies on meaningful dialogues between stakeholders that are based on a shared vision and careful review of available data.

- Effective collaboration requires proactive and committed leadership. This requires engaged and active leadership from the school, lead partner, and other community stakeholders. Meeting agendas should be set in advance, with careful planning for meeting structure, process, goals and outcomes. Leaders must be clear about which aspects of the work require collaboration and which decisions must be made by the school or lead partner agency (due to liability considerations, for example). When stakeholders are new to the collaborative team, school and agency leaders may feel more cautious about shared decision making. Practice, reflection, and dialogue will alleviate the stress of this challenge.
- A commitment to goals and solutions rather than structure is necessary. Community schools can be ever-changing organizations. New structures and processes replace former methods for managing and addressing student needs and development, for example. When new processes and relationships are utilized, community schools benefit most when stakeholders are open to learning from challenges and look for goals and solutions rather than blame and fault. The group should seek new and dynamic ways of addressing new and old challenges.

FOUNDATION: USING DATA: NEEDS AND RESOURCE ASSESSMENTS

Community schools are effective when decisions made about programs and services are driven by data. Data that helps drive community school decisions include:

- Needs Assessment
- Program Evaluations
- Outcome Evaluations
- Attendance Data
- Resource Assessment/Community Asset Mapping

To begin, think of what you know about existing resources and needs and what you need to know by conducting assessments:

- Needs Assessment –
 - o What are the causes and conditions that are interrupting students' ability to achieve the vision?
 - o What programs and services do students think would benefit their development?
 - o What causes and conditions interfere with family success?
 - o What programs and services would make it easier for families to support student success?
 - o Who should be asked to share their perspectives on needs? Students, Parents, Teachers and community members.
 - o How can this information be gathered? Information can be gathered in a variety of ways, including through the use of surveys, focus groups and one-on-one interviews.
- Resource Assessment –
 - o What resources are currently available locally?
 - o How are these resources being accessed or used (if they are)?
 - o What can the school offer to providers that would enable them to reach their "constituents" more effectively?
 - o What do possible community partners think about this type of partnership with the school?



Students at dance class

The needs assessment is a critical element of community school development. First, it enables the advisory board to identify and prioritize the needs of the people that the school serves. The needs assessment also engages the entire school community – children, families, school staff and community members – in the development process. By providing people with a voice, the needs assessment encourages ownership of programs and allows people to have a real stake in community school development and outcomes. A needs assessment also provides a channel for outreach to community members beyond the school walls – neighbors and community business leaders, for example – and lets them know what the school is undertaking, how they can benefit, and how they can support the transformation.

Elements of the needs assessment process include:

1. Conducting the collection of data about school and community needs and resources from existing sources and compiling it into a user-friendly summary profile for the advisory board.
2. Review and analysis of existing data by the advisory board and identification of need for additional data (such as a survey of needs and interests for extended-day services and comprehensive supports for both youth and families).
3. Surveys and/or focus group developed, planned and implemented as needed.
4. Advisory board uses information collected to set priorities and goals and to identify gaps in services and supports based on available data.

Conducting the needs assessment, analyzing its results, and using that data to inform program decisions and overall strategies are critical because data-driven decisions create stronger community schools.

The needs assessment process can range from interviews conducted with stakeholders one-on-one to formal surveys, broadly distributed. The advisory board should strive to develop the most comprehensive understanding possible of the students, families and communities that will be served. Based on what they know and learn about their community, the advisory board plans and develops the needs assessment, often with the assistance of someone in the community who has some expertise in this area.

In order to be effective at creating a community school that supports the successful development of all young people, an advisory board seeks information by conducting a community assessment.

Community assessments answer questions like:

- What are the developmental needs of students, families, and community members? What are social, academic, job-related and health related concerns?
- How are the programs, resources and supports that are in place affecting those needs?
- Do students have the support they need to achieve developmental milestones?
- Are students prepared for transitions between elementary and middle school? Middle school to high school? Secondary education to post-secondary opportunities? Into adulthood?
- How effectively are the supports currently in place working together to achieve positive youth development?
- What potential sources of support can help meet identified needs?
- How can the school act as a “convening place” for the programs and resources families need to access?

Board members may help to facilitate the assessment process by:

- Identifying the kinds of issues that they may need to ask about in the assessment process.
- Developing elements of the assessment tools:
 - survey questions;
 - interview scripts, or
 - discussion topics for focus groups
- Taking notes in focus groups.
- Transporting and collecting surveys.

- Tallying data that is received in the assessment.
- Analyzing what they are learning from the assessment data.



Student art gallery

Additional Uses for Data

Data from the needs assessment can also be used by a resource coordinator to establish basic program structure. Working with the Principal and lead partner liaison, the needs assessment can contribute to a plan for:

- how late the programs are open,
- what kinds of weekend or vacation offerings exist,
- program enrollment capacity,
- program scheduling,
- integrating current programs and services with new offerings,
- space sharing and utilization strategies (i.e., how are classrooms used for programs, how is the gym space used, etc.),
- tuition rates (if applicable),
- ...and so on.

The needs assessment should inform program selection, program design and program evaluation as well. Many schools also conduct needs assessments on an annual or bi-annual basis as a way to track progress towards meeting student, family and community needs and as a way to identify new needs to address.

More than Programs

Community schools have the potential to create an environment in which students grow and thrive, supported by their families and the community at large. Sometimes data from the assessments will illustrate the need to address the climate or environment of the school or community. Such issues may be most effectively addressed when the advisory board works with leaders in the school and/or community to identify and ameliorate these kinds of challenges (i.e., safe passage, transportation, welcoming environment). School policies, structures and professional development can sometimes correct issues more effectively than programs.

Adjustments to the physical plant can also help.

Some communities have completely changed the environment of the school with a team of parents and/or students, local artists, paint donated by the local hardware store, and a couple of weeks in the summer. Consider the possibilities...the hallways of the school changed from institutional beige to the jungles of Africa...the school library painted all the colors of the rainbow with bathtubs, sofas, and sail boats in which students can sit and read.



FOUNDATION: INTEGRATED LEARNING

Community schools are more than traditional schools with afterschool programs added on. In a well implemented community school, the afterschool program is designed in alignment and integration with the regular school day. Learning taking place during afterschool programs is directly linked to – but does not replicate – classroom learning, allowing students time and resources to practice, master, and build on the skills they are learning during the regular school day, as well as to build new skills. Students in community schools do not see the school day and afterschool programs as two separate things, but rather one seamless set of learning experiences. The community school facilitates integrated learning by being very intentional about the programs and services that are brought into the school – both during the school day and during the afterschool time – and also through linkages between school day staff, goals, and priorities and out-of-school time staff, goals, and priorities. The resource coordinator often manages these linkages and this alignment.

Specific community school programs and services are selected with this alignment and integration in mind, and based on data generated by the stakeholders in the school. The advisory board uses assessment data to plan and implement services and programs that will:

1. Remove barriers to student development;
2. Support students' academic challenges; and
3. Enrich and deepen students' development and learning.

Based on their understanding of student and family needs, developmental challenges, and community resources, the advisory board engages teachers and program providers to design and implement programs that will accomplish these three goals.

One of the most productive ways for resource coordinators to ensure that out-of-school time programs align with classroom learning is for resource coordinators to read and understand schools' school improvement plans. By understanding the goals that have been identified by the school improvement planning team and how community school programs can support the attainment of those goals, resource coordinators can link activities to school priorities. Principals can also provide valuable feedback on and input into how afterschool programs can support the school improvement goals, and can help "flesh out" the school improvement plans. It is important to keep in mind that ways in which both academic and non-academic programs can work towards accomplishing school improvement plan goals.

Resource coordinators and advisory boards can also create early wins by creating and implementing a program/service referral process that can be used by teachers and administrators. Community school programs can provide intervention services with students who are experiencing challenges and/or need additional supports. Referral processes work for both academic and non-academic challenges. If students are experiencing particular academic challenges, communication tools such as log books or weekly meetings can be used by teachers to let tutors, homework help assistants, and other out-of-school time program providers and staff know what kinds of supports are needed for individual students.

More broadly, projects like science fair, black history month, state testing, etc. can be planned so that students can build on classroom learning afterschool programs. There are many other ways community schools can support integrated learning:

1. Bring parents who have particular skills into the afterschool program to conduct workshops or make presentations that align with particular lessons that are happening during the school day.
2. Invite community partners to who work in various disciplines to conduct workshops or multi week programs that will enhance students are learning in the areas of science, history, math, English, etc.

3. Ask program providers to give back to the school by conducting some kind of learning experience during the school day when it supports what teachers are working to accomplish.
4. Create art and drama projects that will enrich what students are learning in specific subject areas (i.e., making sarcophagi during an afterschool art class when students are studying Ancient Egypt during the regular day).
5. Develop creative program designs that expand on what teachers are teaching, using other techniques and methods that teachers may not have time to implement during the regular class periods.
6. Ask teachers to have regular representation at advisory board meetings and to serve as liaisons to the rest of the school (or department or grade) staff so that regular communication channels for sharing ideas and projects can be created.

For more ideas on how to integrate between the school program and the afterschool component, go to <http://teacher.depaul.edu> and review the materials developed by Barbara Radner in the Polk Bros. Foundation Center for Urban Education at De Paul University.

PILLARS: THE FOUR PILLARS OF SUPPORT FOR STUDENT DEVELOPMENT

Based on their knowledge of the community, each community school should include all **four pillars of community school development** in their assessment process. These are academic achievement, healthy minds and bodies, family support/engagement and community engagement. Some considerations to make when assessing programs in each area are outlined below.

Pillar 1: Academic Development

There are ranges of ways to support students' academic development. Some students may need **academic remediation** to help them catch up to the standards set for their age or developmental stage. Others may need **academic support** or reinforcement in order to master the skills they are learning in the classroom. All students can benefit from **academic enrichment** to build upon core classroom content and deepen their understanding of what they have learned, and to expose them to different subject areas, cultural tapestries, and learning experiences. Advisory boards gather information about students' academic development to assist with planning a range of academic-related programs and services. Advisory boards

also examine gaps in academic development and experiences, and serve to identify programs and resources to "fill in" those gaps.



Consider: Key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys, test data.

Sources of data: teachers, parents, students, grades, test scores.

Pillar 2: Healthy Minds & Bodies

Community schools provide a range of services and programs designed to support physical and socioemotional needs of the students and families. Planners should consider a range of services to address prevention, intervention and treatment needs, based on the target population. Students' needs can range from lack of access to basic healthcare services to lack of organized physical education and healthy snacks. For some students, these issues

are barriers to learning and positive development. Advisory boards evaluate the physical and mental health indicators (i.e., immunization rates, behavioral referrals) to determine where health and mental health programs need to be focused. The board also assesses what health and mental health-related resources are available in the community, and how those resources can be most effectively and efficiently linked to student and adult needs.

Consider: Key informant interviews, focus groups, surveys.

Sources of data: Local health department, school immunization records, school physical data, parents, teachers, students.

Pillar 3: Family Support & Engagement

Sometimes the best way to support students is to support their families – family needs or stressors pose barriers to student success. Advisory boards assess family needs and seek to understand how those needs can be met, using the school as a hub.



Family Science Night

Advisory boards also seek to offer programs and services that will be meaningful to and valued by families and community members. Educational research shows that engaged parents improve student outcomes, but schools need to create opportunities to compel adults to get involved. Sometimes adults did not have positive experiences in the educational system or they think they don't have much to offer the school. For these adults, fun, non-threatening activities at the school can help to rebuild bridges back to the school and inspire families to get involved, an important consideration for advisory boards when program planning.

Consider: Surveys, key informant interviews, focus groups.

Sources of data: Local health department data, school immunization records, school physical data, parents, teachers, students.

Pillar 4: Community Engagement

It has been said that in a community school the door swings both ways, meaning that community schools provide opportunities to bring community services and programs into schools, and offer programs and services that support the community. In order to determine what programs and resources can best meet the needs of the school and the community, advisory boards look at the strengths and assets of the community

surrounding the school—i.e., community-based organizations, community health/mental health centers, parks, libraries, faith-based organizations, arts organizations, etc. Advisory boards look at the challenges the community faces and consider how these issues affect students and their families, assessing what could be offered at the school.

Consider: Key informant interviews, focus groups.

Sources of data: Advisory board, teachers, parents, community networking groups, human service networks.

After the assessments are complete, the advisory board uses the results to outline next steps. They will determine how current resources can be directed to address prioritized needs. If data indicate disparities between needs and available resources, they can begin a plan for resource development (i.e., reaching out beyond the immediate community, seeking additional funding, and so on). One key to success in a community school is engaging the advisory board as advocates and messengers. They can increase available resources by reaching out to the community to create innovative partnerships that support student and family needs. Picking the “low-hanging fruit” has the potential to ensure early successes, and nothing breeds success more than success.

PARENTS AS COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARTNERS

All parents want the best for their children. A successful community school operates with this in mind, and recognizes that, like their children, parents come with a variety of capacities and challenges. Parents are the strongest community school advocates if the community school is deliberate and principled about creating opportunities for partnership with families.

Parents are key partners in supporting the academic achievement of their children and this involvement is critical to a child's success at school. By being involved in their children's schools, as well as creating home environments that encourage and support learning, parents can help ensure that their children do well in school. Research indicates that children with parents who are involved with their education, whether in school or at home, do better academically. Regardless of income and background, students with involved parents are more likely to earn high grades and test scores, enroll in higher level programs, attend school regularly, show improved behavior, and develop better social skills.

Beyond the Bake Sale (Davies, Henderson, Johnson, Mapp,2006) reminds us that a school that creates a genuine culture of school-family partnership supports high social, emotional and academic standards for every student. Building effective school-family partnerships helps ensure that every student succeeds. Through strong, collaborative partnerships with families, schools can improve interactions between parents and teachers, and increase parent involvement. When schools, families and communities collaborate around student success:

- Student achievement can increase;
- Public support can be built and sustained for schools;
- Families and communities can help schools overcome the challenges they face; and
- Teachers and families can work more collaboratively in building a relationship of trust and respect.

Schools that target activities and processes to give families the tools and the information they need to engage effectively in school improvement create a stronger system of education and provide additional resources for both students and schools. This is the type of parent engagement work that community schools strive to do.

A Community School-Family Partnership Look Like At Its Best

When schools and families work effectively together, the learning community becomes rich with opportunities because everyone is willing to support and works together towards achieving the success of every child. There is no magic combination of programs, resources, or practices that will produce results every time or work in every school. But, there are some standard strategies that can help create effective community school-family partnerships.



The following is a list of characteristics that are found when there is a full and robust school/family partnership:

Relationships

- The school is open for community use and makes social services available to its families.
- A family center is available to all families and provides resources and materials.

- The school offers home visits to all new families.
- Family contributions are honored.

Links to Learning

- Family activities are connected to what students are learning in school.
- Teachers review student work and test results together with parents.
- Links to services and organizations in the community are provided that can offer tutoring and homework programs in the school.

Address Diversity of Families

- The school provides translator services.
- Teachers are encouraged to use books and materials about the various cultures represented in the school.
- Parent groups at the school are be open to all families, and offer opportunities for working parent to participate.

Support Advocacy

- A clear, open process for resolving problems is actively practiced in the school and classrooms.
- Teachers are encouraged to contact families each month to discuss student progress.
- Student-led, parent-teacher conferences are held three times a year.

Share Power

- Parents are involved in all major decisions at the school.
- Parent groups are formed that focus on improving student achievement.
- The school allows parents to use its phone, copier, fax and computers.
- School staff are encouraged to work with local organizations to improve the school and surrounding neighborhoods.

A well-executed partnership goes hand in hand with community school transformation and school improvement. It is important to assess where a school is when it comes to partnering with families as a part of the community school development process. As with other needs assessments, a community school's partnership with parents and families is assessed and evaluated, and the data and results of that work are used to drive parent and family programs. Answering the following questions is a great first step in assessing where schools stands on partnerships with parents.

- Does the school cling to attitudes and practices that confine parents to limited, traditional roles?
- Has the school tried to define what it means by parental involvement and partnership with families?

In Beyond the Bake Sale, four levels of achievement were defined to help schools get a sense of where they are on the parents-as-partners continuum:

- 1) A **Partnership** School: a school that recognizes that all families and communities have something to offer and they collectively work closely together to do whatever it takes a every students success;
- 2) An **Open-Door** School: a school that offers parents many opportunities to be involved and has a welcoming environment;
- 3) A **Come-If-We-Call** school: a school that welcomes parents but only wants to involve parents on its own terms; and
- 4) A **Fortress school**: a school that keeps parents away, rather than working with them possibly because the school is in a troubled community and the school feels it cannot afford to engage the community.

Strategies for building a school/family partnership

As mentioned before, there is no single or specific way to build an effective school/family partnership. Each community school is unique, however the first two steps to consider taking are to assess schools' existing levels of parent involvement and to incorporate parent and family engagement strategies and initiatives into the activities undertaken by the Advisory Board.

Strong leadership on the Advisory Board by parents, teachers, principals, and community leaders can turn ideas into reality. Cultivating parent leadership is also a key component for building parental involvement in schools. Informed, active, and partnering parents are essential to building strong schools and communities. Empowering parents for shared leadership opportunities is one way to develop the school/family partnership.



Schools that receive Federal Title I funds need to make sure they are working with parents as partners as outlined under Section 1118 of NCLB's Title I mandate. Section 1118 of Title I Part A clearly outlines how parents should be active and involved partners in the education of their children. The tenants of Section 1118 are outlined below, and provide a useful roadmap for all community schools seeking to partner with parents:

School districts and schools must have a parental involvement policy

- Section 1118 requires schools and school districts to have a parental involvement policy. It should explain how parents can become involved. The policy should also explain how the district would provide help to schools to improve the effectiveness and the involvement of parents. To obtain a toolkit on how to create your schools parent involvement policy, contact the Illinois PIRC at (877) 586-0007.
- Annual meetings should be convened to review the policy
- It requires an annual public meeting to review the policies. Section 1118 also requires that parents be involved in the decision-making of the use of specific set aside funds for parent involvement activities at the school district and school level.

Home-school communication should be varied and frequent.

- Parents should be frequently notified about their child's performance and the school's curriculum. There should also be opportunities for parents to ask questions and share experiences.

Access for all

- Parent of children with disabilities or children who are English language learners should be given opportunities to learn more about the school so they can better use the resources of the school.

HUMAN CAPITAL: RESOURCE COORDINATION AND PROGRAM MANAGEMENT

A community school functions best with a strong investment in human capital. Because a community school brings multiple systems of the community together to focus on student and family development, there is a great potential for human capital investment.

Teams increase human capital within their community schools by:

- facilitating a strong collaborative process;
- practicing shared leadership and shared decision making; and
- developing highly functioning, mutually beneficial partnerships.

By investing in these three components, community schools can gain a greater return on human capital investments within the school and the community. This in turn means that the community school will be more easily sustainable and that students and families will have greater support leading to stronger outcomes.

By taking time to build relationships, school leaders can establish the trust and connection to the school needed to build a solid foundation and nurturing environment.

One community school principal tells the story of the day after the winter holiday, when she spent most of the day going from classroom to classroom asking teachers about their holiday. Later she admitted, “I’ll get more cooperation from that time than I would ever get from a day of professional development.” Other community schools take great efforts to identify the contributions of partners, community members, and advisory board members. They recognize these contributions both publically and privately. Still others make sincere efforts to know their partners and advisory board members, and to celebrate events and accomplishments in their lives.

Hiring a Resource Coordinator

When the advisory board has developed a shared vision, conducted comprehensive assessments and identified funding, they can begin their search for someone to oversee the community school development. In some schools this person is identified as a Resource Coordinator (RC). Other schools may call this person a Community School Director or Community School Manager, because this is the person who manages the roll out and operation of the community school.

In some community schools, due to budgetary constraints or other factors, another school employee – e.g., a teacher, aide, or librarian – will perform the tasks of a resource coordinator in addition to their daily work. Although this design can meet the immediate needs of the programs and program participants during extended hours, other important aspects of the job may go unaddressed.



Full-time Resource Coordinator

The most effective practice that has been evidenced in community schools across the country is to ensure that the role of the resource coordinator is a full-time position. As the community school develops, and the range of programs and services offered broadens, community school leaders often add staff beyond the full-time position.

A full-time resource coordinator is often charged with a range of responsibilities that take the position beyond coordinating resources. Some community schools have elevated the position to reflect more of a management role. In such schools the community school manager serves as an afterschool, evening, weekend and school break administrator in the building. This person manages a staff of program providers (through fee-for-service contracts or through collaboration and partnership), as well as security, engineering and support staff. The community school manager is responsible for overseeing the delivery of programs and services during the non-academic hours of the community school. In addition, s/he may manage resource development by representing the school at various community networking opportunities. The manager performs outreach in the community and screens potential partners. They build partnerships and facilitate collaboration with community resources, both public and private.

Hiring the Coordinator/Manager

When a school has a lead partner agency (LPA), the partner organization often takes on the responsibility of hiring the resource coordinator (in cooperation with the school leadership). The LPA takes the lead on developing job descriptions and requirements, seeking and screening applicants and conducting interviews. Generally, a few top candidates will also be interviewed by a member of the school's leadership team, and a joint decision of the LPA and the school leadership will be made. Generally, community schools hire the resource coordinator three months prior to the desired program start date. This gives the new RC time to learn about his or her role in the community school and to gain valuable understanding of where the community school is in its developmental process. Orientation to both the school and lead partner organization is very important for new resource coordinators. Providing time and opportunities for the new coordinator to get to know the staff and systems of the school and partner organization will give him or her valuable perspective that may lead to new ideas about potential benefits of the collaboration and partnership. It will also provide the resource coordinator with a context for the programs s/he will oversee, the relationships s/he will build, and the dynamics of the school itself. Three months of "lead time" also gives the new RC time to plan and implement additional programming and establish a formal infrastructure for both program implementation and for the management of day-to-day activities.

Some schools opt to manage and staff their expanded programs internally – that is, reassigning existing staff members to the new programs. There are several different ways that this could work, and its success depends on the ability of the school to allocate the financial and time-related resources to move a staff member into a new role. As programs grow and develop, and

What type of person will be needed to fill this position?

Data from the needs assessment can help identify the skills and capacities that will be needed in a coordinator.

- What are the tasks that the RC will be expected to perform?
- What needs do students have, and how important is it that the RC has familiarity with student/family/community issues?
- To what degree will the RC be expected to conduct outreach and build partnerships? (will the advisory board handle this function?)

as the community school continues to evolve, leadership and/or the advisory board may find it necessary to eventually hire a full-time, program-dedicated resource coordinator. Therefore, this should always be a consideration when doing community school financial planning.

Role of the Resource Coordinator

The resource coordinator is often the only person who is employed full time to facilitate the development of the community school. S/he carries the community school vision into each component of work, and helps other stakeholders direct their energies to the successful transition of the school from a traditional school to a community school. To accomplish this goal, the coordinator will:

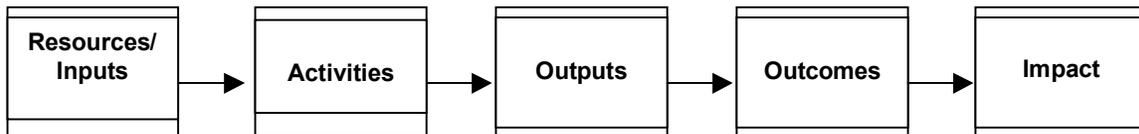
- Coordinate the activities identified in the implementation plan
- Build a strong relationship with the school administration
- Engage school faculty and staff in supporting the community school vision
- Create external partnerships with community resources to bring needed programs and services into the school
- Help focus current resources toward the vision and goals of the school
- Identify new resources available to support the vision and goals of the school
- Facilitate a strong partnership between the school and the lead partner agency
- Nurture supportive relationships with other stakeholders: parents, teachers, students, community representatives
- Manage day-to-day operations of community school programs
- Monitor student needs and align program resources to address needs identified by the advisory board
- Create opportunities to engage parents and teachers as resources
- Create program opportunities that serve parent and community needs
- Manage relationships with program providers
- Facilitate a process for improving the quality of program and service delivery
- Facilitate program monitoring processes that engage other stakeholders
- Create a program referral system with which stakeholders can suggest programs that will benefit students and families
- Become familiar with school discipline codes and train program providers
- Manage discipline referrals in the programs that operate beyond the school day
- Track attendance and report data to funders
- Monitor program data and evaluation efforts and report to the advisory board

Defined - The **Resource Coordinator** is often a full-time staff person dedicated to the development of the community school. In addition to coordinating the logistics of programs and participation, the Resource Coordinator is an ambassador for the community school with teachers, students, parents and the community. This person will represent the community school in school staff meetings and in community networking opportunities. S/he will solicit partnerships, maintain relationships with partners, and manage the acquisition and use of data to guide development.

REALIZING THE VISION: LOGIC MODELS & PLANNING FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Using a Logic Model as the framework

A program logic model is a picture of how [the] program works – the theory and assumptions underlying the program. ... This model provides a road map of [the] program, highlighting how it is expected to work, what activities need to come before others, and how desired outcomes are achieved (p. 35).
W.K. Kellogg Foundation Evaluation Handbook (1998)



After the assessment has been conducted and analyzed, the advisory board is charged with developing a plan for implementing the community school framework. This process begins with a frank dialogue about how the advisory board will realize their vision in the long term, and what goals they want to set for short term wins. The strategic thinking that goes into this plan should attempt to use current resources to do two things:

- Adjust current programs and services to ensure that they are addressing needs and challenges that will ensure student success through measurable outcomes, and
- Leverage collaborative partners who can address local needs by bringing programs and services into the school.

One structure for ensuring that needs and resources align with goals, outputs and long-range outcomes is known as a *logic model*. There are many different types of and designs for logic models, and each advisory board chooses a design that makes the most sense and will be most useful to that individual team. The logic model framework is generally developed through a strategic planning session. Advisory board members should ensure that the most pressing needs are addressed using available resources first, and then continues to meet other needs as resources and opportunities become available.

The process of developing a logic model can help planners ensure that the community school framework will help them realize the vision that they have developed. A strong logic model will ask planning teams and advisory boards to clarify the vision by predicting the measurable outcomes that will quantify and qualify the changes to the major areas of student support that are organized and coordinated in a community school. (The Pillars: Academic Development, Healthy Minds & Bodies, Family Support & Engagement and Community Engagement) Also included in the logic model are the short-term goals to be achieved and a set of activities through which those goals will be accomplished. Finally, logic models include indicators or outputs for each goal and activity that will allow the planners to measure their progress along the way and make adjustments as necessary.

Discussion topics during planning

As the advisory board develops the logic model, they will have to consider:

- how the work will fit into existing structures,
- how those structures need to adjust, and
- what adjustments they need to make to their plan in order to accommodate policy requirements of both the school and lead partner agency (if applicable).

It is also important to track discussions and decisions around specific implementation steps. Some key considerations include:

- How late can the school stay open?
- What will the program schedule look like?
- What ages/grades will programs serve? Parents? Community members?
- What policies need to be established to manage transitions, dismissals, discipline, etc. based on the age of the students?
- How will the school manage snacks or third meal options (getting the food, serving the food, moving students between programs and meal time, etc.)?
- What process determines who will manage field trips and other activities that require permission slips?
- How will the advisory board engage school engineers and security to ensure support beyond the traditional school day? (Many schools stagger schedules at this point to ensure coverage)?
- How will recruiting (school) staff buy-in and support be managed and by whom?
- Who will create and manage a system for referring students to programs based on challenges that are presented at home or during the regular school day (including a feedback loop to encourage use)?
- Who will create and manage a system for referring students to programs based on challenges that are presented at home or during the regular school day (including a feedback loop to encourage use)?
- What space-sharing issues and accommodations need to be made for afterschool activities that take place in classrooms?
- How will students, families and community members learn about programs and services?
- Who has responsibility for maintaining or returning the classroom to its original order after it has been used for programs and services?

All of these considerations are critical not just to achieving the long-term vision and short-term goals, but are also critical to sustainability. Just as the logic model provides a road map for development and implementation, it also provides a touchstone to which the advisory board can refer as sustainability planning and strategizing takes place.

It is important to note that sustainability is about more than “dollar-for-dollar” replacement for grants that have sunsetted. It is as much – if not more so – about forging partnerships that bring programs, resources, and supports into the school so that services and interventions can reach the people they are designed to (and funded to) reach. In other words, when a community school needs to implement an adult English language learning (ELL) class, instead of looking for funding to hire an instructor, the community school reaches out to local the community – community colleges, community-based organizations, volunteer groups, other schools – to bring an existing resource into the school to meet the identified need for an adult ELL class.

In this context, sustainability is about partnerships as well as funding. It is critical that the community school advisory board use this framework for defining sustainability as it undertakes the planning and implementation process, and as it works towards achieving the community school’s long-term goals.

PREPARING FOR IMPLEMENTATION

As the plan for programs and services is being laid out, the partners will want to work with the resource coordinator on issues of program infrastructure. Teams are advised to discuss and decide on the following prior to implementation:

- District policies around building usage, liability insurance, discipline, student referrals and more should be considered.
- If the community school is being implemented with a lead partner, what systems will need to be adjusted to maintain the kind of communication that is necessary for a strong partnership?
- If the resource coordinator is an employee of the partner (as in some models), how will the coordinator be supervised? In many successful schools, a co-supervision agreement is developed between the school and the partner to ensure that the coordinator has the support and resources necessary to perform the tasks associated with the job and to move the community school agenda forward.
- Beyond the development of the logic model, teams should also identify a process for eliciting programs and services to address the needs identified in the assessment and the goals and outcomes that are listed in the logic model. Often this component of the planning process is completed after the resource coordinator has been identified. Since the coordinator's job is specific to developing the community school, his/her presence during this part of the planning process seems both prudent and logical.

Most fledgling community schools find that they do not have sufficient resources to address all of the needs that were identified for the entire target population. Some schools begin by reorganizing and restructuring existing programs and services to align with the needs and goals listed in the logic model. Teams undertake this work by identifying:

The most pressing needs

Which programs will bring early successes

What will attract participation and community/parental support

Each community school must make these tough decisions based on what they know about their students and other stakeholders. It is the role of the advisory board to maintain a keen awareness of the status of needs and resources in the community school. A well-developed advisory board can be actively engaged in looking for additional resources via contributions, partnerships and in-kind services to further address the gap between needs and resources. In order to achieve early victories (and attract additional support) advisory boards will want to be strategic about the current use of resources. It is important that they recognize the community school exists to serve the needs of all students and families, not just those who may be the earliest recipients of programs and services at the community school.

As a team, the advisory board, the partners and resource coordinator address the following questions (and more). They will work together to discuss and make decisions about each question, determine who will take responsibility action steps that follow each decision, and with whom the decisions and action steps need to be shared. Some questions include:

1. How will the team select the best programs and services to meet the needs identified in their plan?
2. How will program providers be selected? Who participates in that process? How will school staff participate in providing programs? Will parents participate as program providers? Will community members?
3. What types of agreements will the school use to formalize and clarify the relationships with program providers? Who will manage that process?
4. How will the team ensure that programs are well planned and well executed?

5. How will programs be evaluated and by whom? How will these outcomes be used to ensure that programs and services are achieving the intended outcomes?

Lessons Learned – Many partnerships engage in these important conversations but neglect to record minutes or notes that should become part of an archive to record the ongoing development of the community school. Because effective implementation of the community school model depends on collaborative relationships, maintaining accurate records of shared decision making and policies that are jointly developed is very important. One of the biggest challenges that community schools face is the transition of people in leadership positions. If the school principal, lead partner representative, or resource coordinator leaves his/her position at any time, having accurate records can address the challenges that arise. Also, when new members become a part of the advisory board, having accurate records of processes and decisions will help bring these new members up to speed and allow for their thoughtful input on future decisions.

OTHER IMPLEMENTATION ISSUES

Implementation forms and materials Once the implementation plan is complete, the resource coordinator will have the challenge of bringing the decisions that were made to fruition. Most community school coordinators develop or refine recruiting materials that reflect the policies and program plans for their individual school. Included in the addendum for this section are samples of forms shared by community school partners across Illinois. These can include but are not limited to:

- enrollment forms,
- guardian permission slips for activities,
- attendance and record keeping processes forms,
- budget forms,
- program development tools, and
- staff in-service plans.

Marketing and recruitment The partners and advisory board work with the resource coordinator to implement a marketing and recruitment plan. Based on their understanding of community resources, advisory boards can be strategic about how to make contact and who should make contact with businesses, organizations and other community groups to see what programs and services could be made available to students and families at the school. Marketing school-based community services should include the two-way benefits that stem from community partnerships. *Note that purchasing programs and services will always require sustainability dollars, but creating partnerships maximizes existing investments in programs, resources and services.* This is as important – if not more so – to sustainability as financing. As the community school opportunities are “marketed” in the community, resource coordinators and advisory boards attempt to find solutions that can benefit the students using in-kind and donated services whenever possible. In exchange for space and access to students and adults, program and service providers can often offer their expertise at a reduced or donated rate, or by delivering services that are already funded from other sources.

The principal can play a key role in promoting the community school to the school staff and helping them understand how they can be involved. Staff development opportunities can include:

- sharing information about programs and services that will be available and how they enhance student outcomes;
- providing services and professional development workshops on how school staff can identify students who would benefit from participating in different programs and how to refer students to what is available; and
- integrating community school principles into staff orientation. Together with the resource coordinator and afterschool program staff, teachers and other school staff should look for ways to connect student development and curriculum standards to program curriculum and extended-day opportunities.

To share information with students and parents, many community schools use events already on the calendar (open houses, parent-teacher conferences, sports events, musical programs, family nights) to promote the community school programs and services. Presentations, pamphlets, materials about programs and services, registration information, and the availability of school staff to answer questions are all effective ways to market programs and share information with students and families. As each semester ends, many community schools host showcases that feature student work, presentations, programs and outcomes that illustrate the benefit of program participation. Lastly, in order for referrals to be effective, resource coordinators must provide regular feedback to teachers who have referred students and check

in with them to see if they are observing changes in student engagement and performance. Working together to achieve positive outcomes and then marketing those outcomes can lead to greater student and adult program participation and community support.

Planning for space utilization One of the biggest challenges that resource coordinators will encounter at this phase of development is managing space. There are several issues that often arise, including:

- How will resource coordinators and staff account for and keep track of programs and services already taking place in the school?
- How will the advisory board and/or school leadership team inform others and gain support for the resource coordinator as the building manager during the afterschool hours?
- What kind of agreements need to be made with teachers over the use of classrooms during the afterschool hours?
- How will damage and loss of personal property that occurs during the afterschool time be handled?
- What current policies anticipate these challenges and where do adjustments need to be made? Who is responsible for communicating and supporting policies?
- How will those policies be introduced, supported, and reinforced?
- Who will staff the front office or front door to the school during out-of-school time activities? Who will manage student dismissal? Are there security needs?

Each community school is different based on many internal and external factors that have affected its development. Political considerations, student and parent needs, socioeconomic factors, union contracts, community relationships, school/community history and other considerations will all impact policies and implementation. The success of the community school will depend on meaningful collaboration among the stakeholders – teams are well-advised to consider carefully who should be involved in strategic planning and how the process will work.

Since teachers and other staff will be directly affected by implementation, involving them in the plan for shared space will create buy in and minimize problems later on. As each component is planned, or each problem encountered, it is important to gather the perspective and input from various stakeholders to establish shared ownership and reduce serious confrontations.

Informed and engaged advisory boards play key roles in helping to create and support policies that will continue to formalize the commitment for the community school framework. The principal, the lead partner representative and the resource coordinator should meet to discuss each of these issues and discuss how to engage others in creating solutions on an ongoing basis.

Scheduling Scheduling programs may seem easy, but there are many issues that can arise and that will impact the program schedule.

Some key considerations include:

- *How long will programs run? A quarter? A semester? Six weeks? Ten weeks?* Shorter program cycles may expose students to a wider variety of offerings, but can reduce opportunities to deepen skills or involvement in an activity. While shorter program cycles let students ‘try on’ many different activities, frequent changes can present scheduling, record keeping, and logistical nightmares for the coordinator if s/he doesn’t have administrative support. The programming cycle that works best in each school depends on individual factors that must be considered by the planners and leadership.
- *Does the slate of program offerings create a balance between academic, enrichment and recreational programs?* Some schools offer academic programming throughout the

community school schedule others have academics immediately following the regular school day, and offer enrichment and recreational opportunities after the academic programs have been completed. Still others have academic programs two or three days per week and other programs (i.e., arts and culture, recreational, physical education-related) on other days.

- *What is the mix of adult programming and student programming?* In some schools adult programming is limited to the evening hours when fewer student programs are taking place. In others, adult and youth programs are scheduled simultaneously, to maximize the use of space and minimize the cost of keeping the school open longer. Space availability, security needs and resources, and community demographics can all influence this issue. Sometimes having childcare available during adult programming is an essential support to adult participation. This, too, could influence decisions about how to schedule programs.

Launching programs/Evaluating processes Once the planning processes have taken place – needs have been assessed, resources identified, participants and partners engaged, initial challenges addressed, and program schedule and infrastructure established – programs can begin. The program launch brings all of the planning and implementation preparation into practice.

There are basically two major tasks at this point. First, resource coordinators (in conjunction with the advisory board and/or school leadership) need to figure out who will be involved in each component of implementation and how to monitor successes and challenges. Logistical issues, such as transitions between the school day program and afterschool programs, attendance and record-keeping processes, and communication between daytime and afterschool staff, can all present challenges. Moving from program to program to ensure that instructors have what they need and feel supported during implementation is important.



The second critical task of the resource coordinator at the implementation stage is to facilitate a debriefing and reflection process among stakeholders who have been involved. This helps to establish a process to determine what works and what could be improved. Usually, the implementation team brainstorms or troubleshoots a list of problems and collaborates to create solutions to these and other problems that may arise. The reflection and problem solving process should be documented so that teams can both learn from the experience and offer guidance for future decision making.

PRINCIPLES OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

Regardless of what the approach to community school development may be – whether the planning team came together organically or grew out of funding – some key principles common to all successful community schools guide implementation and continued development:

COMMUNITY GUIDING SCHOOL PRINCIPLES

- **Foster strong partnerships** – stakeholders partner to share resources and expertise, and to work together on design, implementation and outcomes assessments.
- **Share accountability for results** – clear, mutually agreed-upon goals and desired outcomes drive the work of community schools. Data helps partners measure progress towards results, outcomes and goals, and agreements enable partners to hold each other accountable for school development and move beyond “turf battles” and politics.
- **Set high expectations for all** – community schools aim to support learning and growth along developmental milestones. Children, youth and adults are expected to achieve high standards of learning and to be positive contributors to their communities.
- **Build on the community’s strengths** – community schools marshal the assets of the entire community – residents, local businesses, local organizations, and the school itself.
- **Embrace diversity** – community schools truly know their communities, and are committed to the welfare of all. Partners work to develop and respect strong, positive identities for people of diverse backgrounds.
- **Avoid cookie-cutter solutions** – building on the lessons of others and through close partnerships with community members, each community school works to understand community-specific needs, identify assets within the school and the broader community that can support those needs, and create a unique community school that fits the unique community in which the school is located.
- **Follow the ABCs** – community schools **align** out-of-school time activities with classroom learning; **bring** communities, families and schools together for the benefit of children and adults; and **coordinate** resources so children and adults receive maximum benefits from community assets.
- **Plan for sustainability** – community schools, from their inception, plan for sustainability and put in place partnerships and programs that transcend funding cycles.



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For more information about community schools, please visit our Web site at www.ilcommunityschools.org, or call (312) 629-4990.

