

Assessing Readiness: Questions to Help you Start



- What's the need?** What do the data (disaggregated by race, gender, school district, and neighborhood) say about children's readiness for school and their performance in school? Does performance vary across the community?
- Demographic shifts.** What do recent data reveal about the changing face of the student population in your school district? Are you ready for change?
- Current community schools activity.** How many schools in your district define themselves as a community school or by some similar name? Can you identify community partners already working with schools that may participate in a community schools scale-up?
- What's working?** In what ways have existing schools succeeded? What would other schools like to replicate?
- Leadership and constituency.** To what extent are high-level leaders in the district and in the public, private, and non-profit sectors aware of community schools? What constituent and special interest groups could be mobilized to encourage district-wide support? Are there individual school board members or other local elected officials who might be especially responsive to the community schools approach?
- School system capacity and commitment.** Does your district encourage creativity, support innovation, and seek external resources? Does it have a policy governing relationships with community partners? How is the district organized to connect with community partners? Does your district have an office of community partnerships?
- Collaborative strength.** What has been your district's and community's involvement in collaborative initiatives? Have the efforts been positive, lasting? Which of the initiatives still exist? Could they help convene a community schools conversation?
- Related initiatives.** What groups in the community are engaged in work related to community schools? Is there a P-20 Council, a mayor's cabinet or cross-sector group, or an after-school, school-based health clinic, mental health clinic, mentoring, or other type of programmatic network? How might they be a resource for a community schools strategy?
- Political and economic context.** What conditions in your community might argue for the development of a community school? How can you highlight the benefits of community schools to address the realities of your current situation?