Key Community School Functions for a Collaborative Leadership Structure

Results-Based Vision

A results-based *vision* fuels the initiative, providing the big-picture motivation for scale-up efforts. For community schools, the long-range vision calls for building out the conditions for learning into a "community where learning happens." In an effective scale-up initiative, the system operating culture—assumptions, expectations, beliefs, and stakeholder values—are consistent with the driving vision.

A results-based framework, including indicators, is used to measure student, school, and community progress in key areas of learning and development. It is also used to track operational progress in creating a shift in ownership, depth, spread, and sustainability.

Data and Evaluation

This function focuses on the collection and analysis of information. It illuminates implementation by tracking the initiative's indicators (e.g., attendance, partnership effectiveness, and achievement) and collects data on community assets and social and political context in order to identify areas of need, opportunity, and success. It also integrates different databases for improved decision making while ensuring the requisite confidentiality.

Finance and Resource Development

This function ensures that existing school and community resources are identified, coordinated, and used to leverage new dollars to achieve results, fund continuous improvements, and sustain expansion. For leverage to occur, leaders must be connected to a broad range of potential resources and agree on assumptions and expectations about collaborative responsibilities and outcomes.

Resource development also entails mobilizing a community's human and social capital so that children and youth benefit from connections to caring adults and neighborhood, civic, and business groups and develop a clear sense of their importance in and responsibility to their community.

Alignment and Integration

This function spreads and deepens the commitment to community schools norms in the policies and practices of systems across the community as well as in individual school sites.

Alignment activities ensure that the initiative's results-based framework, school district strategic planning, curriculum and instruction, and partners' system rules and resources are in

accord with and supported by the initiative's overall vision and system norms. It involves working with other related initiatives to support shared goals and facilitate overall progress.

Integration requires school-site leaders to design explicit practice and policy connections among programs and activities that result in progress toward site-level results. It involves integration of the efforts of all practitioners working with students regardless of organizational affiliation.

Supportive Policy and Practice

This function ensures that school districts' and partner agencies' financial, administrative, operational, and strategic policies support community schools and that schools and partners advocate for and enact policy changes in response to site-level needs. It also requires local leaders to communicate regularly with state and federal leaders to advocate for policies that promote community schools.

Governance structures must support—and the system's operating culture must expect—regular communication between community and site leaders. Community leaders must align partner rules and resources insofar as possible to meet site needs, and site leaders must communicate policy and practice needs based on data and evaluation. Data and evaluation techniques that gather practice knowledge or information on gaps between policies and practice must be sensitive to how system norms—attitudes, values, assumptions, and expectations—affect the implementation of policies and practices.

Professional Development and Technical Assistance (TA)

This function plays an essential role in embedding a community school's culture within the larger community by transmitting values and attitudes, assumptions, and expectations consistent with a community schools vision. It promotes the creation of policies and practices that foster the conditions for learning and the principles of community schools. In addition, professional development and TA help schools and community partners build effective relationships.

Broad Community Engagement

This function focuses on building the political will to fund and sustain scale-up by developing a broad-based commitment to "communities where learning happens" as well as the social connections, both formal and informal, that translate into political and financial support. Community engagement activities ensure that the voices of youth, families, and residents are fully heard, that system practices and policies reflect community needs and preferences, and that the community increasingly adopts and spreads the initiative's norms.