



Community Schools Evaluation Toolkit

A starter guide for community school staff who want to use data to tell their story and improve their community schools.

Preface

Community schools face a unique opportunity at the local, state, and federal levels. For decades national support has been growing and there is an increasing recognition of the need to address the multiple challenges involved in attaining greater student success. In this context, community schools are poised to make a major leap forward in the coming years.

U.S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, a long-time advocate of community schools, recently declared community schools as “not in conflict” with other reforms such as effective teachers and school leaders, and standards and quality assessments; rather they are “central to education reform”. Secretary Duncan stresses that schools should be open longer – not just 6 hours a day, 5 days a week. “When children and families learn together great things happen for the community. We have to move with a huge sense of urgency.”

To meet Secretary Duncan’s charge, and move community schools forward, we need more and better data about community schools’ impact on student success (e.g., higher graduation rates, reduced dropout rates, more postsecondary participation) -- as well as intermediate indicators that lead to that success. Community schools must collect, analyze, and use data to convince policymakers to create stronger policies in support of community schools. We know that community schools DO work; we must now make a stronger case using data.

This Evaluation Toolkit is intended to help with that data collection and analysis. It is driven by a results framework, and offers a step-by-step explanation of evaluation approach and a menu of data collection instruments. Additionally, examples from local evaluations are included. As always the Coalition invites your comments and feedback as we seek to develop tools that support the growth and development of community schools across the nation.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'M. Blank'.

Martin J. Blank
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Director, Coalition for Community Schools