This guide provides a set of strategies for Local Education Agencies (LEA) and community partners that will help strengthen their applications in the U.S. Department of Education’s Race to the Top (RTT-D) district competition. The community school strategy will help LEAs meet the department’s emphasis that LEAs “have the leadership and vision to implement strategies, structures and systems to move beyond the one-size-fits-all model of schooling.”¹ This language makes it clear that the Department doesn’t want to fund programs, but rather comprehensive and coordinated approaches that help students succeed. Approaches like community schools. The guide provides a brief overview and explanation of the competition framework in the context of the community schools strategy, and next steps for LEAs and community partners in anticipation of final guidelines.²

RTT-D Guidelines Overview

RTT-D creates a new opportunity for local level innovation for education reform. The Department emphasizes results, resource alignment and integrated services to support personalized and engaged student learning. This guide reviews the following guidelines:

What are the eligibility requirements?

What are the application requirements?

What is the competitive preference priority—Results, Resource Alignment, and Integrated Services?

What are the eligibility requirements?

- The competition requires a LEA or a consortium of LEAs within or across states to serve at least 2,000 students with a 40% minimum for low income student participation.³
- While community organizations, institutes of higher education, government agencies and others cannot be a lead applicant for the competition, they can be key partners by working closely with LEAs in developing the proposal and by providing strong letters of support for the LEAs applying for the competition application (see suggested next steps at the end of this document).

¹ RTT-D Executive Summary, Eligibility Requirements, p.4.
² The Department has released the final competition guidelines. The Coalition for Community Schools applauded the emphasis on key principles of the community schools strategies (review comments). The intent to apply is due on August 30, 2012 and applications are due on October 30, 2012. For more information visit the RTT-D website.
³ RTT-D Executive Summary, Eligibility Criteria, p.1.
What are the application requirements?

Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environment

All LEAs will be required to meet Absolute Priority 1 which focuses on creating personalized learning environments. The community schools strategy provides a platform for this requirement as described in Table 1.

Table 1. Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environment

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTT-D Guidelines</th>
<th>Community Schools Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create student centered learning environments:</td>
<td>Emphasizes the importance of creating the conditions for teaching and learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Personalization of strategies, tools, and support for teachers and students.</td>
<td>• Partnerships support expanded learning opportunities and time, community problem solving and individualized learning plans.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Aligned with college- and career-ready standards.</td>
<td>• The curriculum is engaging, motivating and relevant.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Increase the effectiveness of educators.</td>
<td>• Partners offer access to museums, institutions of higher education and other assets that can be aligned to individual student interests.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• Expand student access to the most effective educators.</td>
<td>• Multiple people support the success of a student.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following research-based reports may be helpful in highlighting necessary conditions for teaching and learning that support individualized and community based learning:

- [Individualized Learning Plans](#) by the National Collaborative on Workforce and Disability, Institute for Educational Leadership.
- [Community-Based Learning](#) by the Coalition for Community Schools.

FIELD EXAMPLE: Learning Partners Dashboard, Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS)

Cincinnati’s Learning Partners Dashboard combines student-level academic data provided by Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) with student-level service provider data (i.e. mentoring, after school tutoring, etc.). It’s a unique platform aimed at fundamentally changing how schools and its community partners work together to best support students. Resource Coordinators from CPS' Community Learning Centers are key to collecting data and were up to the Herculean effort of inputting the massive amount of data. The dashboard allowed coordinators the time, space, and technical support to enter their collected data.

For more information: [Learning Partners Dashboard](#).

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RTT-D Executive Summary, Absolute Priorities, Absolute Priority 1: Personalized Learning Environment, p.5.
Stakeholder Engagement and Support

Engaging stakeholders in both academic and non-academic aspects of the whole child will be crucial in order to create the infrastructure and policies to support personalized learning environments. Table 2 emphasizes the central role of stakeholders characterized in RTT-D.

Who are the potential stakeholders? The draft guidelines include the following: parents and parent organizations, student organizations, early learning programs, the business community, civil rights organizations, advocacy groups, local civic and community-based organizations, local government agencies, the local school employee organization and institutions of higher education (IHEs).5

Table 2. Stakeholder Engagement and Support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTT-D Guidelines</th>
<th>Community Schools Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Stakeholder engagement and support is required in addressing Absolute Priority 1:6</td>
<td>Community Schools build on stakeholder relationships and programs to support student learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• LEA must demonstrate meaningful stakeholder engagement and support, including: “a description of how families, teachers, and principals in participating schools have been engaged in the development of the proposal.”</td>
<td>• Community-wide leadership teams play a key role in aligning the community vision, policies and resources.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>• LEAs must also provide letter of support from key stakeholders.</td>
<td>• School-site leadership teams play a key role in planning and implementing of the community school strategy.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Competitive Preference Priority also emphasizes “coherent and sustainable partnership with public and private organization [] to support the plan described in Absolute Priority 1.”7</td>
<td>Partnerships will yield strong letters of support.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Local examples have demonstrated that the community school strategy creates the relationships that are required for coherent and sustainable partnerships. You can read more in our guide, Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy. The following two figures show examples of which stakeholders who you may want to include in a community-wide and school-site group, as well as their key roles.

Figure 1. Community-Wide Leadership and School-site Leadership

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5 RTT-D Executive Summary, Prior Record of Success and Conditions for Reform, p.6.
6 Ibid.
7 RTT-D Executive Summary, Competitive Preference Priority, p.13.
What is the competitive preference priority—Results, Resource Alignment, and Integrated Services?

LEAs will receive points under this priority based on “the extent to which it [applicant] integrates public and private resources in a partnership designed to augment the schools’ core resources by providing additional student and family supports, such as addressing the social-emotional, behavioral and other needs of the participating students.” This includes child and youth health programs, safety programs, community stability programs, family and community engagement programs that are systemic, integrated, sustainable, and continue through a student’s transition from K–12 schooling to college and career. For LEAs and partners, this will be the opportunity to uniquely strategize about their results, resource alignment and integrated services.

The Department further expects to see in proposals “how the partnership would...develop a strategy to scale the model beyond the participating students to at least other high-needs students and communities in the region over time.” The community school framework allows for a system-wide expansion of community schools that provides LEAs with the structural and systemic changes required to impact the 2,500 or more students LEAs will serve (Refer to Figure 2 and 3). It is not a rigid formula; rather LEAs can start at various points of scaling up to begin building collaborative leadership and functional capacity – while staying focused on results. For more on the process of scaling up community schools, visit http://www.communityschools.org/scalingup/.

Figure 2. Building a Scaled Up System

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8 RTT-D Executive Summary, Competitive Preference Priority, p.13.
9 RTT-D Executive Summary, Definitions, p.18
10 RTT-D Executive Summary, Competitive Preference Priority, p.13.
Figure 3 depicts a 6-stage spiraling process of moving towards a scaled up system. Each stage of the spiral outlines a set of milestones that, according to experience, community schools partners will likely need to achieve in order to build a scaled-up system. The sequence can help LEAs and community leaders see at what stage they are initiating the process and determine what they must do to keep moving forward. The spiral acknowledges what community schools leaders know well; that is, systems change is not linear. School and partner efforts move back and forth across stages and milestones as circumstances dictate, revisiting earlier stages while moving forward.

Figure 3. A Process for Building a 6-Stage Scaled-Up System

Results

Setting out both short- and long-term academic and non-academic results will help LEAs and partners identify the partnerships that will help achieve those outcomes. The table below aligns the community schools results framework with the rigor expected by RTT-D.

Table 3. Competitive Preference Priority – Results

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTT-D Guidelines</th>
<th>Community Schools Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Partnership must identify not more than <strong>10 population-level desired results</strong> for students...which span from cradle to career, that align with the applicant’s proposal and reform strategy. The results must include both educational results and other educational outcomes...and education and family and community results.”11</td>
<td>The <strong>Community School Results Framework</strong> helps define specific results that community schools seek—both in terms of how they function and in relationship to the well being of students, families and communities. Community schools include multiple indicators of academic achievement as well as measures of engagement; attendance (using measures of chronic absence, average daily attendance, and truancy); cognitive, social and emotional competencies; and family and community engagement.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Applicants must identify, with the help of partnerships, “12 to 14 applicant-proposed performance measures tailored to the applicable population” for continuous improvement of their plan to address Absolute Priority 1. For all populations, “applicant must propose at least one grade-appropriate health or social-emotional leading indicator of successful implementation of its plan”12</td>
<td>The <strong>Evaluation Toolkit</strong> helps outline data collection and analysis driven by the results framework, and offers a step-by-step explanation of evaluation approach and a menu of data collection instruments necessary for a strong community schools strategy.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

12 RTT-D Executive Summary, Continuous Improvement, p.11.
Resource Alignment and Integrated Services

Keeping the short- and long-term results discussed above in mind, the RTT-D asks LEAs will need to specify the extent to which they build capacity and infrastructure to align resources and services.

Table 4. Competitive Preference Priority – Resource Alignment and Integrated Services

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RTT-D Guidelines</th>
<th>Community Schools Strategy</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The extent to which partnerships will:</td>
<td>Through results-focused partnerships, the resources of all LEAs, government, institutions of higher education, nonprofit service providers and other community institutions can be aligned, integrated and applied more effectively.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Integrate education and other services;</td>
<td>A community-school coordinator creates, strengthens and maintains the bridge between the school and community. They facilitate and provide leadership for the collaborative process and development of a continuum of services for children, families and community members within a school neighborhood.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Build capacity of staff by providing them with tools and supports to:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Assess needs and assets of participating students;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Identify and inventory the needs and assets of the school and community;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Create a decision making-process and infrastructure;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>● Engage parents and families in decision making;</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Identify its annual performance measures for the proposed population-level and describe desired results for children.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

FIELD EXAMPLE: Walter Helms Middle School - San Pablo, CA

The Walter T. Helms Middle School (WCCUSD) is a vibrant Full Service Community School (FSCS) of 911 resilient 7th and 8th graders, their families, and 30 sustaining partners and active community members. The FSCS approach is both philosophically and conceptually unique as a school reform strategy. Its fundamental emphasis is to end the isolation of schools from the communities they serve and to transform them into community hubs in which necessary services, programs and resources are fully integrated into the daily life of the school. Our multiple services for school, home and community are integrated into our unique grade level house system of three small learning communities. Each house has its own core and special education faculty, academic counselor, community outreach worker and community partner. Services include parental outreach and engagement, leadership training, case and attendance management, mental health, health education, academic support, college readiness, after school academics, enrichment and athletics. We have strong connections with our families, feeder elementary schools and high school academies. Our school community leadership team (Principal, Vice Principal, Instructional Coach and Community School Director) coordinates high quality service delivery, instruction, and community involvement. It shares responsibility for our learning communities’ success, and/or our highly valued partnerships and interface with the district and community. Our API score for 2010-2011 exceeded our growth target by 422%.

For more examples refer to Communities across the Nation.

Next Steps for Local Education Agencies and Community Partners

Community organizations, institutions for higher education, government agencies and others all play a role in developing a successful RTT-D application. As LEAs and partners start thinking about their RTT-D application, the Coalition suggests the following steps to help create a strong base for their RTT-D applications:

1. **Convene Innovators**
2. **Asset Mapping**
3. **Budget**
4. **Leverage Local Policies to Support Strategies**

### 1. Convene Innovators

The Department will award points for applicants who have formed “coherent and sustainable” partnerships. These partners, or innovators, should be **community-wide leaders** who have assets that can support a child within and outside a school. Innovators can include students, families, community members, nonprofit organizations, higher education institutions, unions, philanthropies, businesses and public agencies.

LEAs should:
- Bring partners that support different aspects of the whole child. This can include education, health, youth development and more.
- Strengthen relationships with already established partners but do not forget to open up the opportunity for new partnerships to participate.
- Bring together partners who have a positive attitude towards education reform and are easy to work with.

**Purpose:** Bringing together innovators develops and promotes a shared vision, mobilizes resources, ensures accountability for results, keeps the community informed, nurtures partnerships and relationships and builds the capacity to sustain the effort. *The RTT-D competition is looking not just for a list of partners, but a robust and coherent district-community strategy to address student outcomes.*

**Gather your resources:** Expand your knowledge of programs and examples of ways community leadership had guided and supported schools. The following resources will help guide conversations and structures necessary for a collaborative leadership structure:
- *Education and Community Building: Connecting Two Worlds*
- *Growing Community Schools: The Role of Cross-Boundary Leadership*
- *Community & Family Engagement: Principals Share What Works*
- *Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools*
Suggested Talking Points when Convening Innovators: When convening innovators with a competitive grant in sight, it is often difficult to align a strategic and coherent vision for student academic achievement. The following are a set of talking points and a sample agenda that will help guide your conversations:

**SAMPLE MEETING AGENDA**

**Introductions**
- Use your own personal or professional story to leverage interest in a specific goal.
- Review the Race to the Top district grant competition guidelines.
- Always remember to acknowledge self-interest.

**Community Schools Talking Points**
- Describe the benefit of involving community stakeholders.
- Explain how the community school strategies addresses the competition preference priorities needed to strengthen the application.
- Provide examples of community school success stories.
- Don’t forget to take into account the view of community stakeholders on the RTT-D competition.
- Build a motivating shared vision.
  - Introduce organizations’ role in the community at the table.
  - Align overall community and district goals into a clean, shared vision.
  - Letters of support from community partners will help strengthen application.
  - Partnerships may sign onto memorandums of understanding between the LEAs and partners outlining roles and commitments.
- Create a task list of necessary capacity building steps for LEAs and innovators:
  - Asset mapping and integration;
  - Sustainable budget; and
  - Building school level capacity.

**Ending the Meeting**
- **Distribute informational resources** that will benefit stakeholders in thinking and planning their role in the community, keeping in mind the shared vision developed by the conveners. These resources can be:
  - Community Schools Fact Sheet: The two page fact sheet defines the community schools strategy and provides an understanding of the roles LEAs and community stakeholders would be playing in the RTT-D application.
  - Four Page Scale up Guide: This four page document summarizes the systems and structures needed to support the community schools strategy.
  - List of all innovators at the table and a description of their work.
- Remind innovators to keep the shared vision in mind.
COMMUNITY SCHOOLS APPROACH
TO THE RACE TO THE TOP
DISTRICT COMPETITION

2. Asset Mapping

In order to build coherent and strategic partners, LEAs and community partners should outline the assets (e.g., resources, organizations, partnerships and human capital) within your communities. LEAs can identify and leverage:

- Existing partners within your schools that positively impact students, and
- New partners within your community that can bring a unique strength, asset and/or service for the students and their communities.

The following resources will provide tools and guidance on mapping your community assets and resources:

- Neighborhood Networks Asset Mapping Guide by the Department of Housing and Urban Development
- Asset Mapping by the Orton Family Foundation
- Mapping Tools by the Asset-Based Community Development Institute

3. Budget

With unstable and unpredictable federal and other funds challenging local efforts at sustainability, the RTT-D grant can be used to finance community schools coordinators to marshal a set of diverse public and private resources. Remember to use your budget as leverage. Think about integrating funding sources and human capacity through partnerships in order to support current programs and create the conditions to make them sustainable.

Financing Community Schools: Leveraging Resources to Support Student Success provides an overview of how community school leaders are effectively, efficiently and creatively blending funding to do whatever it takes to support student success. Leveraged funding, collaborative partnerships and the purposeful integration and alignment of assets enable a community school to deliver quality programming and serve student and family needs.

FIELD EXAMPLE: Children’s Aids Society – New York

The Children’s Aid Society in New York has taken a disciplined approach to diversification, aiming for a funding portfolio that balances public and private resources. As part of its strategic financial planning, CAS assesses this balance every year. It determines where funds come from, how they are allocated and uses this information to focus its fund-raising efforts. Initially funds came largely from private sources including foundations, corporations and individuals, with Medicaid partially funding health and mental health services. Greater diversification came in 1999 with the acquisition of a 21st Century Community Learning Center grant, several New York State grants and city funding through the Department of Youth and Community Development’s Out-of-School Time initiative. School district partners have brought substantial in-kind resources, such as custodial and security services, and pay half the salary of select, full-time staff members. Currently, there is a two-thirds public, one-third private funding ratio. Substantial support from private donors, including foundations, has been consistently strong and encouraged by a clear model and with early and ongoing results as well as by the availability of study visits to see that model in action.

4. Leverage Local Policies to Support Strategies
LEAs can shape their policies to better support community school strategies. Examples of recent local, state and school board policies reflecting community school strategies can be found in the Young Elected Officials Policy Book 2012. In addition, below are few examples of communities across the nation are working to create policies that support the community school strategy:

### School Board Policy

**Cincinnati, OH:** Cincinnati Public Schools (CPS) is creating campuses that strengthen this link between schools and communities. These schools, known as Community Learning Centers (CLC), act as hubs for community services, providing access for students and families to health, safety and social services, as well as recreational, educational and cultural opportunities. CPS is garnering national recognition (see pages 37-44) for its work to create these Community Learning Centers district-wide, not just in isolated neighborhoods. The goal of Community Learning Centers is to support student achievement, revitalize neighborhoods and maximize the community's return on their financial investment. For more information refer to [Cincinnati’s Community Learning Centers](#) and [Cincinnati City School District Community School Policy](#).

**Hartford, CT:** The Hartford Foundation has committed $3.1 million over three years in support of a public-private partnership to help develop "community schools" in Hartford. Members of the Hartford Community-School Partnership, which launched in July, 2008, are the Hartford Public Schools, the City of Hartford Mayor’s Office (including Hartford Office for Young Children and Office for Youth Services), and the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. The partnership is an outgrowth of a plan developed by Superintendent Steven Adamowski to create a new system of high quality, high performing schools to close the urban-suburban achievement gap. For more information refer to [Hartford’s Community School Policy](#).

**Seattle, WA:** A Federal Full-Service Community School Grantee, the Seattle Public Schools Full Service Community Schools Project works to increase the number of students who meet achievement standards and receive challenging academic content at Cleveland and Rainer Beach High Schools. This initiative works toward these goals through collaboration with community partners, involving families in student education, increasing students' access to academic enrichment and support services and a focus on student health and development. Read more on Seattle Public School's [School and Community Partnership Policy](#).

### County Policy

**Multnomah County (Portland):** The Schools Uniting Neighborhoods Initiative is a collaboration of city, county, state and school districts in Portland/Multnomah County, Oregon. Fifty-three SUN Schools work to extend the school day and strive to be a community "hub" by linking with other community institutions, such as the libraries, parks and community centers, neighborhood health clinics and area churches and businesses. For more information review [Multnomah County’s Policy](#).
Closing Remarks

With this great opportunity in hand, LEAs should be inspired and motivated to be innovative in strategizing education reform for schools within their own communities. By seeking support from public and private partnerships, LEAs can help envision, plan and implement changes that can make a difference for an individual ‘whole’ child.

More Information on Community Schools

Website: www.communityschools.org
Email: ccs@iel.org

Coalition for Community Schools,
Institute for Educational Leadership,
4455 Connecticut Avenue NW, Suite 310,
Washington, DC 20008
T: 202 822 8405
F: 202 872 4050

About the Coalition for Community Schools

The Coalition for Community Schools, housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership, is an alliance of national, state and local organizations in education K-16, youth development, community planning and development, family support, health and human services, government and philanthropy as well as national, state and local community school networks. Our mission is to advance opportunities for the success of children, families and communities by promoting the development of more, and more effective, community schools.

The Coalition for Community Schools believes that strong communities require strong schools and strong schools require strong communities. We envision a future in which schools are centers of thriving communities where everyone belongs, works together, and succeeds. The Coalition is housed at the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC.

About the Institute for Educational Leadership

The Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL) is a non-profit, nonpartisan organization based in Washington, DC, that works to build the capacity of people, organizations, and systems—in education and related fields—to cross boundaries and work together to attain better results for children and youth. IEL envisions a society that uses its resources effectively to achieve better futures for all children and youth.