Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships

The Community Schools Strategy

• Stories from the Field Supplement •

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Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships is filled with stories from the field that illustrate how community school initiatives have scaled up their local initiatives. The stories are all available on the web-based guide, and new stories are being added all the time. However, this document may be useful to those who want to focus on the experiences of others as they work their way through the 6-stage scale-up process.

Table of Contents

PART THREE: HOW TO SCALE UP COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EFFECTIVELY: A 6-STAGE STRATEGY ........... 4

STAGE 1: DECIDE TO SCALE UP ....................................................................................................................... 5

Milestone #1: Convene Innovators .................................................................................................................. 5
THE CHICAGO CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (Chicago, IL) ....................... 5

Milestone #2: Assess Readiness ..................................................................................................................... 5
EXPANDING INTENTIONALLY (Lehigh Valley, PA) .............................................................................. 5
ALIGNING WITH REFORM INITIATIVES (Providence, RI) ................................................................. 6
CONVERGING IDEAS (Multnomah County, OR) ................................................................................. 6

Milestone #3: Compile a Convincing Rationale for Scale-Up ................................................................. 7

Milestone #4: Broaden Collaborative Leadership ....................................................................................... 7
LOCALLY FOCUSED EVENTS FOR SCALE-UP (Lincoln, NE) ............................................................ 7
AVOIDING DUPLICATIVE LEADERSHIP COALITIONS (Providence, RI) ........................................... 7

Milestone #5: Commit to a Motivating Shared Vision ................................................................................. 7

Milestone #6: Increase Visibility .................................................................................................................. 7
EVERYTHING IN A NAME (Multnomah County, OR) ............................................................................ 7
STATE SUPPORT FOR SCALE-UP (Lehigh Valley, PA) ................................................................. 8

STAGE 2: DEVELOP AN OPERATING FRAMEWORK .................................................................................... 8

Milestone #1: Define Key Functions ............................................................................................................. 8
INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY (Multnomah County, OR) ........................................ 8

Milestone #2: Distribute Leadership ............................................................................................................ 8
ALIGNMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP NETWORKS (Cincinnati, OH) ............................................. 8
COORDINATING PARTNERSHIPS AT THE SYSTEMS LEVEL (Multnomah County, OR) ............... 9
Milestone #3: Plan to Plan ........................................................................................................................................... 9
STAGE 3: PLAN FOR SCALE-UP ................................................................................................................................. 10
Milestone #1: Define Desired Results .................................................................................................................................... 10
USING RESULTS TO DRIVE PROGRAMMING (Lehigh Valley, PA) .................................................................................... 10
Milestone #2: Create a Results-Based Logic Model ........................................................................................................ 10
Milestone #3: Prepare for Evaluation .................................................................................................................................... 10
DEVELOPING EVALUATION CAPACITY (Evansville, IN) ................................................................................................. 10
Milestone #4: Develop a Rollout Strategy .............................................................................................................................. 11
EARLY CHILDHOOD: A KEY PART OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOLS SYSTEM (Multnomah County, OR) .......................................................... 11
“A PERFECT PARTNERSHIP” (Lehigh Valley, PA) ................................................................................................................. 11
SITE COORDINATION EXAMPLES: (Multnomah County, OR; Chicago, IL; Evansville, IN) ................................................. 11
STAGE 4: PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY ............................................................................................................................. 12
Milestone #1: Build Financial Capacity .............................................................................................................................. 12
ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF PARTNERING (Evansville, IN) ................................................................................................. 12
FINDING RESOURCES TO FUND COORDINATORS OVER TIME (Cincinnati, OH) ............................................................... 12
BLENDING FUNDING STREAMS TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGY (Evansville, IN) ............................................................. 13
GOVERNMENT AND CITIZEN SUPPORT (Multnomah County, OR) .......................................................................................... 13
Milestone #2: Build Political Capacity ............................................................................................................................... 13
KNOW THE QUESTIONS; FIND THE ANSWERS (Cincinnati, OH) ....................................................................................... 13
THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (Evansville, IN) .............................................................................................. 13
CONTINUING EXPANSION IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY (Multnomah County, OR) .............................................................. 14
STAGE 5: IMPLEMENT SYSTEMICALLY .............................................................................................................................. 14
DEEPENING THE PRACTICE (Multnomah County, OR) ........................................................................................................ 14
Milestone #1: Align Principles, Practice, and Policies ........................................................................................................ 14
Milestone #2: Initiate Professional Development and Technical Assistance ........................................................................ 14
BUILDING CAPACITY IN LEAD AGENCIES (Lehigh Valley, PA) .......................................................................................... 14
CONNECTING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TO THE CURRICULUM (Providence, RI) ............................................................. 15
STAGE 6: CONTINUE IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION .................................................................................................. 15
Milestone #1: Collect Data to Assess Progress .................................................................................................................... 16
Milestone # 2: Use Data to Strengthen the Initiative ........................................................................................................ 16
THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DATA AND INFORMATION (Evansville, IN) ............................................................................. 16
Milestone #3: Publicize Progress ................................................................. 16
COMMUNICATION POWER (Providence, RI; Lehigh Valley, PA) ....................... 16
Milestone #4: Expand Rollout ........................................................................ 16
CONTINUED GROWTH (Multnomah County, OR; Cincinnati, OH, Evansville, IN) 16
Milestone #5: Preparation and Professional Development ............................ 17
Milestone #6: System Scan ........................................................................... 17

PART FOUR: CASE STUDIES OF SCALING UP COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVES .................................................. 18
CINCINNATI, OHIO: One Brick at a Time—How a Facilities Master Plan Enhanced Collaborative Decision Making ........................................................................ 18
EVANSVILLE, INDIANA: From One School to an Entire District ........................ 22
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI: Schools Enhancing Community Welfare .................. 26
LEHIGH VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA: Building Out Regionally—COMPASS Schools and the United Way Of Greater Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania ............................................................... 30
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: Lifting the Vision of Community Schools Across a District ................................................................. 34
PORTLAND/MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON: More Than a Promise—Where Learning Happens .... 38
SOUTH KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON: Doing the Work Better and Faster; Expanding in King County, Washington ........................................................................................................ 41
TULSA, OKLAHOMA: Learning from Other Initiatives and Planning for Sustainability .... 44
PART THREE: HOW TO SCALE UP COMMUNITY SCHOOLS EFFECTIVELY: A 6-STAGE STRATEGY

Drawing on the experience of many community schools initiatives over nearly two decades, Part Three outlines a process to create an initiative with the wide-ranging capacities needed to create a scaled-up system of community schools. It introduces a 6-stage spiraling process for moving toward a scaled-up system (see Figure 6).

Rather than providing a rigid formula or lockstep set of requirements, the Scale-Up Spiral helps school systems and communities at many different starting points begin building collaborative leadership and functional capacity—while staying focused on long-term results.

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

![Figure 6: A Process for Building a Scaled-Up System](image)
STAGE 1: DECIDE TO SCALE UP

Milestone #1: Convene Innovators

THE CHICAGO CAMPAIGN TO EXPAND COMMUNITY SCHOOLS (Chicago, IL)
The Polk Bros. Foundation led the way in community schools development in Chicago, funding three pilot sites in 1996 with encouraging results. When Arne Duncan became CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, the Polk Bros. Foundation, with the support of other funders, played a lead role in convening a group of philanthropic and community leaders to convince Duncan to scale up the community schools strategy. Together, they committed to the Chicago Campaign to Expand Community Schools to organize 100 community schools in Chicago over a seven-year period. A group of foundations underwrote the initial planning and development work and funded individual community schools; the school system matched city funds to support the first 38 schools. The campaign achieved its seven-year goal; today, Chicago boasts over 140 community schools. Following on the heels of the Chicago Campaign, the Federation for Community Schools, an Illinois collaboration, was organized to advocate for community schools across Illinois.

Milestone #2: Assess Readiness

EXPANDING INTENTIONALLY (Lehigh Valley, PA)
The COMPASS community schools initiative in Pennsylvania’s Greater Lehigh Valley spans two counties and three school districts and serves 12 schools. Functioning as an intermediary, the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley works with several lead agencies and has built partnerships with leaders in the business community, medical/health community, local family centers, preschools and daycare centers, after-school programs, and higher education community service departments, among others. Nearby districts—both urban and rural—have expressed interest in making similar community services available in their schools. The United Way chapter and its partners are excited about the possibility of sizeable expansion. At the same time, they realize that they need to expand intentionally and assess their own readiness before they launch a regional scale-up. Are the appropriate people at the table? What new challenges will arise with implementation in rural areas? What commitments are school districts willing to make? What changes in leadership need to be addressed? Partners are looking at these issues and taking appropriate steps. For example, to encourage continuing commitment in a district that will be hiring a new superintendent, community schools leaders met with school board members to suggest questions to ask candidates in order to evaluate their support for community schools expansion.
ALIGNING WITH REFORM INITIATIVES (Providence, RI)
The emergence of the Providence (Rhode Island) Full-Service Schools Initiative is partly the result of an effort to build on and connect with five ongoing initiatives. Between 2001 and 2007, the United Way’s Community School-RI initiative funded four middle school demonstrations in four Rhode Island cities. Supported by the Rhode Island Department of Education, Child Opportunity Zones (COZ) provide families with improved access to services in and near schools. The Afterzones Initiative, led by the Providence Afterschool Alliance, has helped build a citywide system to support and sustain high-quality after-school programs, and, since 2000, the Casey Foundation’s Making Connections Initiative has worked to expand family economic and early grade school success in three Providence neighborhoods. In response to these initiatives, the Providence Public Schools crafted its full-service community schools strategy and started with funding from a federal Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) grant in partnership with local community-based organization Dorcas Place Family Services.

Now that the superintendent of the Providence Public Schools (PPS) has hired Rebecca Boxx, former Dorcas Place program director, as the director of Full-Service Community Schools for PPS, Boxx is drawing on her Dorcas Place experience to develop a comprehensive and sustainable community schools strategy. She is developing institutional buy-in from district leaders, engaging leaders from related initiatives, and working through the Mayor’s Cabinet, which brings together leaders of several agencies and institutions.

CONVERGING IDEAS (Multnomah County, OR)
In 1998, elected and community leaders in Multnomah County, Oregon, were searching for ways to address critical issues and rebuild the fabric of the county’s communities. A Community Building Initiative convened by the County with representatives from the city of Portland, the state, and business and community organizations articulated two clear goals: supporting education and improving the delivery of resources for students and their families. At the same time, parallel ideas were emerging in a city-led After-School Cabinet and from the community itself, as several school principals were opening their doors to community partners and advocating for public support of promising efforts.

With the convergence of ideas from different constituencies, the various leaders and innovators created a joint committee across the two groups in order to harmonize plans in the design of a single shared model. After research, visits to other cities, and much discussion, the leaders agreed to a community schools strategy as the most advisable way to address community building and after-school risk concerns. Thus, what is now a 60-site community school effort involving six school districts was born.

The city and county invested public dollars in community schools as a vehicle to further their own missions, and leaders from the Community Building Initiative Sponsor Group became the core leadership group that drove the development of the first eight SUN Community Schools.

The initial phase of the SUN Community Schools gained the considerable support of policymakers, principals, and parents. Demand for additional community schools grew rapidly. Despite tough financial times, local leaders began to look to expand the effort. In the first few years, the number of sites grew from 8 to 19 through grants and alignment of similar school-based efforts into the community schools model. On the county end, a thorough analysis and planning exercise in 2002-2003 led leaders to conclude that it would be more effective and efficient to redirect existing funds allocated to fragmented family and youth programs into one aligned service system. The shift was part of a comprehensive
retooling of the county’s youth and family service system into the SUN Service System, with community schools at the heart of that system. That planning effort set the stage for the phase-in of an additional 41 SUN Community Schools over the past eight years.

**Milestone #3: Compile a Convincing Rationale for Scale-Up**

**Milestone #4: Broaden Collaborative Leadership**

**LOCALLY FOCUSED EVENTS FOR SCALE-UP (Lincoln, NE)**

Leaders from Lincoln, Nebraska, directly experienced the benefits of learning from other community schools. Early in Lincoln’s community schools planning process, a group of about 60 leaders—including the superintendent, mayor, and others—visited Kansas City to learn about its community schools initiative. “Trips are a great way to get people to buy in to an idea. Also, when you travel together you bond around a shared experience. When you get back home you know your team better and you talk about how you can make the work we’re doing better,” said Cathie Petsch, co-coordinator of the Lincoln Community Learning Centers. She sees tremendous value in meeting people involved in similar work in different communities. “You learn so much from each other and use each other as resources and sounding boards.”

**AVOIDING DUPLICATIVE LEADERSHIP COALITIONS (Providence, RI)**

When Tom Brady, superintendent of the Providence Public Schools, decided to scale up community schools, he recognized that he needed someone inside the system who would embody the system’s commitment to engaging with the community. It was then that he hired Rebecca Boxx. Building on related initiatives in Providence, including the highly regarded Providence After School Alliance and Promise Neighborhood, Boxx decided to work through an emerging interagency cabinet organized by then-Mayor David Cicilline. Current Mayor Angel Taveras has retained the cabinet, which, among other benefits, provides the community schools strategy with direct connections to major institutions. As a leadership group, the cabinet helps guide the strategy and mobilize the resources and political will of a variety of organizations.

**Milestone #5: Commit to a Motivating Shared Vision**

**Milestone #6: Increase Visibility**

**EVERYTHING IN A NAME (Multnomah County, OR)**

In Multnomah County, Oregon, community school leaders wrestled for months to come up with a name that would set their initiative apart from other school partnership projects. Finally, they decided to ask the County Youth Advisory Council to suggest a name. And thus Schools Uniting Neighborhoods was born, with the easy-to-remember acronym SUN Schools. The name succinctly captures the shared vision of the initiative and suggests potential and optimism. According to Diana Hall, program supervisor, this unique identifier has been pivotal in building community awareness and broad-based sustained support. Though everyone may not know what SUN stands for, most people know what it means—a source of support and positive experiences for young people, communities, and families.
STATE SUPPORT FOR SCALE-UP (Lehigh Valley, PA)
State entities can play an important role in convening partners and developing strategies to build support for community schools expansion. A sold-out, day-long retreat organized in 2009 by the Pennsylvania Department of Education, in partnership with the United Way of the Greater Lehigh Valley and the Coalition for Community Schools, brought together a diverse group of school and community partners from across the state to learn how to begin to scale up community schools. Organizers reached out to school district personnel, CBOs, public agencies, teachers, higher education faculty and administrators, child care agencies, and state children’s cabinet members. A keynote address by the Pennsylvania’s Secretary of Education was followed by a panel of local school superintendents and community leaders who explained why and how community schools are part of their core district agenda. The retreat helped participants see community schools in action and visualize the possibility of change in their own communities. Equally important, it reinforced local leaders' commitment to strengthening and expanding community schools.

STAGE 2: DEVELOP AN OPERATING FRAMEWORK

Milestone #1: Define Key Functions

INTER-ORGANIZATIONAL ACCOUNTABILITY (Multnomah County, OR)
To strengthen fidelity to the community schools collaborative model and capacity among site partners (particularly principals, non-profit lead agencies, and site coordinators), SUN developed an inter-organizational accountability checklist. The checklist emerged as an idea from the SUN Districts Council, an operations-level group that includes representatives of affected school systems, the city of Portland, and Multnomah County. As intermediary for SUN, the county designed the tool by drawing from existing partnership agreements and partner input. Such a tool has proven valuable in keeping the work of the SUN collaboration at all levels on track, ensuring progress toward its broader vision. The checklist focused on items such as vision, operational structures, leadership integration, and communication.

Milestone #2: Distribute Leadership

ALIGNMENT THROUGH PARTNERSHIP NETWORKS (Cincinnati, OH)
In Cincinnati, Ohio, district-level delivery of enrichment services is the work of partnership networks rather than of a single intermediary organization. A Cross-Boundary Leadership Team consists of leaders of networks concerned with a range of needs and opportunities from after-school and mental health services to physical health to tutoring and mentoring. To ensure coordination with the curriculum and increase efficiency, organizations interested in partnering with the public schools become part of a
partnership network that responds to specific school needs. Site-based governance teams and resource coordinators at individual community schools work with the partnership networks to select the providers most suited to meet the needs and culture of a given school. Such an approach gives the provider “exclusive rights” to a school, prevents service overlap with other providers, and ensures that all schools have equitable access to services. The networks support implementation in line with school plans, provide ongoing quality control and professional development, and develop business plans and financing strategies to sustain their work. Some networks are staffed by volunteers; others have sought foundation support as non-profit entities.

COORDINATING PARTNERSHIPS AT THE SYSTEMS LEVEL (Multnomah County, OR)

In Multnomah County, Oregon, the SUN Service System builds partnerships at three levels. A Coordinating Council provides system-level governance, guidance, policy recommendations, and support to the community schools initiative. It orchestrates policy alignment among agencies and organizations to reduce duplication of effort, streamlines service delivery, and strengthens impact. The Coordinating Council nurtures relationships with primary partners to keep them engaged, including local school boards, local municipalities, CBOs, and businesses. The development of the Coordinating Council grew out of an original group of city and county and school district leaders who realized that a more permanent and broad-based body was needed to deepen partnerships and guide the system’s development.

A midlevel operations team is “the glue,” says Diana Hall, program supervisor for the SUN Service System. When the composition of top-level leadership on the Coordinating Council changes, staff at the “operations level” – such as Peggy Samolinski and Diana Hall (employed by Multnomah County) and Mary Richardson (employed by the city of Portland) – provide and consistency to the work. They helped develop the initiative’s top-down and bottom-up alignment and communication by working closely with members of the Coordinating Council as well as with principals and SUN Community School managers at the site level (the third level). The third level identifies needs, develops partnership opportunities, and implements activities at individual schools.

Milestone #3: Plan to Plan
STAGE 3: PLAN FOR SCALE-UP

Milestone #1: Define Desired Results

USING RESULTS TO DRIVE PROGRAMMING (Lehigh Valley, PA)
The Greater Lehigh Valley United Way COMPASS Community Schools initiative uses Results-Based Accountability planning to drive its work. The approach to planning starts with the end in mind. What results does COMPASS want for children and youth? What indicators require measurement? Planners map backwards to develop programs and services to achieve results. Lehigh Valley finds the approach particularly useful because it leads people to think about who is responsible for a particular indicator and what organizations need to join forces to “turn the curve” in a positive direction on a particular measure. The Results Leadership Group provided training to selected COMPASS staff in planning systems. COMPASS Director Jill Pereira is a strong believer in results-based accountability and planning.

Milestone #2: Create a Results-Based Logic Model

Milestone #3: Prepare for Evaluation

DEVELOPING EVALUATION CAPACITY (Evansville, IN)
In Evansville, Indiana, a “culture of evaluation” built on the principles of accountability, data-driven decision making, and continuous improvement has evolved with the city’s scale-up of its community schools initiative. Evaluation succeeds in Evansville because of leadership support, partnerships with external evaluation experts, and a department of the school district dedicated to evaluation and research.

Early on, a community partner with evaluation expertise volunteered to develop an evaluation protocol at Evansville’s first school site, Cedar Hall Elementary. The protocol focused on program evaluation and school-related indicators. Later, with the formation of a community-wide leadership structure called the School-Community Council and the community schools initiative’s expansion to 13 sites, the evaluation underwent redesign to look at all 13 schools. It added community-related indicators to school factors and examined the new council’s functional effectiveness. Finally, the school district’s full commitment to make every school a community school called for an evaluation to track alignment between the district’s school improvement plan and the “whole child” approach of community schools. Related work is underway on a Response Intervention Framework designed to increase social and emotional support to improve academic performance.
In addition to continuously refining its evaluation design, Evansville has significantly expanded its ability to use and share data. With a data warehouse that collects cross-district student information, Evansville tracks students within schools as they advance through the system. Rather than expecting partners to “fish” for data on their own, the district executed MOUs that stipulate the information requested by a partner and the justification for the request. Release forms for personal data are fully disclosed to parents before they are signed and then kept on file.

**Milestone #4: Develop a Rollout Strategy**

**EARLY CHILDHOOD: A KEY PART OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOLS SYSTEM (Multnomah County, OR)**

In Multnomah County, Oregon, community leaders believe that making connections with early childhood initiatives is an important part of a scaled-up community schools system. With “thinking money” from the Kellogg Foundation, Multnomah County is one of three communities working on ways to make strategic connections between community schools and families with very young children. A study team composed of representatives from Head Start, child care and early intervention initiatives, the public libraries, and other agencies and community partners is looking at how early childhood education and community schools are purposefully related and what practices and policies need to be in place to support a smooth transition from preschool into the elementary grades. One simple step has been the addition of a question on community school registration forms asking parents how many preschool-age children are at home. With that information, community school leaders can work with school staff to build supports for young children who are not yet in their school building but will be in future years.

**“A PERFECT PARTNERSHIP” (Lehigh Valley, PA)**

In Pennsylvania’s Greater Lehigh Valley, the concept of community schools “fits perfectly for us,” says Art Scott, president of Northampton Community College (NCC), a lead partner agency in the COMPASS initiative. He believes that community schools and community colleges share similar goals: to educate the workforce, improve quality of life, and ensure economic development. Therefore, participation is a win-win. “We want our buildings to be open 24-7, and we want community groups to use our facilities,” he explains, because “we’ll be able to provide better collegiate-level instruction if we understand better the families that we serve.” Accordingly, NCC is a lead partner agency at Fountain Hill Elementary, a school largely characterized by a recently arrived Latino population. NCC pays a portion of the community school coordinator’s salary and benefits while the United Way covers a large share of the salary; the school district contributes to benefits. In addition, NCC has recently become the lead partner agency for the community school initiative in the rural Bangor Area School District. NCC is interested in increased enrollment in higher education among the rural district’s population.

**SITE COORDINATION EXAMPLES: (Multnomah County, OR; Chicago, IL; Evansville, IN)**

- In Multnomah County, Oregon, when the city of Portland and the county decided to pursue a community schools approach, they believed strategically and politically that they could not give money directly to the school system for on-site management. The county historically has worked through contracted private non-profit agencies and community-based organizations. Instead, leaders adopted a model with a non-school lead agency at individual school sites—an
approach that has resulted in strong and sustained cross-sector buy-in, a rich pool of expertise, diversified funding, and strengthened community engagement.

- In Chicago, then-school CEO Arne Duncan recognized that CBOs had the expertise and resources needed by the school system. He therefore decided to fund CBOs to coordinate community schools and provided additional enrichment during scale-up of an initial pilot. Many of the community partners have brought valuable services and opportunities into the schools through their own fund-raising and community mobilization efforts.
- In Evansville, Indiana, the school system is the intermediary for the entire initiative and oversees day-to-day management of school sites. The structure of the school district’s central office underscores the district’s commitment to community schools and collaborative work. Most notably, an associate superintendent for families, schools and community partnerships, supported by a director of full-service community schools, coordinates the work of the initiative, which represents a “big table” of more than 70 partners.

STAGE 4: PLAN FOR SUSTAINABILITY

Milestone #1: Build Financial Capacity

ADDITIONAL BENEFITS OF PARTNERING (Evansville, IN)
In Evansville, Indiana, one of the benefits of partnership has been the development of a bulk purchasing model. As a group, the school district, city and county government, and 70 local organizations now bid on and purchase copy paper, fuel for car pools, and other consumables. By joining together to purchase items in bulk, partners benefit from the most competitive prices and then direct the savings to the schools. The community-minded leadership of School Superintendent Vince Bertram was vital to tapping the power of group purchasing.

FINDING RESOURCES TO FUND COORDINATORS OVER TIME (Cincinnati, OH)
Cincinnati uses a building-block approach to develop its community learning centers. As resources become available, it is putting in place various services through its partnership networks, e.g., school-based mental health services, school-based health clinics, and extended learning opportunities before and after school and during the summer. It is also adding resource coordinators as funds become available, with the aim of placing a coordinator in each school.

Currently, 44 of the district’s 51 schools have full-time mental health counselors who provide direct services as well as broader support around mental health issues; there are 10 school-based health
centers and 32 schools with aligned after-school programs. At this point, 28 resource coordinators are financed through an array of public and private funds, including support from the school district’s Title I budget, United Way of Greater Cincinnati, Greater Cincinnati Foundation, Community Learning Center Institute, and private donors.

BLENDING FUNDING STREAMS TO SUPPORT THE STRATEGY (Evansville, IN)
The Evansville-Vanderburgh School Corporation is unique in directing all its federal funding streams (Title I, Safe Schools Healthy Students, Title III, 21st Century Community Learning Centers) to support its vision for community schools. Instead of relying on a system of individual grants, Superintendent Vince Bertram and Associate Superintendent for Family School and Community Partnerships Cathy Gray have blended the various federal funding streams into a single source to support their overarching goal. Their integrated approach is supplemented and supported by the integration of the opportunities and supports available through a wide array of community partners.

GOVERNMENT AND CITIZEN SUPPORT (Multnomah County, OR)
The distinguishing trait of the SUN Community Schools initiative is the financial investment by local government—Multnomah County and the city of Portland, including Portland Parks and Recreation and the Portland Children's Levy. Together, they provided the large share of cash contributions—$5.3 million in support of SUN Community Schools— in the 2010–2011 school year. Each school is able to fund a SUN site manager through a community partner and offers academic support along with family engagement opportunities. SUN site managers broker resources and service opportunities from an array of community partners.

Milestone #2: Build Political Capacity

KNOW THE QUESTIONS; FIND THE ANSWERS (Cincinnati, OH)
Unambiguous communication is essential. Straightforward answers promote confidence and encourage buy-in. In Cincinnati, Ohio, before deciding to participate in the community schools initiative, prospective community partners wanted basic information about their likely roles and responsibilities. According to leaders in Cincinnati, common questions included the following:

- Will the district support school hours that expand the traditional school day?
- Will services be available to the larger community?
- Will on-site space be available to partners? Who or what will cover rent and overhead?
- Will partners at the site level be selected by community members or by the district?
- What financial plans are in place to sustain the initiative both system-wide and at individual sites?

THE VALUE OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT (Evansville, IN)
In 2003, a $70 million referendum to support public education in Evansville, Indiana, failed by a three-to-one margin. To turn that figure around, a determined superintendent decided that the district needed to make a stronger case for community schools. He also gave the community an opportunity to buy into the initiative and express its concerns. At the same time, he reached out to the business and labor communities and met regularly with their representatives to build mutual respect and trust. Five years
later, 71 percent of Evansville’s registered voters passed a $140 million referendum in support of community schools. Says Superintendent Vince Bertram, “The community has stepped up because it’s no longer ‘us versus them.’ We all share responsibility for our kids.”

CONTINUING EXPANSION IN MULTNOMAH COUNTY (Multnomah County, OR)
While highly successful, community leaders in Multnomah County, Oregon, have reached only 60 of the 150 school in their six target districts; so expansion is always on their minds. As part of an expansion strategy, the SUN Coordinating Council organized an “every school a community school” work group to help think through how such an approach might be implemented. From that process, they decided that the co-chairs of the coordinating council—then-Director of County Human Services Joanne Fuller and business leader Bill Scott, along with other council representatives—should conduct a series of individual meetings with key stakeholders to deepen their understanding and commitment to SUN Community Schools. The response was positive. While a plan for expansion is still unfolding, it was the coordinating council’s outreach that has proven vital to expanding local commitment to sustaining the SUN initiative and creating a climate for future growth.

STAGE 5: IMPLEMENT SYSTEMICALLY

DEEPENING THE PRACTICE (Multnomah County, OR)
In Multnomah County, Oregon, efforts are ongoing to build the collaborative capacity of partners and staff at each SUN Community School. At the beginning of each year, county-level SUN staff convene district-wide meetings in each district to bring together district leaders, principals, site managers, and agency staff. They revisit roles and responsibilities, contracts, and agreements for each SUN Community School. The meetings provide an opportunity to learn about available resources, share “what works,” build relationships, and discuss challenges and solutions. At one such meeting, site managers from several schools expressed concern about their inability to communicate quickly with other staff during after-school hours. District leaders responded by providing walkie-talkies at each site to ensure effective communication.

Milestone #1: Align Principles, Practice, and Policies

Milestone #2: Initiate Professional Development and Technical Assistance

BUILDING CAPACITY IN LEAD AGENCIES (Lehigh Valley, PA)
In the Greater Lehigh Valley, the United Way’s role as intermediary has evolved as the initiative has expanded. Says Marci Ronald, who recently directed the COMPASS initiative for the United Way, “We’re
providing not just the funding, but also the training and technical support that’s necessary to get it done. Doing both can be a tricky dance.”

The COMPASS model calls for a lead agency to partner with a school, hire a community schools coordinator, provide key resources and services, and manage daily operations. One evolving challenge has been the selection of agencies capable of taking on the work of the lead agency—or grooming agencies for that role. When one lead agency did not have in place the systems needed to write a short-term contract to hire new staff under a mini-grant, the United Way stepped in and hired the person directly. In another case, a lead agency prohibited staff from driving parents to appointments and other events, citing insurance limitations. With the United Way’s input, the school principal identified and agreed to use discretionary funds to provide transportation.

Memoranda of Agreement (MOA) can also help by spelling out the various roles, responsibilities, and expectations of the United Way, the school district, and the lead agency. When problems arise, the MOA provides a starting point for respectful but candid conversation that leads to the identification of needed changes and the offer of coaching. Eventually, a formal and streamlined approach to technical assistance will assess strengths in key areas and then deliver assistance before problems arise.

CONNECTING COMMUNITY SCHOOLS TO THE CURRICULUM (Providence, RI)
In Providence, Rhode Island, the Full-Service Community School (FSCS) initiative has developed a planning tool called an “integration grid” to ensure that after-school and wraparound activities support the school’s instructional focus. Each month, classroom teachers identify one or more targeted learning objectives based on the state’s common core standards. FSCS staff then develop a program plan for the entire month that aligns and supports the standards in the following areas: academic enrichment, family literacy, behavioral supports, health and wellness, family engagement, and early childhood.

STAGE 6: CONTINUE IMPROVEMENT AND EXPANSION

- System Scan
- Preparation and Professional Development
- Expand Rollout
- Publicize Progress
- Use Data to Strengthen the Initiative
- Collect Data to Assess Progress
Milestone #1: Collect Data to Assess Progress

Milestone #2: Use Data to Strengthen the Initiative

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN DATA AND INFORMATION (Evansville, IN)
Continuous improvement depends on the ability to drill down to see what is happening in classrooms and to children and families. In Evansville, Indiana, district leaders wanted to understand why students missed 10 or more days of school. When they looked at high-absentee students in schools with very low poverty rates, they found that time spent on vacation was the primary reason for poor attendance. For high-absentee students in high-poverty schools, the reason was head lice. By asking a specific question, staff used district data to generate useful information and tailor improvement strategies to fit different circumstances.

Milestone #3: Publicize Progress

COMMUNICATION POWER (Providence, RI; Lehigh Valley, PA)
- In Providence, Rhode Island, FSCS staff developed a variety of easy-to-understand graphs and charts to show clear evidence of the positive relationship between its focus on family engagement strategies, a decline in chronic absenteeism, and various measures of increased parent capacity to support children’s academic success. In addition, findings highlighted “what went right” such as effective recruitment and strong parent participation and pointed to “what needs to change,” including greater family awareness of available resources, improved recognition, and the need to communicate in several formats and reinforce key messages.

- In the Greater Lehigh Valley’s COMPASS initiative, an end-of-year Community School report card is developed by the site-based leadership team (composed of the community school coordinator, lead partner, principal, and other partners) from each COMPASS Community School. The data provide information on the number of students in before-school, after-school, and summer school activities; adults in adult education; and more. The report card also measures how well the initiative provided services to the highest-need students and families, including the number of programs/strategies connected to the academic curriculum, programs targeted to students performing below grade level, and more.

Milestone #4: Expand Rollout

CONTINUED GROWTH (Multnomah County, OR; Cincinnati, OH; Evansville, IN)
Rollout strategies emerge in a variety of ways. In Multnomah County, Oregon, the SUN Community Schools secured a commitment of reallocated county dollars to create 23 additional community schools in 2004. Over time, a variety of grants, district contributions, and a new allocation from the Portland Children’s Levy permitted SUN to grow to more than 60 schools.

Cincinnati’s school board has set forth a vision for all schools to become community learning centers. The Community Learning Centers Institute, which serves as the local intermediary, and community
partners are gradually moving in that direction and plan to place a full-time resource coordinator in every school; they are already 40 percent there, with coordinators in 22 schools. At the same time, through community partnerships, they have placed mental health counselors in schools, established school-based health centers, and added a variety of supports and opportunities for students. Still, the overall goal is for schools to function as community learning centers.

In Evansville, Indiana, the school district has embedded family and community engagement in its strategic plan and expects all schools to be community schools. Evansville has made a strong commitment to integrating federal funding streams with the work of community partners, preparing principals to function as leaders, and developing an evaluation strategy that captures data on indicators for success.

**Milestone #5: Preparation and Professional Development**

**Milestone #6: System Scan**
PART FOUR: CASE STUDIES OF SCALING UP COMMUNITY SCHOOLS INITIATIVES

Considerable practice knowledge has been developed by communities in rural, suburban and urban settings. Their collective work illustrates a coherent strategy to unite discrete programs and splintered community efforts into a powerful means to improve results for children and families, schools, neighborhoods. They have started from scratch and built systems of community schools and many are in their second or third iterations, always seeking to fine-tune and improve their overall strategy. Their stories show that communities begin their system-building efforts in many ways—sometimes by implementing only one or just a few sites—or by addressing only some of the conditions for learning. No place or story is exactly the same but each contributes to a better understanding of how places are organized to support students, families, and communities.

Wherever communities begin, we hope the stories that follow will encourage them to think strategically about large scale expansion from the get go.

CINCINNATI, OHIO: One Brick at a Time—How a Facilities Master Plan Enhanced Collaborative Decision Making

Cincinnati’s Community Learning Center Initiative (CLC)—a core feature of the Cincinnati Public Schools’ (CPS) 10-year, $1 billion Master Facilities Plan—is built on a shared philosophy among school and community partners: schools are a hub of the community, and their purpose is to revitalize learning and transform the community. According to Darlene Kamine, formerly a consultant to CPS and now head of the Community Learning Centers Institute, “Commitment to that philosophy has been laid one brick at a time” through ongoing community engagement and an infrastructure grounded in collaborative decision making.

The groundwork for the CLC began in the late 1990s when leaders of the CPS, the CPS Board of Education, and the community began developing their initial concepts about community schools—motivated by an Ohio Supreme Court decision that found conditions in Ohio schools so deplorable as to fail the constitutional requirement for an adequate public education. Jack Gilligan, former Ohio governor and member of the CPS Board of Education, visited Children’s Aid Society community schools in New York City and Local Investment Commission community schools in Kansas City, Missouri, to see how those jurisdictions were using school buildings as centers of the community. Seeing communities’ potential for organizing supports for students, Gilligan encouraged the district to adopt a community schools strategy. He said:

The park board, the recreation commission, the board of health, the library board—all of them are doing things in the neighborhood but not always in a coordinated fashion. To get them thinking in terms of not just doing their own thing their own way but coming into a community
effort and joining a community effort—that will make the total impact greater than the sum of the parts.

Concurrently, then-CPS Superintendent Steven Adamowski was thinking about schools as joint-use facilities. He was inspired by then-U.S. Secretary of Education Richard Riley’s vision of schools as centers of community. Adamowski also understood that reconnecting the community was essential to the school district’s successful revitalization; he saw the rebuilding of physical facilities as a catalyst for engagement. The CPS, however, lacked the capacity to lead a neighborhood-by-neighborhood community engagement process in the district’s 52 neighborhoods. Therefore, Adamowski and the CPS Board of Education asked the Children’s Defense Fund (CDF) in Cincinnati to manage the process. Eileen Cooper Reed, then executive director of the CDF in Cincinnati and now a CPS Board of Education member, secured funding from the KnowledgeWorks Foundation to ensure the independence and integrity of community engagement.

The broad vision laid out by Cincinnati’s leaders was refined through years of dialogue, debate, and decision making among residents, parents, and school leaders at community engagement sessions in each neighborhood. Ultimately, the system for effective and sustainable CLCs was born.

The CPS and community partners launched a plan to create state-of-the-art learning environments for all students in new or rebuilt schools. The CPS saw schools as public assets wherein community resources could be directed to student, family, community, and economic development. Kamine, a former juvenile court magistrate, developed the initial community engagement strategy while at the CDF and then became a consultant to the CPS. She led the effort to build and implement the CLC Initiative’s infrastructure.

In 2001, the CPS Board of Education, motivated by a desire to revitalize Cincinnati, adopted a vision for a district-wide redevelopment of all schools as centers of their respective neighborhoods. Each school would be the neighborhood hub, open to community agencies and community members for health care, recreation, social services, and cultural events during and after the school day. Campaigning on the vision for schools as the centers of community, the CPS approved a $1 billion levy in 2002. The levy supported a 10-year Master Facilities Plan to construct new schools, renovate existing schools, and provide space for neighborhood activities in all schools.

The CLCs are a joint enterprise of the CPS and community-based public and private partners. Operationally, the CPS’s central administration provides core support, but decision making occurs at the site level under the authority of each CLC’s Local Schools Decision Making Committee (LSDMC). Each LSDMC and site-level governing body select partners, consistent with the unique vision developed through the community engagement process. To facilitate the equitable allocation of and access to partners and resources, leaders developed CLC Partnership Networks, networks of community partners that brokers and coordinates services to schools requesting a variety of services—health, mental health, the arts, and so forth. These collaborative leadership structures have enabled CPS to rely on community partners and local site teams to improve results for children. For example, when Superintendent Mary Ronan wanted to create an additional month of learning for elementary school students—called the
Fifth Quarter—community partners were already organized to support the CPS and its students through the CLCs. They immediately began working with selected schools and the CPS to plan expanded summer learning opportunities by using new and existing resources.

In 2005, Rockdale Elementary School—the first CLC school—opened its doors, reflecting the vision of the entire community in its curriculum, physical design, and enrichment activities offered through a variety of partners. Partnerships that emerged from the community engagement process led to a co-located comprehensive health clinic; daily extended-day programming; a full-time, on-site mental health provider; and year-round programming for students, families, and the neighborhood.

As part of the Master Facilities Plan to build or redesign all 52 CPS schools as CLCs, every school participates in a community engagement process wherein community members and school stakeholders identify their needs and assets and develop a strategy for rebuilding the school as a CLC. The result? Each school has or is developing a new or renovated facility with supports for students, families, and neighborhoods provided by the Cross Boundary Leadership Team (CBLT).

The CPS has come far in its efforts to make every school a CLC. The Louisville Courier-Journal recently recognized the success of the Oyler Community Learning Center. In addition, Winton Hills Academy was a semifinalist in 2008 for the Richard Riley Award for outstanding schools as centers of community, and the Ethel Taylor Academy received the 2011 Coalition for Community Schools Award of Excellence.

Most significant, the CLC strategy has been integral to the CPS’s dramatic success. From a ranking of “academic emergency” and a 52 percent graduation rate in 2002, Cincinnati Public Schools was the only urban district to achieve an “effective” rating from the Ohio Department of Education in 2010. High school graduation rates have soared to over 80 percent and continue to rise.

Currently, 38 schools fund and coordinate after-school programs. Forty-seven have fully implemented mental health partnerships, and 10 operate school-based or linked health centers. Two have co-located full-day, year-round early childhood education centers funded and operated by a private partnership. Two hundred business partners are integrally and consistently involved through a business mentoring program that was an outgrowth of the CLCs. A new museum school, a neighborhood Montessori program, and two pre-kindergarten–12 schools are the product of Cincinnati’s direct engagement in the redesign of its schools as neighborhood hubs.

The ideal CLC has a resource coordinator; in fact, 22 schools have created that position, funded by the Greater Cincinnati Community Foundation, Greater Cincinnati United Way, CPS Title I funds, and private donors. Work is ongoing to secure financing for coordinators at all CLCs.

The CLC financing philosophy is unique. While the CPS guarantees the use of its facilities and covers maintenance and overhead costs, funding for partners does not depend on school budgets. That is, to ensure consistency and sustainability, partners are expected to reallocate existing resources and find their own sustainable business models through third-party billing, grants, or other revenue streams.
From the outset, teachers and the Cincinnati Federation of Teachers (CFT) have been strong CLC partners. Educators were important participants in each school’s community engagement process and helped set the direction for the schools’ transformation into CLCs. Julie Sellers, current CFT president, used to teach in a CLC and, as an enthusiastic supporter, recognizes that the CLC approach empowers teachers to contribute to schools’ overall strategy as they perform their most important job: instruction. Sellers describes the added value of CLCs:

...[O]ne great benefit of the CLCs is that they increase attendance because students are getting their health needs taken care of at the school instead of staying home... A lot of our families do not have transportation to go to the clinic, the doctor, the free store, or the food bank. This really is an easy way to provide needed services... As a teacher at a CLC, you see the parents in the building more often, so you can develop a better connection with the family. As parental involvement increases, students become more successful. The parents build relationships with the teachers through the CLC’s community activities. Then, when a teacher calls, they already have a relationship and parents are less intimidated and more supportive of the school.

The CPS and the community are committed to the CLC vision. In 2010, the CPS Board of Education passed Policy 7500: Community Learning Centers, which strengthened the initial guiding principles formulated nearly a decade earlier. The policy states:

The Board of Education believes that each school should also be a community learning center in which a variety of partners shall offer academic programs, enrichment activities, and support to students, families, and community members before and after school as well as during the evenings and on weekends throughout the calendar year.... The Board envisions each CLC as the neighborhood’s center of activity.

Policy 7500 has helped make the CLCs a sustainable component of Cincinnati’s strategy to improve its schools, its neighborhoods, and the city. Cincinnati continues to address the constant challenge of funding, especially for resource coordinators, who are essential to the successful administration of schools as CLCs. Efforts to help city leaders understand the inextricable link between school success and the success of the city through neighborhood learning centers will further maximize the investment in CLCs.

Cincinnati continues to grow and provide an example for new community schools initiatives. For example, representatives from Cleveland recently visited Cincinnati to learn about CLCs as the Cleveland Metropolitan School District works to develop its own community schools; in addition, Kamine has visited leaders at the state level and in other Ohio cities.
EVANSVILLE, INDIANA: From One School to an Entire District

The Evansville Vanderburgh School Corporation (EVSC) (a school district in Evansville, Indiana) launched its community schools initiative in one school and has since expanded it to include all 34 schools under its jurisdiction. Demonstrating the community’s commitment to community schools, the school district has embraced the community schools strategy despite considerable turnover in superintendents. Superintendent Dr. Vince Bertram took the community schools strategy to a new level by engaging the community in listening sessions and responding to the community’s concerns. He made Family, School, and Community Partnerships a core element of the EVSC strategic plan. Even with Dr. Bertram’s recent announcement of his departure, the Board of School Trustees remains committed to finding a new leader who will continue to expand the community schools initiative.

Starting at Cedar Hall Elementary

In 1991, a group convened by the United Way of Southwestern Indiana reported that drug and alcohol abuse and support for families leaving welfare were major concerns in Evansville. When research indicated that after-school programming was a successful response to these problems, the group identified four high-risk, high-poverty EVSC elementary schools for enhanced after-school programming: Cedar Hall, Lincoln, Delaware, and Culver. In partnership with the United Way and with additional funding from the Lilly Endowment, each school began to develop after-school programs in partnership with youth-serving agencies.

In 1994, seeing the success of these collaborative efforts in the elementary schools, Cedar Hall Principal Cathlin Gray drew on the work of Joy Dryfoos to develop a vision of a full-service school infrastructure. Dryfoos advised the Evansville leadership team to visit communities across the country that had instituted full-service schools. Inspired by its visit, the team began to create the Cedar Hall Model. Soon, community collaborations at Cedar Hall offered GED classes, pre-school programs, counseling and in-house therapy, social work services, and community beautification programs as well as after-school programs in partnership with the YMCA, YWCA, 4-H, and Girl Scouts, just to name a few.

In 1995, Gray took a decisive step to take the Cedar Hall Model community-wide. She convened a meeting of community members and potential partners to form what became the district’s first school-based Site Council. Meeting weekly, the council used Kretzmann and McKnight’s Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community’s Assets to conduct a comprehensive survey of the community’s assets and challenges. Formal partnerships took shape, focused around a central goal: to meet the needs of Cedar Hall students and families effectively and efficiently. Some early Site Council members included the United Way, the Southwest Indiana Mental Health Center, the local neighborhood association, the Salvation Army, juvenile court, St. Mary’s Hospital, the Boys and Girls Club, Big Brothers and Big Sisters, the Indiana Division of Family and Children, and Lampion, a family and child service agency.

Starting in 1996, Cedar Hall’s efforts began to spark interest throughout the school district. That year, the EVSC Board of School Trustees passed a formal resolution that designated Cedar Hall as the first full-service community school. The resolution underscored Cedar Hall’s significant impact on the lives of children and families. The following year, Cedar Hall and the United Way co-sponsored a conference for
stakeholders from across the state to help them learn about school and community collaboration as seen through the eyes of national experts.

Cedar Hall was starting something big and people around the state were watching. In 1999, the Indiana Department of Education supported an evaluation of the full-service strategy at Cedar Hall; the following year, Senator Evan Bayh recognized the school with a visit. Cedar Hall began to receive more national grants and national recognition based on its successful outcomes.

Expansion Begins
In 2000, a U.S. Department of Education 21st Century Community Learning Centers (CCLC) grant enabled five district schools, including Cedar Hall, to hire site coordinators to expand their after-hours activities into year-round enrichment programs, offering activities after school, on weekends, and during the summer. With the support of their site coordinators, the schools began to form their own site councils, mirroring the Cedar Hall approach. A special feature of the grant allowed the schools to institute social work services through St. Mary's Healthcare Services. St. Mary's created a Mobile Outreach Health Clinic and began delivering health services to underserved communities in the Evansville area.

The success of Cedar Hall's full-service model was becoming increasingly evident. A state-funded program evaluation of Cedar Hall found that test scores increased by nearly 15 percent in the school year immediately following implementation of the full-service model.

Moving Forward with the Superintendent's Leadership
Determined to find a better way to maximize community resources and seeing the success of Cedar Hall, school officials worked to expand the model. Then-Superintendent Dr. Phil Schoffstall envisioned a community-wide meeting place for organizations concerned with children and families. In 2000, he promoted Principal Gray to the central office as the Title I director and charged her with systematically expanding the full-service community schools model across all EVSC schools. In 2001, the district expanded the model to 10 schools through a second 21st CCLC grant. In 2004, EVSC received a Safe Schools Healthy Student grant that helped expand the strategy into all district schools.

The work was growing and showing great success. Community partners were joining Evansville’s community schools movement. Still, the work needed to be more intentional and required a higher level of coordination. In 2001, community partners and the EVSC formed the School Community Council (SCC). The SCC’s mission is “to establish school sites as places of community to enhance youth and family development.” Community agencies work together at the SCC level, much like site councils work at the school level, to integrate resources targeted to children and families. The SCC developed a detailed strategic plan that specified goals, objectives, and outcomes. Subcommittees, or Strategic Goal Teams, began addressing topics such as cultural diversity, access to services and programs, health and wellness, and evaluation. In the years since the SCC’s formation, the council has grown from 50 to more than 70 members.

The Welborn Baptist Foundation began supporting the SCC’s work in 2001, allocating funds to create the infrastructure needed to support the expansion of the community schools strategy throughout the district, with a focus on health and wellness. In 2002, Bart McCandless was appointed superintendent. In
one of his earliest decisions, he elevated Evansville’s SCC initiatives to a new level by creating the position of assistant superintendent of federal projects, with Gray in that role. She assumed responsibility for all school-financed health and social services, after-school programs and related activities, and the coordination of federal, state, and other monies. This organizational shift bundled the funding and coordination of school-managed resources, allowing the school district to use its funds strategically to coordinate with community partners.

Today, EVSC blends a variety of federal funds to support its community schools, including Title I; Title I School Improvement Grants; 1003 G—School Improvement; Special Education; Title II—Professional Development; Title III—English Language Learner; Title IV—Safe and Drug Free; Even Start and Head Start; Centers for Disease Control; 21st Century Community Learning Centers; Carol M. White Physical Education Grant; Grant to Reduce Alcohol Abuse; Safe School/Healthy Students; McKinney Vento Homeless Grant; and Full-Service Community Schools grant. EVSC demonstrates that funding can support a district’s community schools strategy in lieu of creating programs to fit the available funding. In this way, EVSC is always moving toward its goal of creating more community schools.

In spring 2007, Dr. Vince Bertram was appointed EVSC superintendent. The SCC played an active role with the school board to ensure that the new superintendent would support the drive toward community schools. Bertram fulfilled the council’s expectations. He immediately engaged the community in over 250 listening sessions, even midnight sessions so that parents who worked two jobs could participate. Out of those sessions, the district developed a strategic plan that addressed five core areas: early childhood education, technology, professional development, innovative school models, and family, school, and community partnerships. Bertram also established the position of associate superintendent for family, school, and community partnerships, raising the status of community schools even higher in the district.

**Evansville Today**

Evansville has achieved its goal of systematic adoption of the partnership approach in all district schools. All EVSC schools are on the continuum of community schools development. Significantly, the community schools strategy has become fully integrated into the district from the central office down to the individual school. Associate Superintendent Cathy Gray said:

> We want to change the way we do business as a corporation and change how we think about communities and schools working together. This is about a process, about collaboration. Each school has its own identity, so it’s important to create an infrastructure where we open the doors to community collaboration and see what comes up at each site.

Evansville’s community schools effort continues to enjoy vigorous support from its superintendent. Speaking at a U.S. Department of Education briefing in February 2011, Bertram said, “Education is a complex enterprise. Meeting our children’s academic, social, emotional, and health needs is a shared responsibility. That is why family, school, and community partnerships are at the core of our district’s strategic plan, and we are dedicating substantial resources to support this work.”
As with most initiatives, EVSC is constantly evaluating and reassessing its work. In spring 2011, EVSC hired a director of full-service community schools, another position that will support the district’s strategy. The school district and community partners are reassessing the composition and responsibilities of the SCC, with a focus on creating a robust steering committee that will set the agenda for the community schools strategy. By constantly assessing progress and deeply engaging the community, EVSC is revising its leadership plan and action steps to ensure that community schools continue to be the centerpiece in helping students succeed for years to come.
KANSAS CITY, MISSOURI: Schools Enhancing Community Welfare

The story begins not with a grant, funder, educator, or elected official. The story begins with an individual who had an idea. Bert Berkley, a Kansas City–area business leader, believed that the Missouri Department of Social Services (DSS)—a major funder of human services—needed to do better for Kansas City’s children and families. Berkley had the opportunity to put his belief into practice when Gary Stangler, then DSS director, encouraged Berkley to devise a reasonable alternative to traditional service delivery. Berkley struck upon a simple, powerful idea: form a citizen board committed to system reform by means of community engagement, collaboration, and broad participation.

It was unclear what would result from Berkley’s idea. The citizen group, called the Local Investment Commission (LINC), had no state statutory authority, no clear charter, no logic model, no data system, no web site, and no email. LINC, as Berkley later wrote in Giving Back: Connecting You, Business and Community, had the remarkable opportunity “to find its own way.”

Initial organizational work began in 1992 with the hiring of Executive Director Gayle A. Hobbs, who set up shop in borrowed office space with a laptop computer, a card table, and lawn chairs. (She still leads the effort today.) The result is a neighborhood-based decision-making process that led to the restructuring of existing services targeted to low-income families. As Communications Director Brent Schondelmeyer states:

[LINC] was an outgrowth of community interest and not in response to a grant opportunity or anything like that. It was just people thinking or sitting around thinking, surely we can do better by our community.

The LINC commissioners—the board of directors—were recruited by Berkley based on nominations from the community. Out of concern that they would dominate discussions and the agenda, providers and elected officials could not sit on the board. LINC grew in spurts in response to a community need.

During the 1990s, LINC initially developed its organizational culture and community presence around welfare-to-work, which was the major federal domestic policy issue of the decade. LINC obtained federal waivers that it used to develop a community-based, community-designed welfare-to-work system. That effort, which drew significant national attention, unfolded before the 1996 adoption of landmark federal welfare reform and its promise to “end welfare as we know it.” LINC continues its work in this arena.

At the same time, LINC recognized that any meaningful effort to improve community welfare would need to involve a significant presence within schools and therefore a partnership with school districts. LINC discussed the establishment and support of “school-based or school-linked” services. Hobbs said:

In order to get better results, we had to be able to touch families close to where they work, deliver services in the appropriate time, to be convenient or accessible, and also that, the focus
to be on children. To help children you had to help the families, to get healthier families you had to have healthier neighborhoods.

The framework for LINC’s work as a “community schools” model gradually began to emerge in the early 1990s through an ongoing association with Martin Blank of the Institute for Educational Leadership in Washington, DC. Blank had helped LINC with its initial organizational development. As an intermediary, LINC carries out four critical functions: (1) engaging, convening, and supporting diverse groups and communities; (2) establishing quality standards and promoting accountability; (3) brokering and leveraging resources; and (4) promoting effective policy measures.

LINC worked with a handful of site coordinators who directed Caring Communities—LINC’s name for its community schools initiative. The coordinators had some flexible funds to spend on supportive services and were expected to organize site councils consisting of families, neighbors, and other interested parties. Much of LINC’s early work focused on providing school-based health services at selected high schools, with funding leveraged primarily from federal Medicaid dollars for administrative case management.

In 1999, LINC underwent a dramatic transformation. That year, the Kansas City School District, the region’s major urban school district, settled a long-running, expensive school desegregation case. A central feature of the court-supervised desegregation effort was the establishment of magnet schools intended to attract students from neighboring school districts. The 1999 settlement of the federal case resulted in a substantial reduction in school district funding amid an enormous increase in the school transportation budget. At the same time, success in creating racially diverse schools was modest at best, and the existing system of before- and after-school child care faced imminent collapse. The future looked grim.

LINC, by this point, had built a reputation for bringing together diverse partners to design, develop, and manage large-scale systems. This reputation was founded on the success of LINC’s early welfare-to-work efforts. Moving into school-age child care made perfect sense. And, given that a critical factor in a successful welfare-to-work system was the provision of safe, secure, accessible, and affordable child care, the prospect of delivering school-based care was an effective way to serve a large number of children, tap into new funding, and expand Kansas City’s network of community schools.

LINC was selected by the state of Missouri to develop an out-of-school-time system for the Kansas City School District by tapping new funding sources. Drawing on its strong partnership with the Missouri DSS, LINC initially turned to Temporary Assistance to Needy Families (TANF) funds and, later, a Child Care Development Block grant. LINC made a straightforward case for funding: continuing success of welfare-to-work depended on the availability of affordable child care for TANF participants. Under TANF rules, individual families could apply for child care subsidies and seek high-quality child care, which often was in short supply and inconveniently located. LINC proposed an alternative. It would apply on behalf of all eligible families—with eligibility determined on the basis of children’s free or reduced-price lunch status—and use the subsidy to provide school-age child care at schools attended by the children.
Tying out-of-school time to TANF funding was a huge step. It provided LINC with core funding of about $4.8 million annually, allowing it to develop out-of-school-time programs in almost every elementary school and assign a full-time site coordinator to each affected school to manage and direct the effort. The resources were sufficient for LINC to operate a low-cost, affordable, and readily accessible program while meeting state licensing standards and staffing ratios.

The new effort transformed LINC—already recognized for its welfare-to-work initiative—into a major community institution. The number of LINC Caring Communities sites grew from 18 schools in four districts to more than 70 sites, the majority within the Kansas City School District.

In 2006, the arrival of a new school superintendent with little understanding of LINC’s long-standing partnership with the school district gave rise to a contract dispute between LINC and the district. The Kansas City School District, which once counted over 70,000 students, saw dramatic year-to-year declines in enrollment that leveled off at under 20,000 students—half the district’s size at the time that LINC began its efforts in the district. At the same time, LINC was able to transfer Missouri DSS funds to serve eligible families in school districts located in inner-ring, increasingly low-income suburbs. Therefore, LINC exited from the Kansas City School District and expanded into the adjoining school districts. LINC has now established new school district partnerships and expanded existing ones.

It is hard to see LINC as a whole because it bridges so many school districts and political boundaries. It has a significant presence in seven school districts and a recognized functional presence in a three-county area (Jackson, Clay, and Platte) as the state’s recognized “community partner” for eight state agencies. In 2009, a new Kansas City School Board and superintendent invited LINC to return to the school district. LINC has since re-established its presence there.

LINC operates one of the country’s most extensive community schools initiatives. Combined enrollment (2010 figures) at its Caring Communities sites totals approximately 30,000 students; if LINC were a unitary school district, it would be Missouri’s largest. Student demographics are 50 percent African American, 16 percent Hispanic, and 32 percent white. Of these students, 71.9 percent qualify for free and reduced-price lunch. At each school, LINC provides funding, support staff, data systems, and training in over 60 low-income neighborhood schools through partnerships with seven school districts. At each school, LINC organizes parents, neighbors, and businesses into site councils that are charged with directing neighborhood-level efforts.

LINC sees the wide-ranging network of community schools as an emerging “delivery system” that provides localized services and supports for children, families, and neighborhoods through, for example, parenting classes, computer and computer literacy classes, health education, adult literacy classes, and food and emergency assistance. LINC also uses school buildings to serve the immediate neighborhood by offering additional services in the schools. In one instance, LINC is locating an office in a school to help TANF recipients obtain training, jobs, and supportive services. That school has the region’s highest number of TANF recipients in a neighborhood where limited public transportation often constrains access to social services. LINC’s 2010–2011 budget of $17.7 million is a significant increase from $6.1
million in 1998, the year just before LINC started to provide out-of-school-time care in the Kansas City School District.

LINC’s wide-ranging presence in terms of geographic coverage and scope of services is unmatched in the community. LINC increasingly sees itself as a “distribution network” for service delivery, information, opportunity, community organizing, and engagement. Its community school presence enables LINC to address broad, significant community issues. Two notable examples are LINC’s work on foreclosure issues in the Kansas City area and its information campaign on the $1.2 billion sale of a non-profit health care system to HCA, the result of which was the creation of two health care foundations with assets of $650 million available to address community health care needs.
LEHIGH VALLEY, PENNSYLVANIA: Building Out Regionally—COMPASS Schools and the United Way Of Greater Lehigh Valley, Pennsylvania

The United Way of Greater Lehigh Valley (UWGLV) finds itself on the cusp of a great challenge and opportunity. After working for six years to expand community schools in three school districts, UWGLV has received a request from one of those districts to scale up the community schools strategy in all of its schools while a fourth district wants to join the initiative. How did UWGLV get to this position, and how is it responding to these scale-up opportunities?

UWGLV serves the area between Philadelphia and New York City, including the urban hubs of Allentown, Bethlehem, and Easton as well as rural areas. It launched its community schools initiative in 2005. Known as COMPASS (Community Partners for Student Success), the initiative is a core component of the United Way’s region-wide strategic community impact plan. According to Vice-President for Community Impact and initial COMPASS Director Marci Ronald, COMPASS is “a marriage of shared community responsibility. It takes shared leadership and good chemistry.”

The COMPASS strategy grew out of community stakeholders’ concerns about outcomes for youth and families. In 1997, the United Way convened community leaders and partners across Lehigh and Northampton counties, including representatives from the departments of health and human services, school districts, institutions of higher education, and local businesses and corporations. The leaders formed a collaborative called the Lehigh Valley Council for Youth, which focused on best-practice models and strategies to boost support for students and schools in the region. Out of its deliberations, the council created Family Centers, wraparound services, positive behavior intervention and support programs, parent engagement, and other programs that promoted developmental assets in selected schools.

In 2004, the collaborative decided to think more comprehensively about its strategy and created a blue-ribbon panel that included Joy Dryfoos, a well-known community schools researcher, to evaluate its progress. Thanks to the generous $100,000 commitment of a local philanthropist, the Lehigh Valley Council for Youth held a small conference in 2005 with 40 education and community leaders from across the area to launch the community schools strategy. The event included presentations by representatives of the Coalition for Community Schools and the SUN (Schools Uniting Neighborhoods) Community Schools in Multnomah County, Oregon.

The council started crafting its community schools initiative by inviting four area school districts to participate. In wisely deciding to build on the success of its earlier work, it launched the first community schools in the Bethlehem Area School District in sites that had already adopted aspects of community schools strategies. At the same time, Lehigh and Northampton counties and the United Way planned to create one to two community schools in each of four focus districts as a way to start building the strategy from the ground up. They quickly expanded into the nearby Allentown and Bangor school districts. Bangor Superintendent John Reinhart explained why his district was interested in the community schools strategy, saying, “Our schools can’t offer all things to all people. We have to look to the community. I think community schools can offer real leveraging power...it’s a better way to handle the issues we face.” Allentown Superintendent Dr. Karen S. Angello added, “We have benevolence in the Lehigh Valley; benevolence of heart, benevolence of skills, benevolence of funding. So why are we doing this? Because we have the ingredients. Community schools are all about aligning resources...to benefit our children and their families.”
The fourth district chose not to commit to the initiative. It was in the midst of internal transitions and wanted to consider how the community schools strategy would meld with its existing work. That district is preparing to introduce the components of community schools in the 2011–2012 school year.

Late in 2006, the Lehigh Valley Council for Youth decided to reorganize its partnership structure to align with the new focus on community schools. It expanded its membership to include the heads of the Lehigh and Northampton County Departments of Human Services, lead executives from community-based organizations, and program providers. Together, this new collaboration of community leaders formed the COMPASS Council, with the intention of building a community schools initiative. They discussed issues of membership, name and branding, purpose, structure of meetings, communication, and resource development. From these leadership deliberations, COMPASS was launched in January 2007.

The United Way is the intermediary organization that administers COMPASS; it champions the initiative and builds awareness and community participation. UWGLV also works closely with lead agencies selected to manage operations at each site, providing ongoing training, technical assistance, and oversight. In addition, it provides core funding and receives contributions from each county’s department of human services, from corporate foundations, and from school districts under Title I, Safe Schools/Healthy Schools, and, the state accountability block grant.

At the school site, the United Way and a lead partner share the cost of supporting a full-time community schools coordinator. The United Way has selected a unique array of lead partner agencies, including the Boys and Girls Clubs of Allentown, Communities in Schools of the Lehigh Valley, Northampton Community College, and Lehigh University, to participate as lead agencies. Early on, leaders decided to develop their own capacity to deliver training and technical assistance; in 2006, the United Way named a full-time director of training and technical assistance to support community schools through on-site training and technical assistance as well as implementation of the COMPASS model. COMPASS’s director is responsible for administration of the initiative, coordination of support for the schools, budget management, and resource development. A part-time administrative staff member assists the director.

COMPASS was awarded three VISTA volunteers who will join the initiative in July 2011. One volunteer will be placed in each of the three partnering school districts and will focus on building capacity for volunteer engagement at each school, alignment of program providers with each district’s academic vision and curriculum, and development of a consistent message and media presence within each district via a web site and newsletters.

The COMPASS Council continues to serve as the initiative’s community leadership group. It meets four times a year and is responsible for the initiative’s vision and strategy. In addition, the COMPASS Partnership, which comprises all members of the COMPASS Council and any other individual interested in learning about the COMPASS network, meets twice a year. Lead partners may attend the semiannual meeting, along with other program providers who want to learn how to connect to COMPASS. The purpose of the meeting is to showcase the COMPASS sites’ innovative programming and to motivate interested parties to explore ways to create lasting and meaningful impact.

The United Way’s regional focus, demonstrable improvements in several measures at COMPASS schools, and partnership efforts with state education leaders—amid a challenging economic climate and a school population with wide-ranging needs—have set the stage for expansion. Marci Ronald describes COMPASS’s scale-up plan as “very organic.” She says, “As dollars—steady dollars—became available, the
collaborative has thoughtfully considered how, when, and if to expand.” COMPASS’s receipt of significant dollars from the United Way’s pool of undesignated funding from the 2008–2011 investment cycle significantly contributed to the initiative’s growth. In addition, Lehigh and Northampton counties have provided their respective schools and districts with some funding. Consequently, the initiative has expanded into 12 schools across three districts.

In 2008, COMPASS reassessed its work once again and developed a strategic plan to respond to a shifting environment. It focused on clearly articulating the initiative’s priorities, vision, and mission. In a case of unfortunate timing, however, the COMPASS strategic plan was largely put on hold when the United Way launched its own strategic planning process. However, through the efforts of COMPASS leaders in dialogue with the United Way Board of Directors, COMPASS community schools became a focus of the United Way’s strategic plan.

COMPASS now operates in 12, and soon to be in 13, of 42 high-poverty schools with academic achievement concerns; it reaches 8,000 students in elementary, middle, and high school. “In just three years,” says Ronald, “we’ve had tremendous growth, success, and energy around what it takes to engage CBOs, schools, districts, and others to work together, for the long term, around a common mission for students in our community.” Nearby districts, both urban and rural, want a similar set of community schools services in their schools; the United Way and its partners are encouraged by the possibility of a sizeable expansion.

As of spring 2011, COMPASS continues to work with the Allentown School District to understand the reality of what scale-up could mean. In fact, in partnership with the Allentown School District, UWGLV/COMPASS has submitted a proposal to the Social Innovation Fund of the Corporation for National and Community Service, requesting $1 million for each of the next three years. United Way has committed $500,000 to the project and has agreed to raise an additional $2.5 million over the next three years. The funds are expected to leverage $10.3 million for use in transforming five current School Improvement Grant (SIG) schools in Allentown into COMPASS Community Schools. In addition, despite financial constraints and budget cuts, Allentown Superintendent Gerald Zahorchak has created a new administrative position within the district to oversee and coordinate all before- and after-school programs and other opportunities and services across the district. The COMPASS Community School model is seen as the vehicle for effective and efficient coordination.

The Bethlehem Area School District recently inquired about how it might identify all programs and services offered within its jurisdiction, along with the full range of unmet needs. Part of Superintendent Joseph Roy’s plan for maintaining or increasing growth and opportunity revolves around the question, How do we increase the number of community schools in the district?

The Bangor area continues to make steady progress in understanding the demands of a rural district. It is working on the details of a five-year plan to implement the community schools strategy more fully across all five of its schools. The Easton Area School District (EASD) continues to build the infrastructure to support COMPASS goals. As a first step, the district has aligned itself with the important (and new in 2011) COMPASS-led Early Childhood Education effort, whereby COMPASS is working with a lead partner in Easton on the transition from pre-kindergarten to kindergarten. The United Way is using the partnership to educate and inform the Easton community about the COMPASS work on a larger scale. A local political figure representing parts of EASD has recently inquired about how the community schools model could be incorporated into state legislation promoting urban development. That inquiry holds promise for COMPASS’s further expansion.
Looking ahead, COMPASS Director Jill Perriera says, “We are keenly aware of the window of opportunity that is now wide open for COMPASS to look at a more comprehensive regional scale-up of community schools in the Lehigh Valley. Partnerships have been energized and strengthened by new leadership at all levels and are being guided by the power of leveraging resources and aligning efforts in the interest of student and family success and achievement.”
OAKLAND, CALIFORNIA: Lifting the Vision of Community Schools Across a District

In July 2010, Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) joined the ranks of school districts that have declared the full-service community school strategy as a core part of their school reform agenda. Community schools are becoming such an important focus to OUSD that visitors to the district’s website are greeted by the tagline, “Oakland Unified School District: Community Schools, Thriving Students.” OUSD reached this point through decades of community organizing efforts, strong nonprofit partners, assistance from a local community foundation, careful planning in partnership with the community, and the vision of its new school leader, Superintendent Tony Smith.

In 2001, Tony Smith was working for the Bay Area Coalition for Equitable Schools (BayCES) as Director of the Emeryville Citywide Initiative. The state of California took over Emeryville Unified School District (EUSD), a small district with less than 1,000 students that borders Oakland, Berkeley, and the San Francisco Bay, and is the home of PIXAR, for low performance in 2004. BayCES was charged with helping EUSD and Smith introduced the community school strategy as one element to turn around the district. It worked. EUSD got off the state receivership list faster than any other district had at that point and the school board hired Smith as its superintendent. Smith convinced the Emeryville Board of Education and the City Council to adopt the community schools approach as a means to disrupt the predictive power of race and demographics on student achievement.

After seven years, the San Francisco Unified School District (SFUSD) hired Smith as the Deputy Superintendent for Innovation and Social Justice, where he continued to advocate for the community school strategy in a number of different ways. First, San Francisco included a network of community schools as part of its 2008-2012 Strategic Plan. Further, Smith helped write a successful New Day for Learning grant for the Mott Foundation which incorporated the community school strategy. Third, he had a vision of applying for and using federal School Improvement Grant (SIG) funds to include a provision for community school coordinators in the neediest buildings. That vision came to pass in 2010 and is being implemented today. Nearby Oakland Unified School District (OUSD) hired Smith as superintendent in May 2009. (SFUSD Superintendent Carlos Garcia, New Day for Learning Director Margaret Brodkin, and new Deputy Superintendent Richard Carranza are committed to continue the vision for community schools across the district. SFUSD is currently using SIG monies to fund 10 community school coordinators and it remains a part of the district’s strategic plan.)

Over this same period, Lisa Villarreal, Program Officer for The San Francisco Foundation (TSSF) and Vice-Chair of the Coalition for Community Schools, had been having regular discussions with Smith and providing seed funding in each of his previous districts to support the community school strategy. Smith first met Villarreal while attending a National Community Schools Forum during his tenure at Emeryville and wanted to learn more about community schools. The relationship between these two leaders led to years of discussion about the power of community schools to transform communities. TSSF encouraged other funders to listen to Smith and his vision for community schools which built momentum in the Bay Area.
As he had done before in SFUSD, Smith brought his passion for community schools to his new role. Oakland’s children, like those in many urban areas, face numerous disparities. According to Smith (actually Dr. Tony Eiton – Jane sending the cite), an African American child born in West Oakland, two miles away from Oakland Hills, a predominantly white area, is:

1.5 times more likely to be born premature, seven times more likely to be born into poverty, two and a half times more likely to not be vaccinated when they enter kindergarten, four time less likely to read at grade level by grade four, and six times more likely to be pushed out or to drop out of school before they graduate. That basically ends up with African Americans born in West Oakland having 15 years less life expectancy than white kids two miles away.

Oakland has a number of assets, including many different CBOs, on which to build a community school strategy. OUSD had already created the Department of Complementary Learning to better coordinate supports and partnerships in schools. As part of the Department’s efforts, they raised the number of children being served by summer school from 800 to 8,000 and the number of schools with after school programs from 32 to 90. They also increased the number of partners working with the schools and expanded the number of school-based health clinics through a $26 million school bond. The school board was attracted to Smith’s focus on the whole child which was aligned with these existing activities. He was a natural fit for the community.

As one of his first acts as superintendent, Smith spoke with community members to discover which strategies were improving the lives of children. According to Smith, people saw “a lack of coordination, no alignment of services, and we weren’t able to leverage the incredible resources that were available for all the kids.” He saw that there were a number of organizations that were using elements of the community school strategies and an array of other partnerships, but he characterized their efforts as “hit and miss, or in pockets.” Smith committed to taking these efforts to address children’s myriad needs to a new, more coordinated level. He said:

We all have to come together in terms of children and families, particularly for those kids who have been least well served by the system. We just think that being a full-service community district or a district of full-service community schools is the way to go.

Smith included the community school framework as a central part of the district’s strategic plan to improve schools and communities which he proposed to the Board of Education. Smith acknowledged the importance of having a Board that is committed to improving outcomes for children. The Board voted unanimously to adopt the plan to make Oakland a full-service school district and incorporated the framework into its five-year strategic plan. Gary Yee, President of the Oakland School Board explains, “When the child comes to school, he should be getting cues from the neighborhood that says ‘we all care and support you!’ That’s why I think this full service community school is so important.”

Smith’s vision and the Board of Education’s support paved the way for a scaled up system of community schools across the district. Smith stated:
That’s who we are [a full-service community school district], and what we’re about now. With the passage [by the School Board] of this content, this work plan, it is now the sole work of the [Oakland] Unified School District. We are in the process of becoming a full-service community district that engages deeply with family and the communities we support.

Unique in Smith’s framing is the concept of creating a full community schools district complete with the policies and practices that support community schools on the ground

One of OUSD’s first steps was to change its tagline to “Community Schools, Thriving Students.” This new tagline is displayed on their website, business cards, and official documents, communicating the district’s new strategy and message into the community.

The district has taken part in unprecedented steps to engage the community and plan thoughtfully. To design its community school initiative, OUSD organized a full service community schools task force that is comprised of 25-30 people from OUSD and the community and meets almost weekly. It includes representatives from the Oakland Community After School Alliance, East Bay Asian Youth Center, the Oakland Unity Council, among others (a full list of the Task Force is presented on the website). To engage the community, the Task Force visited existing FSCS sites to understand lessons learned, consulted with key stakeholders to capture their perspective on what a FSCS district should look like, and held numerous community gatherings to listen to people’s ideas about community schools. The Urban Strategies Council, a local highly respected community intermediary, has been facilitating the development of the FSCS plan. Community organizations and businesses support the district’s efforts. According to Joseph Haraburda, President, Oakland Chamber of Commerce, “The business community is completely behind the idea of full service schools and supports the district’s effort to accomplish that.” Nicole Taylor, President and CEO, East Bay Community Foundation adds, “Tony is really galvanizing a great cross-section of folks in the city. Not just folks within the school district, but business leaders, non-profit leaders, parents and families.”

OUSD also launched a website, www.thrivingstudents.org, dedicated to communicating how the district is working towards becoming a full-service community school district. The website a list of task forces, highlights work that is being done along the way, presents meeting times, documents, and summaries, and provides ways for visitors to contribute to the design of the initiative through email, Facebook, and Twitter.

OUSD is planning to merge the offices of Complementary Learning and Family and Community into the Department of Partnerships for Families, Schools, and Community, thereby institutionalizing FSCS within the district, buttressed by district staff and funding. It is aligning its departments to support the FSCS strategy. Human Resources; Leadership, Curriculum and Instruction (LCI); and, Facilities are examples of some departments that are exploring how they can support the FSCS vision. For example, LCI is going to provide professional development to principals on how to share resources, develop trust, and lead in a FSCS. The Task Force is also working with Facilities to resolve issues around custodial staff working during the expanded hours required of FSCS.
The Full Service Community School's Task Force completed its work and timeline and the work of this and all the other task forces rolled up into a draft strategic plan which was unanimously approved by the Board of Education in June 2011, with implementation staring in fall 2011. Like many other developing initiatives, they will start in the schools that already have the culture of partnerships and integration in place and will work with other schools to prepare them for partnership, increased supports, and community involvement. The Oakland work represents one of the most complete plans for creating a scaled up strategy for community schools that has yet been developed. The challenges of implementation await. Go to www.thrivingstudents.org to see the task force working documents and videos about the Oakland FSCS initiative.

The Bay Area has become an area of incredible growth of the community school vision. Nine local school districts are watching what Oakland is doing and hope to develop similar plans for community schools to present to their boards of education.
PORTLAND/MULTNOMAH COUNTY, OREGON: More Than a Promise—Where Learning Happens

Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) represents one of the nation’s most powerful visions of a community schools system. Built by county and city leaders in partnership with six school superintendents, SUN has grown from 8 schools in 1999 to 60 schools in 2011, with an emerging plan to make every school in Multnomah County, Oregon, a SUN Community School.

In 1998, Multnomah County knew that it was facing an uphill battle against shrinking budgets, increased demand for services amid growing cultural and linguistic diversity, a widening achievement gap, and no clear sense of where and how resources supporting school-age youth and families were used. At the same time, leaders from both the city of Portland and Multnomah County recognized that responses to local conditions were emerging from several fronts: a county Community Building Initiative, a city After-School Cabinet, and school-based grass-roots efforts that forged partnerships with community organizations to meet students’ needs. City and county leaders merged these various efforts and led a joint planning process to design a model to meet the community’s needs. Although family-oriented services were already available in the community, leaders realized that increased access to services through school-based centers would enhance service availability while providing a valuable platform for community engagement. Visibly co-locating services in schools would counteract the isolation of schools and help voters, the majority of whom did not have children in public school, appreciate the centrality of schools and their importance to the entire community. Leaders acknowledged:

We had several motivations for going this route. We wanted to meet families where they are—in the neighborhood—and provide services in a place that was familiar and non-stigmatizing—the neighborhood school. We knew that school personnel were likely to be able to identify students who could use extra support before these students were in crisis, so that resources could be spent on enrichment and prevention.

Drawing on national research and the opportunity to visit the Children’s Aid Society, a large service provider in New York City with over 20 years’ experience in implementing and supporting community schools initiatives, city and county leaders chose the full-service community schools model as the vehicle for partners to achieve their shared vision and individual missions. The partners’ vision for community schools was broad: comprehensive services to increase educational success and self-sufficiency for children, families, and community members provided through a system of community schools.

From their joint planning effort, leaders created the SUN Community Schools Initiative, with youth suggesting the name SUN. The initiative launched eight community schools in 1999, funded by the city and county. The initiative’s pivotal decision to fund non-profit partners as the lead agency responsible for organizing community schools in part reflected the fact that the county historically did not fund school systems. This decision has proven prescient as non-profit partners have generated additional resources to support SUN Community Schools.
At the leadership level, the Community Building Initiative Sponsor Group evolved into the SUN Sponsor Group, incorporating members of the After-School Cabinet to form the initiative’s governing body. The Sponsor Group comprises leaders from the city of Portland, Multnomah County, the city of Gresham, six school districts, the state of Oregon, businesses, and community organizations.

Local leaders, such as Lolenzo Poe, the then-director of the Multnomah County Department of Community and Family Services, also knew that the initiative “needed to do more than promise to do good and avoid evil.” Thus, the Sponsor Group agreed on a results-based vision that called for improved attendance, behavior, parent involvement, and achievement. Later, as the initiative evolved, the Sponsor Group developed outcome targets to help gauge success and ensure accountability.

The Sponsor Group selected the county as the initiative’s intermediary, or managing, partner, taking advantage of its capacity to convene partners, manage contracts and other administrative issues, and link to county-funded services, including anti-poverty, health, mental health, library, and juvenile justice services. In its first year as intermediary, the county convened separate monthly meetings of school principals, site managers (the term for local site-based community school coordinators), and lead agency supervisors (responsible for overseeing site managers) to provide technical assistance, encourage peer networking, and gather input on effective practices. In addition, joint meetings of these stakeholders from the eight initial sites took place several times a year. Over the last 12 years, the county has expanded the technical assistance and program development structures and resources available to stakeholders and has added a table for district liaisons from each of the six school districts to address systemic operational issues.

SUN Community Schools expanded rapidly as it gained visibility. It received significant financial support when it was added as a line item to the 2000 city and county budgets. Between 2000 and 2002, SUN relied on 21st Century Community Learning Centers grants, Safe Schools grants, and the restructuring of an existing high school family resource center to add new community schools. By 2003, SUN had more than doubled in size and grown to 19 schools across five districts serving 9,721 children and 44,000 other people. When voters passed the Portland Children’s Levy in 2002, SUN added 4 sites during the 2003–2004 school year.

In 2004, SUN Community Schools grew significantly as a result of policy and system alignment efforts on the part of Multnomah County in partnership with the city of Portland. The county adopted a School-Age Policy Framework in 2003 that created a system for the delivery of social and support services that lead to educational success and self-sufficiency for children, families, and community members. The system, which is now known as the SUN Service System, built on SUN Community Schools and identified community schools as its cornerstone strategy. In implementing the system, the county redirected funds to increase the number of SUN Community School sites, and the city of Portland aligned 13 existing Parks and Recreation community schools that were not previously SUN Community Schools with the SUN model, resulting in 46 total sites.

The value of community schools and their effectiveness in engaging community became evident when county funding for SUN was threatened in 2006. Over 500 parents, students, and community members attended a county budget hearing to testify on behalf of SUN Community Schools and to sustain the
community schools strategy. The community won. SUN Community Schools continued to receive funding, and a new governance body for the initiative was formed—the SUN Service System Coordinating Council.

The council includes representatives from SUN partner organizations, including the director of the Multnomah County Department of Human Services, high-level school district administrators, the director of the Portland Children’s Levy, the director of Portland Parks and Recreation, and members of the Coalition of Communities of Color, community partners, and others.

From 2005 to 2010, more champions rose to support SUN Community Schools as school districts and public leaders identified the community schools initiative as a main strategy for achieving their respective core missions. The collaboration secured grants from federal and local sources and identified educational funding to increase the number of sites. As intermediary, the county supported the development and strengthening of collaborative leadership and its commitment to collective impact by, for example, staffing the SUN Service System Coordinating Council. The county also ensured communication across and between all levels of the initiative, convened partners, coordinated strategic planning, conducted an evaluation and specified accountability measures, provided technical assistance and training, and managed program development—all of which are critical to the ongoing collaboration.

By the start of the 2010-2011 school year, SUN Community Schools counted 60 schools and served close to 20,000 children and adults. Its scaled-up success is visible and sustained. Despite leadership transitions, the initiative has grown because of its broad political support. Since SUN’s creation, the system has seen the arrival of four county commissioners representing both political parties, along with the arrival of three mayors. SUN has critical financial and political support. According to Lolenzo Poe:

> It has become a model that in the city of Portland and in Multnomah County, you cannot run for public office unless you embrace SUN as a model. You cannot run for school board unless you clearly articulate your support of SUN as a model and how it in fact supports the academic achievement of students. When you run for office, I can guarantee you that there's a number of organizations that ask every candidate the same series of questions, and it all centers around that.

This support will help ensure SUN’s impact well into the future. SUN is planning to scale up into every school in Multnomah County—over 150 schools—permitting it to extend its reach to the entire county and making it the nation’s first all-county community schools initiative.
SOUTH KING COUNTY, WASHINGTON: Doing the Work Better and Faster; Expanding in King County, Washington

For Deborah Salas, executive director of the Community Schools Collaboration (CSC) in South King County, Washington, scale-up has meant “learning to do the work better, faster and more efficiently.”

Unbeknownst to Salas, what would become her community schools journey began in 1998. At that time, representatives from Casey Family Programs met with representatives from the Puget Sound Educational Service District (PSESD) to discuss ways to remedy an unacceptable drop-out rate and the high number of out-of-home placements. The participants decided to focus on the city of Tukwila—just outside Seattle—because of its small size (five schools), history of collaboration, rapid urbanization, and King County’s highest rate of children living out-of-home (one in nine). Casey hoped to learn from Tukwila and then expand its work in new communities. Tukwila is one of the nation’s most diverse school districts; among its 2,800 students, 1,500 refugee and immigrant youth speak over 70 languages.

Casey Family Programs and PSESD added the Tukwila School District, the city of Tukwila, and the Washington State Department of Children and Families to the CSC as founding partners. Together, they established the Tukwila Community Schools Collaboration (TCSC) as a public/private partnership. Leaders from the respective organizations devoted two years to conducting internal conversations to ensure that each partner had an equal voice, a share of funding responsibility, and no staffing issues. As part of the process, the partnership conducted 19 focus groups with families, students, educators, public agencies, and local government and secured additional funding from the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation. The partnership developed a strategic plan built on the following vision: “To establish Tukwila as a model community that maximizes resources to improve its schools, neighborhoods, and economic environment through a coordinated collaboration of local schools, government, businesses, citizens, and foundations.”

In 2001, the TCSC was formally introduced; a Collaborative Executive Leadership Team comprised of representatives from the founding partners governed the enterprise, with PSESD’s children’s foundation serving as the fiscal agent. That same year, site-level operations began in all five Tukwila schools: three elementary schools, one middle school, and one high school.

The TCSC funded eight staff in each school (a full-time site manager, three part-time group leaders, and four part-time youth leaders). Deborah Salas was among the initial site managers, and she recalls that two of the youth leaders were high school students who themselves needed support and enrichment. Site managers at each school forged partnerships with groups such as Tukwila Parks and Recreation, the Tukwila Public Health Department, Washington Reading Corps/AmeriCorps, Smile Mobile dental services, and 4-H. Initial programming focused on after-school and summer academic and enrichment activities. Quarterly literacy events offered families opportunities to learn with their children, and an annual health fair with immunizations addressed student health concerns.

In short time, TCSC leaders and staff saw the need for more expertise and began looking for partners that could provide greater capacity in the schools. In an area with few community-based providers, the TCSC took a broad approach and looked for partners in arts, cultural, and faith-based organizations as
well as through contracts with skilled individuals. It also recognized the need for ongoing training of both TCSC and school staff. As a result, the TCSC launched a Continual Quality Improvement (CQI) process and identified areas for professional development.

As its work grew, the TCSC expanded its vision and developed a multipronged strategy not just to support students but also to strengthen families and enhance school effectiveness. The TCSC realized that high school as well as elementary school students needed enrichment opportunities and social supports and that all students would benefit from special assistance at academic transition points.

Typical of growing systems, the TCSC recognized—after three years—that it needed to perform its work more effectively and efficiently. One challenge in particular underscored the need for improvement: the TCSC was experiencing difficulty in communicating to funders the collaborative’s unique partnership and leadership structure. The TCSC project coordinator worked for Casey, the school-site managers worked for PSESD, and other staff were on the city of Tukwila’s payroll. The arrangement was workable but did not lend itself to easy explanation. So, the Collaborative Executive Leadership Team decided to restructure the initiative by forming an independent not-for-profit 501(c)3 organization. A community board of directors oversaw the work of the reconstituted organization, which was now positioned to receive additional funding from local funders, such as the Stuart Foundation, the Milton S. Eisenhower Foundation, a 21st Century Community Learning Centers grant, and others. The five founding partners served on the new governing board as the TCSC recruited additional members. In 2004, the new community board added to the original partners a parent from the community, a local business consultant, and the leaders of community-based organizations. It formulated a cohesive management vision, naming Salas the first TCSC executive director and developing a fund-raising strategy. Since then, the TCSC has expanded its partnerships, deepened its work, and continued to see success.

By 2007, the TCSC had improved graduation and attendance rates and saw a decrease in drop-out and mobility rates. It received the Coalition for Community Schools National Award for Excellence and was gaining visibility in the region among funders and community leaders. At the same time, it drew the attention of John Welch, superintendent of the nearby Highline School District, and of the city of SeaTac. With the Stuart Foundation’s and Seattle Foundation’s support of community schools in the region, the Tukwila Community Schools Collaboration became the Community Schools Collaboration, reflecting its new regional focus. The TCSC’s first effort at expansion began with the Highline School District. Believing that community-based organizations command the strength to support efforts to improve student achievement, Highline’s leaders identified SeaTac and White Center as the communities with the greatest need for support. According to Superintendent John Welch, “We really need our communities to rally around our kids’ education and just support kids overall so they can be successful in school and life and that is what community schools are all about.”

Regional scale-up has been intentional in all three communities, with clusters of schools organized around elementary, middle school, and high school feeder patterns. Within the clusters, schools work with and learn from each other, and students and families may progress through schools that employ a community schools approach. From 2008 to 2010, the CSC expanded into 16 campuses and 20 schools and began to address transitions across grade levels and the alignment of extended-day activities with
student supports. Extended-day activities are organized around youth development assets and grade-level standards. In addition, teachers or CSC staff who have worked with an education coach coordinate many of the activities.

Salas notes that the CSC has expanded its family engagement “by developing partnerships with culturally based community agencies [e.g., Somali Community Services Coalition, Para Los Niños, and PACIFika], partnering with the parent-teacher organizations and reaching out to families in their own language.” The CSC has expanded health services to include physicals, immunization services, dental screenings, and vision care through partnerships with individual doctors, dentists, the Swedish Hospital, King County Public Health, HealthPoint Community Health Centers, Washington Smile Partners and the Smile Mobile, and LensCrafters.

The CSC has re-branded itself with a new logo and web site and is now developing a new strategic plan that makes community schools the centerpiece of education reform, building deeper alliances and sustainability strategies. It is working with a cradle-to-career network on benchmarks and transitions in a child’s developmental path and putting the community schools strategy out front.

The pace of change has been exhilarating as the initiative’s budget has grown from $600,000 to over $2 million in just a few years, and that figure does not count the more than $1 million in leveraged programs and services delivered in CSC community schools. The CSC is reaching out to nascent initiatives in Seattle, Tacoma, and Vancouver, Washington, to help them build and strengthen their own community school initiatives. Still, the challenges facing the CSC remain daunting, particularly as difficult economic times challenge families. With scale-up continuing into new communities with different demographic and political dynamics, leaders have learned about the importance of patience and flexibility. But, for Deborah Salas, the payoff lies in watching community schools become “not just a program but the life and breath of our schools.”

In 2010, after more than 10 years of hard work, the CSC reflected on its system-wide operations and took even greater steps in scaling up and improving its work. It co-founded the West Coast Collaborative of community schools initiatives, a group funded by the Stuart Foundation to share best practices with one another.
TULSA, OKLAHOMA: Learning from Other Initiatives and Planning for Sustainability

Community leaders in Tulsa, Oklahoma, recognized that the supports made available to preschool-age children failed to make a difference in children’s lives once the children entered grade school. The leaders therefore began searching for a way to connect the same types of student and family supports to the schools. After intentional research on best practices, they discovered the community schools strategy and began a journey around the country to learn from others as they planned for a sustainable strategy. Today, community schools are embedded in two Tulsa school districts (Tulsa Public Schools and Union Public Schools), and other Tulsa-area school districts have begun to inquire about community schools. Under the umbrella of the Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative, community school leaders have built collective trust among school leaders and community partners; as a result, many more students in Tulsa are succeeding.

In 2005, the Metropolitan Human Services Commission (MHSC) decided to make educational improvements one of its priorities. The MHSC is a collaborative of leaders established and supported by the Community Service Council of Greater Tulsa (CSC), city of Tulsa, Tulsa County, Oklahoma Department of Human Services, Tulsa Public Schools (TPS) and Union Public Schools (UPS), Tulsa Area United Way, Tulsa Community College, Tulsa Health Department, Tulsa Technology Center, and Tulsa Metro Chamber of Commerce.

The MHSC had been involved in several activities to support children and families, especially in the areas of child abuse prevention, family support, and early childhood development. Members recognized that, despite these activities, the supports were not following children into the school system. In addition, too often, the gains made in the early years evaporated when children reached school age. Consequently, the MHSC sought to identify a positive school reform and revitalization strategy that would involve the whole child, from the prenatal period through post-secondary education and into the workforce.

The MHSC engaged the CSC to research and present options for developing new strategies to increase the likelihood of success for all children in the education pipeline. The CSC hired Jan Creveling, a respected former Junior League vice president who had worked on MHSC and CSC initiatives, to identify an education improvement strategy appropriate for Tulsa. Creveling began an 18-month process of gathering and analyzing research. She investigated the Beacons model, family resource centers, and other supportive strategies across the nation. After studying various approaches to education reform, Creveling and the CSC determined that community schools offered an overarching framework for all the other programs under consideration.

Creveling and the CSC set out to learn as much as possible about existing community schools. She and Phil Dessauer, the CSC’s executive director, attended the Coalition for Community Schools National Forum in Chicago in spring 2005. At the forum, Creveling and Dessauer were surprised and encouraged when they met the principal and assistant principal of Roy Clark Elementary School, a Union Public School in Tulsa. They, too, were attending the forum to learn about community schools. Following the forum, Creveling visited Washington, DC, to meet with Coalition staff, who recommended that she
accompany a team to the Coalition’s National Forum in Baltimore the following year. Upon her return from Washington, Creveling made a formal presentation about her research and recommended that the MHSC begin designing a community schools initiative. The MHSC supported the recommendation and directed Creveling to initiate the needed planning.

Creveling began her efforts by contacting other community school leaders around the country to learn from their experiences. She asked, What lessons did you learn? What should we avoid? What have been your successes? What do you wish you’d done differently? And, if you were starting today with what you know now, what would your initiative look like? Given that Creveling had been involved in other efforts that could not be sustained, she focused on sustainability from the beginning of the planning process.

Creveling assembled a team of 32 community representatives from a variety of sectors to attend the Coalition for Community Schools National Forum in Baltimore in spring 2006. With a plan to learn from others, each representative of the Tulsa delegation was encouraged to attend specific workshops and report back to others in Tulsa on what they learned. Upon their return from Baltimore, attendees began to formulate the vision, mission, core beliefs, governance structure, and core components of a Tulsa community schools initiative.

Given that the Tulsa and Union schools were not only MHSC members but also parties to the decision to investigate a new school reform strategy, UPS Superintendent Dr. Cathy Burden and TPS Superintendent Dr. David Sawyer started hosting listening sessions that enabled the Tulsa delegation to present its findings and proposals to others. Dr. Burden invited all UPS Title I elementary schools to the sessions with the aim that all UPS schools would become community schools; Dr. Sawyer invited everyone from the TPS elementary schools most interested and experienced in community partnerships (based on attendance at listening sessions and leadership experience in working with community resources) to establish the first TPS elementary community schools.

Concurrently, the CSC began to build the infrastructure needed to coordinate and manage the community schools initiative, which was soon called the Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative (TACSI). The CSC created the TACSI Resource Center, a “central clearinghouse” staffed by the CSC, to plan, implement, and administer the initiative. Creveling agreed to serve as senior planner in charge of the TACSI, and, in 2006, the CSC hired a school liaison to work with designated community schools.

Since 2006, TACSI has followed a uniform process at each new community school to initiate planning. The planning process is organized around a resource inventory that covers the seven core components of the community schools framework: early care and learning, health/health education, mental health/social services, family/community engagement, youth development/out-of-school time, neighborhood development, and life-long learning. Schools begin the process by identifying initiatives and partners already involved within their school community in order to align strategies, avoid duplication of effort, and generate buy-in from the school and community organizations. Each community school must identify three priority needs to ensure that TACSI meets at least one of them each year and remains responsive to individual schools’ needs.
In 2007, TACSI created a Management Team of leaders from participating school districts and other key stakeholders to help implement and align the TACSI strategy with that of the school districts and the University of Oklahoma community schools system. The team also develops policy guidelines for community schools.

Through a large steering committee established in 2009, the broader community is now engaged in planning and guiding the TACSI; it meets monthly to help guide and support strong community relations. The committee comprises approximately 20 members, including funders, school board members, representatives overseeing each of the seven core components, and individuals with a history of supporting Tulsa-area education and planning initiatives.

CSC staff serve as the intermediary for TACSI and oversee the TACSI Resource Center. The CSC employs the community school coordinators in the TPS sites, whereas coordinators in the UPS sites are district employees. The CSC and school principals supervise TPS and UPS coordinators in an arrangement consistent with the desires of each district as specified from the outset of the initiative.

After learning about planning for sustainability at a Coalition for Community Schools National Forum, TACSI planned the community schools initiative in three-year increments in order to remain sensitive to changing environments. This approach has helped TACSI stay focused while planning for scale-up.

As part of its planning, TACSI outlined the structure, activities, and normative elements of its community schools initiative in what it describes as Community School DNA. The structural elements for each fully developed community school depend on the principal’s strong leadership as well as on a coordinator and site team to ensure the delivery of a set of holistic programs, services, and opportunities; family and community engagement; and community-based learning. The normative elements are democratic leadership, program coherence, parent responsibility, and professional capacity. Together, the aligned DNA elements create and support the conditions for learning.

In addition, TACSI characterizes its schools along a continuum of community schools development according to the following stages (in ascending order): inquiring, emerging, mentoring, and sustaining. In adapting these stages from the Children’s Aid Society community schools stages of development, TACSI has been able to map expectations for new and growing community schools as they scale up.

In 2007, after thoughtful deliberation and learning from experienced community schools initiatives around the country, TACSI launched 18 community schools in the Tulsa and Union school districts. It planned the phased-in implementation of the community schools strategy, starting with elementary schools and then moving to middle schools in later years, thereby providing a vertically aligned continuum of supports. TACSI assumes that it will have to adopt a different approach for the post-elementary level. It plans to explore the relevance of some of its assumptions in a startup effort at the UPS’s grade 6 and 7 center during the 2011–2012 school year.

In the initial year of community schools implementation, principals relied on Resource Inventories to evaluate a school’s capacity and determine its suitability for designation as a community school. Based on the inventories, TACSI started with 2 “mentoring” schools, each with a full-time community school

www.communityschools.org
coordinator; by the end of the first year, 5 community schools were at the mentoring level and had a full-time coordinator. In the TACSI model, “mentoring” schools demonstrate the school climate and culture conducive to partnerships and thus are considered to be prepared for a coordinator. Thirteen other schools, referred to by TACSI as “emerging,” started to develop the climate and culture of community schools and, during the first year, began to move along the community schools continuum. All 18 schools learned from one another, participated in professional development activities, and received technical assistance over the next two years. In 2009, 7 more schools joined TACSI as “inquiring” schools” in the earliest stages of developing into community schools.

An essential component of TACSI’s scale-up and sustainability strategies is a rigorous evaluation of the implementation and impact of community schools. The TACSI partnered with the University of Oklahoma at Tulsa’s (OU-Tulsa) School of Education to begin evaluating the model. Assistant Professor Curt Adams first studied the governance structure of each community school and found that high-implementing community schools (“mentoring” schools) achieved the greatest success with students and families. For leaders of the initiative, this finding confirmed the effectiveness of the TACSI model. In a second study, Dr. Adams and his team examined cross-boundary leadership, another key ingredient of the strategy, and found that collective trust among leaders and school personnel was essential to success. A third study found that, on state achievement tests, grade 5 students in high-implementing TACSI community schools were outperforming by 30 points grade 5 students eligible for free and reduced-price lunch in non-community schools. Leaders were surprised and delighted to see that the initiative was making a noticeable difference in so little time. Each study has helped TACSI expand the initiative by using the best data available for decision making.

OU-Tulsa has been involved in developing TACSI from the initiative’s outset. Pam Pittman, head of the university’s Community Engagement Center, has served on the Management Team since its inception, and the OU-Tulsa clinics have always played an important role in providing supports in community schools. Using a university-assisted community schools model, OU-Tulsa provides supports to students starting in grade 9 and continuing through college. The university’s diagram of the P-20 Pipeline in Tulsa illustrates the relationship: TACSI provides support at the beginning of the pipeline, from early childhood education and elementary school through middle school, and OU-Tulsa supports students from high school through their experiences as life-long learners.

In 2009, TACSI was awarded a grant from the Institute for Educational Leadership, in collaboration with the W.K. Kellogg Foundation, to participate in the Early Childhood and Community Schools Linkages project (Linkages). The project goals are (1) to ensure that all children are prepared for success in school and life; (2) to enable all schools to be prepared for the youngest children; and (3) to demonstrate that community schools are effective vehicles for promoting access to and continuity of high-quality programming across early childhood education programs and the early grades. Tulsa, and indeed the state of Oklahoma, has a history of strong and broad early childhood education support. The Linkages grant enabled TACSI to deepen its connection to existing early childhood efforts in Tulsa and to create important linkages to elementary schools scaling up to become community schools.
As mentioned, TACSI’s plan for scale-up is well aligned with participating school districts’ objectives. To scale up effectively, the Management Team decided (1) that every community school must write the community school strategy into its site plans and (2) that districts must include the strategy in district strategic plans and vision. TACSI worked with both the UPS and TPS to ensure that community schools were aligned with the student achievement approach in each district’s strategic plan. The student achievement goal in the TPS 2010–2015 strategic plans sets forth the following objective:

Expand the concept of community schools to appropriate scales of growth within the District. A community school is both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Community schools combine the best educational practices with a wide range of vital in-house health and social services to ensure that children are physically, emotionally and socially prepared to learn.

Encouraged by the strength of its strategy and the high level of community support, TACSI has most recently been working to expand the number of community schools. Every Title I elementary school in UPS is a community school. As the result of a recent school consolidation plan, the TPS is closing several schools, and Superintendent Keith Ballard is committed to transforming all remaining schools into community schools. Broken Arrow and Sand Springs, two nearby districts, have approached TACSI and are in the initial phases of developing their own community schools initiatives. TACSI has also been helping Metro Tech become a community school. Metro Tech is an alternative high school located in Oklahoma City, about 100 miles from Tulsa.

TACSI is reaching out to state political leaders, courting the support of Governor Mary Fallin and the new Oklahoma Superintendent of Public Instruction Janet Barresi. TACSI escorted Barresi on a site visit to Kendall-Whittier Elementary, a TACSI school, and a representative from the governor’s Tulsa office has visited the school.

TACSI continues to enjoy the support of school, community, and government leaders who view community schools as a central strategy to improving outcomes for children, families, and communities. Thanks to thoughtful planning and learning from others, TACSI is growing and providing an example for others.


The CLC Partnership Networks are a collaboration of agencies, organizations, and other resources committed to the mission, vision, and goals aligned with the CPS Community Learning Centers, CPS Strategic Plan, and relevant regional initiatives. A network leader is assigned to each partnership network to facilitate collaboration, build capacity, and provide ongoing support for implementation at the site level.

The CBLT brings together leaders of the partnership networks and key funders to ensure coordination, promote interdisciplinary approaches to maximize positive outcomes, and create models for financial sustainability.

Bertram resigned as EVSC superintendent in spring 2011 to become executive director of Project Lead the Way and was replaced by Dr. David Smith. Smith has held several positions in EVSC, most recently as assistant superintendent of human resources and business affairs. He has pledged to continue to support community schools as a central feature of EVSC’s strategic plan.


PSESD provides support services, professional development, and other support for all school districts in King County.

The MHSC coordinates funding and assists with planning and policy decisions among its partners. It is staffed by the Community Service Council, a local non-profit research and planning organization.

Roy Clark is a 2011 National Community School of Excellence award winner.