Step 2: Make sure you have what you need to conduct a successful evaluation.

2a. Consider your readiness.

To conduct an effective evaluation at any scale you need to know what you are trying to evaluate. Before you start you need to know:

- **Do you have the resources you need?** Identify people who can help you collect or analyze data. Make sure that you and your partners have adequate time to devote to the evaluation. Determine if you have access to a secure computer both to store confidential data and to conduct data analysis.

- **Have the school, community partners, and other stakeholders identified a shared set of school and community results?** The LM is comprehensive and your school may be focused on only one or two of the results. (E.g. *Children enter school ready to learn; Students attend school consistently*) If you and your stakeholders have not decided on a shared set of results, Steps 2 and 3 (discussed in later sections) can help you think about how to create these.

Exploring Higher Education Partnerships
Community schools should consider developing a partnership with a local university to enhance their evaluation efforts. Most universities have students studying research methods who may be interested in helping you for little or no cost.

For example, Tulsa Area Community Schools Initiative (TASCI) has a strong partnership with the University of Oklahoma's Jeannine Rainbolt College of Education. The university research team was able to collect and analyze data from the participating schools. As a result they have an evaluation of their community school initiative. The report will inform TASCI's work around: fundraising, partnership building, stakeholder meetings, and improving their community schools.

2b. Plan for success!

Careful planning in the form of an evaluation work plan helps ensure that you have all the pieces in place. The following checklist includes pieces that need to be included in your evaluation work plan:

- ☑ Key results from the Community Schools LM (page 8), and related indicators, are defined and aligned with existing programs. (See the *Introduction*, *Steps 3 and 4*).
- ☑ Evaluation questions (see *Step 5*).
- ☑ Indicators and data sources (see *Steps 6* and *7*).
- ☑ A list of partners and their role in the evaluation process.
- ☑ Plans for sharing what you learn from the evaluation (see *Step 8 and 9*).

A detailed timeline for the first year. In addition to an overall evaluation timeline, creating a data collection timeline is also important. Frequency of data collection will also depend on the indicator you choose to focus your work. For example, if you decide to address the indicator "Early Chronic Absence," you will need to decide if you are going to collect this data weekly or monthly.