Step 7: Collect data.

Now that you have decided on results and corresponding indicators for data collection, you can move on to collecting the data. There are many issues to consider before you start. Table D (page 24) provides you with a starting point for each of the indicators, but choosing the best data sources for you will depend on your school and community.

7a. Important data collection guidelines.

Consider confidentiality: A key concern about collecting and using any kind data is confidentiality. It is important to not reveal students' or parents' names, addresses, or other identifying information in any analyses, reports, or presentations. Ensure that when reporting information, you only identify groups of people that are large enough to make it impossible to identify individuals. To be safe, you may want to only report information for groups that include 20 or more people. If you store any confidential data, make sure that appropriate security is in place so the data cannot be seen by others (even over the Internet) or taken without your knowledge. Discuss confidentiality issues with everyone who will be collecting data. Refer to the FERPA (Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act) for more guidance: http://www.ed.gov/policy/gen/guid/fpco/ferpa/index.html.

Obtain permission to collect data: You will need to get permission to collect or use data that is already collected at your school and community sites. Be sure to check with the appropriate administrators (e.g., principals, superintendent, city, or county personnel) to find out what their expectations are around this issue.

Address barriers or provide incentives for data collection: You will likely encounter barriers that make data collection difficult. Think carefully about what challenges you may face in data collection (e.g., language, return rates, busy schedules, access to phones/internet, transportation issues) and consider how you can work around them. Also look for natural opportunities to collect data (e.g., parent-teacher conferences, school event). Maintaining a database entails knowing which kids participated, how often, whether their families attended, etc.

Sharing Data: Sharing data on individual students across organizations can be difficult for many logistical and political reasons. Creating Data Use Agreements (DUA) with partner organizations can help to manage expectations and to identify possible areas of concern. For a sample DUA:
http://www.communityschools.org/resources/community_school_evaluation_toolkit_resources.aspx.

Incentives: In some cases you may consider providing an incentive for individuals to fill out surveys or attend focus groups. Common incentives for students include extra credit points, pizza parties, or free time for classes with high survey response rates.

7b: Data Collection Methods - *Which data will answer your evaluation questions* (see Step 5, p. 21)*? How will you collect the data to answer your questions?*

There are a variety of data sources you can access to answer your evaluation questions. [*Forming evaluation questions is discussed in Step 5.*] Many questions can be answered using data already collected by your school, district, county, or other partner agencies. However, some evaluation questions may require additional data. The most likely ways to collect necessary additional data are through: data systems, surveys, focus groups, and through data collected by other agencies. Below you will find in-depth explanations of each source.

I. School Data Systems:
For schools and school districts, existing data systems usually include information about student and family demographics, student academic achievement, attendance, suspensions, expulsions, and possibly other information. These data are typically maintained by a school district; a school's individual access varies by district. Even if accessing information on each student individually is not possible, you should be able to access school-level information for various groups of students through your District Office or State Department of Education websites.

It may be possible to modify your data system to incorporate additional information or to create a parallel data system (in a spreadsheet or new database) that can be connected to the existing one. In either case, the aim is to be able to have the data you need to answer your evaluation questions. **Reminder:** in order to access this information, you may need Data Use Agreements (DUA) with your school districts. You can find sample DUAs at:
http://www.communityschools.org/resources/community_school_evaluation_toolkit_resources.aspx.

Database Systems
Investing in a database system for your evaluation can save you time and money. There are many good products on the market. Two resources that may be helpful to you in selecting a database:
1. TechSoup.com provides information on using new technologies including articles on what to look for in a database system. www.techsoup.com
2. One example of a product that community schools use is the Cityspan Provider™. This database offers a system for recording client information, tracking enrollment, and attendance and measuring outcomes. It can be customized for your needs and was designed with many federal and state funding reporting needs in mind: http://www.cityspan.com/

II. Surveys:
Surveys offer a complement to existing data because they can help you get information about other issues not usually included in existing database systems. Areas such as: youth motivation, family satisfaction, teacher perspectives, among others may be critical to your evaluation and would require a survey. In Step 6 you will find several sample surveys that come recommended by community school researchers and evaluators. When considering these surveys or others, think about the following questions:

- Is the survey relevant to the services and efforts in your community school? Does it help answer your questions and connect to your results and indicators?

- Is the survey age appropriate? Is it written for the age group of children or individuals from whom you are collecting data? The same survey is sometimes available in different versions for children of different ages.

- Is it the right survey at the right time? For example, you wouldn't use a satisfaction survey at the start of a program.

- Is the survey easy to complete? Does it ask questions that will make the respondent uncomfortable or confused? Are questions asked clearly and only one at a time? Does is take a long time to complete?

To access all of the surveys visit:
http://www.communityschools.org/resources/data_collection_instrument_guide.aspx.

III. Focus Groups:
Unlike existing data systems and surveys, both of which can answer questions about larger groups of people, focus groups concentrate on a set of key respondents. Focus groups are an excellent way to learn more about process type questions – how participants feel about a program or service, why and for whom it does or does not work, and in what ways the program or service could be modified or improved. Learn more about how to conduct focus groups at:
http://www.managementhelp.org/evaluatn/focusgrp.htm.

IV. Data Collected by Other Agencies:
Your partner agencies also collect information about your students, families, and community. For instance, your local county health department or agency may collect information on students receiving mental health services or rates of asthma, immunization, or health insurance coverage; your human or social services department or agency likely collects information on public assistance receipt and subsidized preschool participation; police departments collect crime or safety statistics. It may be helpful to use these data, even if they are available only on a community-wide level, both in planning your services and in helping to answer some evaluation questions.

A few other places to look:
- The U.S. Census Bureau has local population estimates by age and ethnicity as well as a host of local information about population education levels, employment, income, and insurance coverage, among others (www.census.gov). In particular, you should check out the American Community Survey on the Census website: http://tiny.cc/HLyWG for demographic information.
- The Youth Risk Behavior Surveillance System (YRBSS) monitors priority health-risk behaviors and the prevalence of obesity and asthma among youth and young adults. The YRBSS includes a national school-based survey conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and state, territorial, tribal, and local surveys (www.cdc.gov/HealthYouth/yrbs/). For example, California administers the California Healthy Kids Survey (CHKS) in several grades.
- Annie E. Casey Foundation's data system called KIDS COUNT (http://www.aecf.org/MajorInitiatives/KIDSCOUNT.aspx) provides data on a variety of child-related topics.
- State Departments of Education often have web-based information on school performance, etc.
- The Great Schools website: offers information on schools': test scores, teacher stats, student stats, and extracurricular activities. http://www.greatschools.net/.

For further guidance on data collection tools and processes, visit:
http://www.innonet.org/client_docs/File/data_collection_workbook.pdf.

7c. Create a Detailed Data Collection Plan.

As part of your evaluation planning process (discussed in Step 2.), create a detailed data collection plan. An example of what to include is provided in the following template:

Data Collection Plan Template					
Evaluation Question	**What**	**Where**	**How**	**Who**	**When**
	What data are needed	**Where** are the data located	**How** will the data be collected	**Who** will collect the data	**When** will the data be collected
Example Question: **Do students attending before school mentoring program show**	grades, attendance in mentoring programs, opinions, standardized test scores	report cards, school database, county records, teacher	review of records, surveys, focus groups, tests, program	file clerks, teachers, program staff	daily, each grading period, end of year

4

improvements in their science grades and standardized test scores?	files	participatio n records
See Step 5 to for guidance on forming evaluation questions	See Step 6 Table E to view example indicators for specific results and data collection instruments	