



## **Step 9: Use your findings.**

### **9a. Select your audience and decide what to report.**

When presenting your findings to others, use clear and simple charts and statements so that people can quickly see the results. Relate your findings to the evaluation questions and results. By presenting your data in an informal setting to the individuals who helped you collect it, you can make sure that your findings make sense and that they are useful and relevant.

Ideally, students, principals, teachers, after-school program directors, and others who are providing direct services to youth and adults in your community will be able to look at your findings and have conversations about what they mean. Consider sharing your initial and refined findings with any interested partners. There are many ways to do this from one-on-one meetings once a year to small group discussions that happen once a week. Within these discussions you can reflect on the data and their meaning:

- What you did.
- How you did it.
- Whether your students and families better off.

There are many opportunities to share your findings. You can use your findings to make changes to the day-to-day implementation of your community school, to change local policies, and to convince funders about the success of your program.

### **9b. Present your data to change day-to-day practice and results-based planning.**

Information from process questions and results-based questions can help you modify the day-to-day practice of your community school. Reflecting on the evaluation will help you to continuously improve your strategies. Using the findings from your evaluation, you can work with your partners and community school staff to ask questions like:

- Are there needs you didn't anticipate?
- Do you need to do things differently?
- Do you need new partners to fill unmet needs?
- Did the level of resources available to you affect how you delivered services and programs?

There may also be other questions you will want to ask with your partners as you use your data for future planning.

It is important to make your data available to your stakeholders. In order to have a productive conversation around data you will need to know the interests of your stakeholders before deciding how and when to share your findings. In year one, however, you may want to share findings with just a few people that could become champions for future evaluation efforts.

**Examples of using data to make adjustments at your community school:**

- Since test scores among ESL students are rising less quickly than native English speakers there is a need to create stronger links between after-school and in-school programming.
- Failure to attract minority students led to X change in programming.

For more information:

- Many schools describe a continuous evaluation process as a “cycle of inquiry. “For a diagram of this process visit:  
[http://www.communityschools.org/resources/data\\_collection\\_instrument\\_guide.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org/resources/data_collection_instrument_guide.aspx).
- Some schools review their data in what are referred to as “learning communities.” Learning communities are small groups that meet regularly to collaboratively collect, analyze, and use data to improve their individual and group practices. For a quick reference on one model for learning communities visit:  
[http://www.communityschools.org/resources/data\\_collection\\_instrument\\_guide.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org/resources/data_collection_instrument_guide.aspx).

**9c. Data to change policy.**

School board members, superintendents, city, or county policy makers and other elected or appointed officials can use your big picture findings to make decisions. Policy makers are pressed for time and will want short, professional summaries and reports that explain clearly what you found and how it connects to the decisions they are making. When working with these audiences, consider the following:

- **Have specific recommendations** – Use your findings to show where needs exist and ways to address them.
- **Find champions** – Know which community leaders are interested in the issue you are addressing. Consider having someone who was deeply involved in the evaluation provide an “outside” eye on findings.
- **Timing is everything** – Know what topics are currently being discussed at the local, county, state, and federal level and relate them to your data.
- **Presentation matters** – Make your findings easy to read and professional looking. Charts, colors, bullet points, and other formatting tools can be used to highlight findings at a glance.
- **Who is presenting information matters** – Consider all of your stakeholders as potential presenters. In some situations it may be the most powerful to have teachers, students, or

others that were directly involved in collection or analysis to present the information to policy makers.

### **Capturing Data on Leveraging Resources**

In addition to capturing and analyzing data on community school indicators to change policy, community school leaders must be able to use this data to leverage financial resources. Evaluating the impact of community schools on students, families, and communities is the primary focus of this toolkit; however, there is another intermediate dimension through which to examine the impact of community schools – how community schools leverage resources across multiple funding streams and programs.

U. S. Secretary of Education Arne Duncan, described community schools as the best investment he made in education reform because of the assets the community schools strategy was able to leverage. Policymakers are also concerned about the fragmentation of services and programs that make it difficult for people to receive the supports and opportunities they need and deserve. Community schools respond to the challenge by integrating resources at the school to create a more integrated delivery system.

Therefore, it is important for community school leaders to demonstrate to policymaker how they are leveraging federal, state, and local resources funding streams as well as private resources and volunteer assets to improve results. Demonstrating this leverage can buy time until specific indicators of student, family, and community well-being move forward.

The Coalition has developed a template [Appendix C] that can assist local community schools and community school initiatives to capture information on funds and services being brought together at individual community schools. Our recent report on community schools financing includes examples of how initiatives and individual community schools are financed which illustrate the value of collecting information on the resources that are aggregated through the partnerships that are the essence of community schools.

## Engaging Youth in Evaluation

### **Resource: Youth Engaged in Leadership and Learning (YELL).**

The JGC initiated YELL in 2000 as a nine month after-school program that trained 15 eighth grade students as community researchers, advisors, and socially conscious leaders. With JGC program staff and researchers, school and community partners and youth themselves contributed to program development. YELL expanded to include 350 middle school and high school students in two Bay Area communities over the next six years. YELL experienced many successes during its first six years, including:

- Use of youth-driven, research-based recommendations in presentations to, dialogues with, and decisions of school leaders, city leaders, councils, and commissions.
- Placement of youth in leadership positions, including mentors, grant-makers, and evaluators within youth serving organizations as well as on school leadership teams and advisory boards.
- Initiation of youth and adult volunteer initiatives, public art projects, community forums, and intergenerational events.

A handbook for training youth as researchers and community leaders in an after-school setting can be found here: [http://jgc.stanford.edu/resources/yell\\_curriculum.html](http://jgc.stanford.edu/resources/yell_curriculum.html)

### **9d. Data for funders.**

Although funders often require specific types of data to be included in reports to them, consider using the LM in your conversations with your funders. You might include funders in your stakeholder group and give them opportunities to participate in the evaluation process. Some funders may not be flexible about what information they need. But learning what results are important to them and keeping them informed of your evaluation efforts will likely be helpful as they report to their boards and talk to other funders about supporting your work.

### **9e. Sharing data beyond the stakeholder group.**

#### **New Supporters:**

Don't be shy about sharing successes and challenges with everyone! Encourage current stakeholders to include others in the evaluation process and be ready to share your findings publicly. Local, regional, and national press outlets may be interested in sharing stories like yours – especially unique successes that have made a difference in your community. You may find new partners and champions in surprising places.

For an easy guide to creating a communications campaign, take a look at the resource from Spitfire Strategies here:

[http://www.communityschools.org/resources/data\\_collection\\_instrument\\_guide.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org/resources/data_collection_instrument_guide.aspx).

#### **National Community Schools Movement ([www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org)):**

There are many schools across the country that identify with the national community schools movement and are potential allies. This toolkit has outlined nine results that community

schools care about with the purpose of promoting a common language to facilitate collaborative efforts among them. Several ways to connect with other community schools include:

1. Find other local community schools and create cross-site learning opportunities.
2. Participate in a site visit to another school and share your findings with them.
3. Present your findings and how you got them at the Coalition for Community Schools Conference or at other education related conferences.
4. Share your findings with others working on county, state, or national legislation that would benefit your school.