

Stage 4: Implement Systemically



1. Initiate Professional Learning Opportunities
2. Align Key Functions
3. Use Data for Continuous Improvement

Overview

Stage 4 focuses on depth through systematic implementation. Efforts began in Stage 1 to ensure that leaders at all levels share the defining vision and principles of Community Schools and consistently align policies and practices to reflect that vision. Effective systems building requires a level of change that recasts attitudes, personal interactions, and expectations about learning and development. **Site implementation depends on activity in several functional areas, notably professional learning opportunities, alignment, and integration of policies and practices.**

As the system builds on its professional learning opportunities, all educators, partners, and leaders must understand the transformational strategy being created. As partners receive capacity building to strengthen implementation, system leaders continue to align practices, policies, and processes across the system and school sites, within the school district offices, and across agencies and partner organizations. System leaders collect and analyze data aligned with the results framework to support continuous improvement.

Milestones

Milestone #1: Initiate Professional Learning Opportunities

Site practitioners need to apply Community School principles to every aspect of their work. It is likely that assumptions and behaviors that run counter to Community Schools principles will emerge, alongside gaps in expertise. Left unaddressed, these issues can affect implementation; thus, it is essential to deliver technical assistance at the school site while embedding the Community School vision in professional learning opportunities for principals, teachers, and other school staff.

Professional learning opportunities can assist classroom teachers and principals, mid-level administrators such as instructional supervisors and curriculum developers, and policymakers in achieving the following:

- Improving understanding and application of Community Schools' principles as related to methods of teaching and learning
- Developing a closer connection between curricula and Community School programs and services
- Building capacity in areas such as evaluation, community building, and finance

Embedding the Community Schools vision and practice into principal and teacher preparation is essential to developing a pipeline of practitioners skilled in implementing the strategy. Community Schools Coordinators must also participate regularly in professional learning opportunities. In well-developed Community Schools, new practitioners may be paired with seasoned staff members who serve as coaches and mentors. Field trips, classroom observations, and joint planning sessions through release time can facilitate capacity building. Such efforts should meet local needs and build ownership, reflecting the collaborative nature of Community Schools.

Milestone #2: Align Key Functions

Site leaders—principals, Coordinators, and site teams composed of school and partner agency staff, families, community members, and students—need flexibility to identify and meet local priorities and to problem-solve together. Most sites need support to align their work with the system’s vision and desired results by:

- Enabling effective site-level management through professional learning opportunities and technical assistance for principals and Coordinators to ensure ongoing linkages between school, families, and the community
- Ensuring alignment between the system and school sites through regular communication between and among site Coordinators and intermediary staff to identify and distinguish between implementation issues that need technical assistance and issues that require a policy response from community leaders
- Setting the stage for success by sharing space, personnel, authority, and accountability
- Encouraging local sites to adapt the system’s desired results

Milestone #3: Use Data for Continuous Improvement

For data collection to succeed, site staff need to keep adequate program records and use surveys, questionnaires, and other methods consistently and as intended. Given that data collection is a resource-intensive effort, a team-based training session with opportunity for input is a good way to build ownership and an ongoing support structure that can minimize trouble down the road.

Ask questions about individual school sites and across the system. The answers will help generate the action needed to improve the system building effort. For example:

- Are we reaching and keeping the intended students and families in the numbers and with the impact we hoped for? If not, why not?
- What internal and external factors may be affecting participation? Which factors can we address?
- What internal and external factors may be affecting impact? What needs to change?
- What are the differences between sites? What accounts for them?
- What additional implementation supports are needed in key functional areas?

Summarize what you have learned. Look for positive trends. Ask what requires action. Establish priorities. Determine what can be improved internally and what changes require policy changes, technical assistance, or the involvement of other sites. Get started.

Use communication mechanisms to ensure a regular, two-way flow of information between and among sites and the system. Communication should include not only evaluation data but also relevant practice knowledge and field experience that can shed light on concerns, strengths, and opportunities—within the system, at school sites, and in the surrounding community. To ensure useful information and to build connections between site and system leaders, consider the following:

- Prepare periodic reports organized into overarching issues and recommendations for policy action per the reported problems and requests of sites
- Present the reports periodically for discussion with school-site Coordinators, families, or other site team members
- Communicate intended actions to affected sites

Pitfalls

There are nine pitfalls in Stage 4 to consider:

- Not creating a mechanism that enables school-site teams to communicate policy challenges that influence their ability to achieve the results they seek
- Cutting corners on the quality and quantity of Coordinators in an effort to establish quickly new Community Schools
- Overlooking the need to embed Community School principles and practices in school systems' and community partners' professional learning opportunities; failing to provide professional learning opportunities for Coordinators
- Developing one-size-fits-all training for sites without their input
- Relying on inaccurate or incomplete data
- Failing to organize data into issues that are prioritized and addressed
- Underusing the site management team as a source of information and insight into community conditions and school-site operation
- Delaying the release of information on progress until “hard data” on test scores are available
- Overlooking positive trends and the cumulative impact of small improvements

How You Know You Are Making Progress

STAGE 4: Implement Systemically			
MILESTONES (est. 6-month sprints)			
1. Initiate Professional Learning Opportunities 2. Align Key Functions 3. Use Data for Continuous Improvement			
Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Community Engagement	Published data on the performance of each Community School and on system-wide expansion are easily accessible to the public and policymakers	Communication with the public via various media occurs regularly through open meetings, social networking sites, TV, radio, newsletters, flyers, posters	<p>The Community School promotes itself as the hub of the neighborhood and uses the name and logo of the initiative to build its own identity</p> <p>Expansion sites host visits for elected officials, partners, family members, neighborhood residents, and representatives of other schools to showcase accomplishments, recruit champions, and develop peer networks</p> <p>Families and residents represent the concerns of Community Schools and their neighborhoods in decision-making forums at all levels (e.g., neighborhood associations, housing commissions, city council, and school board)</p>

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Alignment & Integration	Partners enact policies and provide resources to ensure that sites targeted by the initiative’s rollout strategy work together to achieve results		<p>Sites connected by the initiative’s rollout strategy collaborate with each other in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities</p> <p>Site partners, within and across linked sites, participate in developing the school improvement plan that reflects each site’s results framework</p> <p>Sites integrate the activities of other community reform initiatives aimed at achieving similar results</p> <p>The school and its partners integrate academic and non-academic support, services, and opportunities to attain agreed-upon results</p> <p>Instructional content and methods, during and after school hours, reflect Community School principles in support of selected indicators</p>

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Professional Learning Opportunities	<p>The principles and practices of Community Schools are incorporated into higher education and district-run educator preparation opportunities for principals, teachers, paraprofessionals, counselors, nurses, and others</p> <p>The principles and practices of Community Schools are incorporated into professional learning opportunities for partner staff</p> <p>Joint, ongoing professional learning opportunities for school and partner staff is available; policies encourage and enable participation</p>	<p>Technical assistance aligns policies and integrates practices across sites to build functioning networks of Community Schools</p> <p>Technical assistance helps sites develop a results and evaluation framework</p> <p>Staff organize pre-service training for Community School Coordinators and facilitate their continued training in appropriate, district-led professional learning opportunities</p> <p>Staff ensure that participants and technical assistance providers jointly design, implement, and evaluate professional learning opportunities</p>	<p>School staff and site-level partners participate in joint professional learning opportunities and planning time designed to deepen integration between in-school and after-school teaching and learning</p> <p>Community School Coordinators receive pre-service training from the initiative, and site-level partners participate in relevant school-run professional learning opportunities</p> <p>Technical assistance facilitates the work of school-site teams</p> <p>Participants and technical assistance providers jointly design, implement, and evaluate professional learning opportunities</p> <p>Leadership development opportunities for parent/family members and residents enable them to carry out their leadership tasks</p>
Data & Evaluation		<p>Intermediaries provide technical assistance and manage the data collection necessary to develop a results and indicators framework</p>	<p>Priority is given to specific results based on site needs, with indicators used to track progress</p> <p>Based on results and indicator frameworks, site teams make decisions about which data are most relevant and useful to collect</p>
Finance & Resources	<p>Reliable funding streams are coordinated and sustain priority programs and services at community schools</p>		

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Policy & Practice	<p>The district sets forth administrative guidelines enabling the effective operation of Community Schools</p> <p>Partners, including the school board, enact specific policies to support and sustain Community Schools</p> <p>Partners act to change policies within their own organizations to support scale-up</p> <p>School board and/or district policy allows community partners to use school facilities at no charge to implement activities aligned with site-level results</p> <p>Partners solicit and are responsive to resource and policy requests based on site data and practice knowledge</p> <p>A clear and coherent set of practices and policies with respect to site-level implementation guides both school staff and community partners, fostering integration between in-school and after-school activities</p>	<p>Sites package data-based findings into appropriate recommendations for changes in policy, resources, and/or training and professional learning opportunities</p>	<p>Policy barriers based on confidentiality and other requirements are communicated to community-wide leaders for action</p> <p>A clear and coherent set of practices and policies with respect to site-level implementation guides both school staff and community partners and fosters integration between in-school and after-school activities</p> <p>Personnel policies of school sites, lead agencies, and partner agencies are aligned and reviewed regularly to foster positive working relationships across shared staff</p> <p>Sites communicate policy, resource, and professional learning opportunities needs to community-wide leadership based on data collection; they regularly scan across all functional areas</p>
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	<p>Regular review of MOUs and results and indicator frameworks ensures that the staffing and delivery of all partners' activities at each site are integrated with school plans and Community School priority results</p>		<p>Leadership development opportunities for parents/ family members and residents enable them to carry out their leadership tasks</p>