Building a Community Schools System

COALITION FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

IEL Institute for Educational Leadership
Innovation. Equity. Leadership.

About the Coalition for Community Schools

The Community Schools movement is at the helm of public education system change. A long-standing strategy, it has gained increasing visibility, with communities and school districts across the country adopting the strategy to build systems of support and shared leadership. **The Coalition for Community Schools** has been at the forefront of this movement since 1997 as an alliance of partners across national, state, and local levels, advancing the vision of "Schools as centers for creating communities where everyone belongs, works together and thrives." To achieve this, the ultimate goal is for all schools to become Community Schools. This requires collaborative systems of support that will sustain beyond positions.

The Coalition is coordinated by the **Institute for Educational Leadership**. IEL "prepares, supports, and mobilizes leaders to create ecosystems of collaborative leadership and advance Community Schools as a key equity strategy for children, families, and communities."[1] The Coalition is guided by a national **Steering Committee** structured with committed organizations that reflect the core elements and exemplar local leaders. Additionally, the Coalition is comprised of **several peer networks** designed to deepen knowledge, skills, competencies, and to advocate for excellent and sustainable Community Schools: Community Schools Coordinators Network, Community School Leadership Network, District Leaders Network on Family and Community Engagement, Next Generation Coalition, Research Practice Network, State Coalitions Network, United Way Community Schools Learning Community, and University-Assisted Community Schools Network.

The Coalition's guiding principles are to build on community strengths, invest in trusting relationships, and commit to continuous improvement. Together, we catalyze collaboration by mobilizing network leaders to create cross-sector partnerships to sustain and deepen Community Schools. We cultivate quality by preparing and supporting Community Schools professionals and their partners for the development of high-quality Community Schools toward equitable outcomes, and we celebrate success by lifting transformative and innovative local solutions and stories of impact.

About the Institute for Educational Leadership

Since 1964, the **Institute for Educational Leadership (IEL)** has equipped leaders to work together across boundaries to build effective systems that foster successful transitions from cradle to career, preparing children and youth for postsecondary education, careers, and citizenship. We envision a society that uses all its resources effectively to provide an equal opportunity for all children and youth to learn, develop, and become contributing citizens of our democracy. As a community driven, equity-focused organization dedicated to catalyzing and building capacity at the intersection of leadership, education, and workforce development, IEL partners with under-resourced communities through initiatives strategically situated at grassroots, regional, and national levels, cultivating and activating leadership across ages, stages, and context. IEL is the home to the Coalition for Community Schools.

Acknowledgements

Design by Collaborative Communications Group, Inc.

Acknowledgements

Building a Community Schools System

Table of Contents

Introduction

The Community Schools movement is growing across the country and is a non-partisan solution that promotes local decision making to accelerate student success. The Community Schools strategy has evolved as a vehicle for whole-child, whole-family, whole-community prosperity, through intentional school-family-community partnerships. This strategy, "transforms a school into a place where educators, local community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. As partners, they organize in- and out-of-school resources, supports, and opportunities so that young people thrive."[1] At the system level, Community Schools bring together diverse actors—educators, young people, families, districts, service providers, community and faith-based organizations, civic and government entities, and businesses—to build a Collaborative Leadership Structure. The growing body of evidence about Community Schools, alongside the Community Schools Standards,[2] show the essential role this strategy plays in changing the outcomes of young people and supporting thriving communities. It is from this context that we share the guide to *Building a Community Schools System*, an update to our 2011 *Scale Up School and Community Partnerships Guide*.

> **A Community School** can be described as a "local engagement strategy that creates and coordinates opportunities with its public schools to accelerate student success. It serves as a vehicle for hyper-local decision-making that responds to the unique needs of each community."

> **A system** is a collection of parts that interact and function as a whole. It is an area with geographic boundaries whereby diverse cross-sectoral leaders engage in a Collaborative Leadership Structure to coordinate opportunities that support whole-child, whole-family, and whole-community.

Building a Community Schools System is written for diverse audiences engaged in Community Schools efforts, from planning to integration of the Community Schools strategy in their community and/or district to existing systems of schools looking to further sustain, deepen, and expand this strategy. The audiences for this guide are inclusive of leaders at any level of their community that desire to sustain community-wide collaboration toward better results for children, youth, families and communities.

We begin by introducing the concept of system-building through Collaborative Leadership Structures and functions. We then introduce the five-stage process for Building a Community Schools System, unpacking each stage within the subsequent sections.

---

[1] Community Schools Forward. (2023). Framework: Essentials for community school transformation (p. 2). Retrieved from https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/media/3935/download?inline&file=CSF_Visual_Framework_Essentials_Community_School.pdf

[2] Coalition for Community Schools. (2018). Community School Standards. Washington, DC: Institute for Educational Leadership. Retrieved from https://www.communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/08/Community-School-Standards-2018-1-1.pdf

System-Building through Collaborative Leadership

The Community Schools strategy is not a model or a program; rather, it is a comprehensive approach that intentionally reconstructs education systems into community-wide collaborative and sustaining efforts that cultivate relational trust, shared accountability, continuous learning and improvement, and leverage resources and supports to progress the lives of students, families, and communities. What makes this strategy unique is the principle of shared decision-making, whereby schools, districts, and intermediaries create leadership space for diverse voices and perspectives, sharing power and resources in an equitable way. Collaborative leadership is the hallmark of the Community Schools system-building because it creates a structure for sharing ownership and accountability by bringing together cross-sectoral partners (see Figure 1 for the collaborative leadership illustration).

Figure 1. A Collaborative Leadership Structure for Community Schools
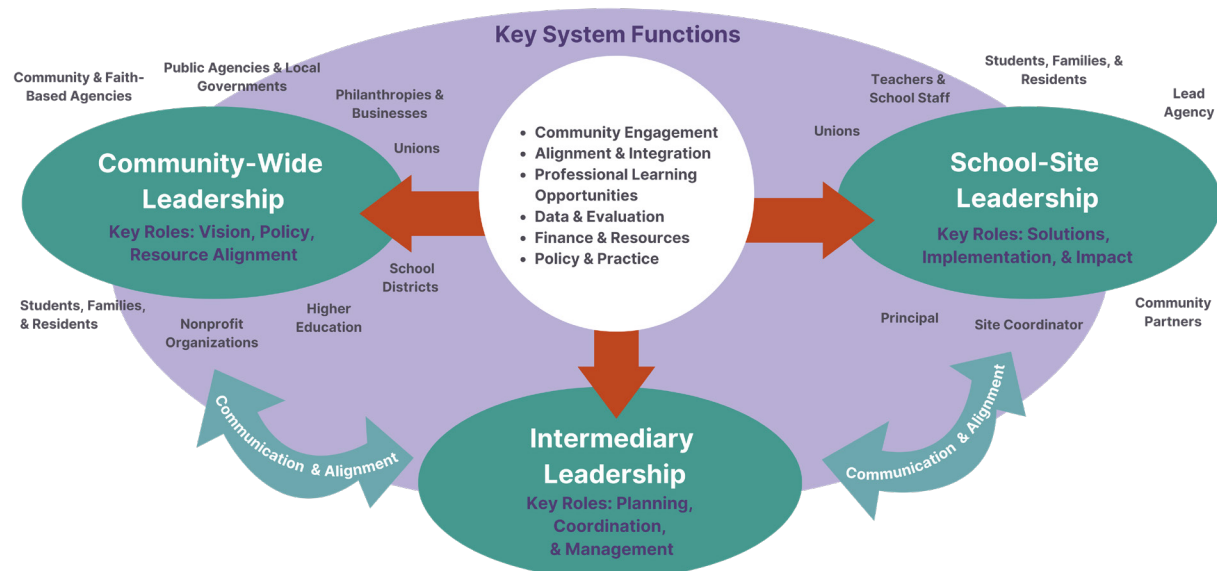
Collaborative leadership activities ensure that the voices of youth, families, and residents are heard, and that system practices, provisions, and policies reflect community needs and preferences. The Collaborative Leadership Structure depicts how leadership is shared across key roles and responsibilities to build capacity of each functional area. A continuous flow of communications and efforts to align the work of both school-site and community-wide leaders is facilitated by intermediary leadership to keep the initiative on track. A shared vision fuels the initiative to build a Community Schools system.

The Collaborative Leadership Structure connects community-wide leadership, intermediary leadership, and school-site leadership:

- **Community-wide leadership** (e.g., elected officials and executive officers from school districts, government, United Way chapters, universities, businesses, community- and faith-based organizations) is responsible for inclusively constructing the overall *vision, policy, and resource alignment*. It creates the context and capacity for sustainability and expansion. It serves as a networking vehicle for policy development and communication in which leaders whose responsibilities reach across a broad population within the defined geographical region system decide why and how to align their resources to build and sustain a system of Community Schools.

- **School-site leadership** (e.g., families, residents, principals, teachers, community partners, and young people) is responsible for *planning, implementation, and continuous improvement towards measurable student, family, and proximate community results*. Leaders ensure that implementation builds on a desired state of a school's community developed by students, families, and residents, mitigates challenges, satisfies student needs, aligns with the school's academic mission, and generates practice knowledge and data to inform improvements.

- **Intermediary leadership** (a way to link together and facilitate a working group comprised of managers from the community-wide organizations) provides planning, coordination, and management. Leadership powers the work by ensuring communication between community-wide and school-site leaders and by facilitating operational functions at all leadership levels and across school sites. It convenes school and community partners, provides strategic planning, and ensures that what happens at the community leadership level empowers students, families, and practitioners at school sites.

This collaborative structure creates conditions and mechanisms for ongoing development, coordination, and support that over time leads to system-level change. However, system building is a regenerative and continuous process, often punctuated by changes in leaders, resources, policies, practices, and external environmental factors that inform and/or influence the system. To create a sustainable and adaptable Community Schools system, the partners in this structure engage in six functions: community engagement, alignment and integration, professional learning opportunities, data and evaluation, finance and resources, and policies and practices.

Table 1. Six Functions and Intent

Function	Intent
Community Engagement	This function focuses on the authentic engagement and inclusion of young people, families, and community members, from the start and throughout system building at all levels of the leadership decision-making. Through a co-design process, shared and inclusive decision-making, a Community Schools system integrates community engagement as an essential part to guiding the development policies, provisioning of resources, and changing of practices.
Alignment & Integration	This function spreads and deepens the commitment to the results-based framework and overall vision. Alignment involves working among organizations and with other related systems to support shared goals and facilitate overall progress. Integration requires explicit blending of resources, practices, and policy connections among organizations, programs, and activities that result in progress toward shared results regardless of organizational affiliation.
Professional Learning Opportunities	This function plays an essential role in embedding a Community School's culture within the larger community by transmitting values and attitudes, assumptions, and expectations consistent with the vision. It also focuses on the constant skill building for professionals responsible for facilitating collaboration at each leadership level to foster the conditions for learning and the principles of Community Schools that help build effective relationships.
Data & Evaluation	This function focuses on the collection and analysis of information. It illuminates implementation by tracking the system's indicators (e.g., attendance and chronic absence, academic growth and deeper learning, and partnership effectiveness.) and integrates different databases for improved decision-making while ensuring the requisite confidentiality.
Finance & Resources	This function enables sustainability by ensuring existing financial, human, and other resources are identified and used to leverage new resources and are coordinated for greater efficiency and responsiveness to accelerate the achievement of results.
Policy & Practice	This function supports regular communication between community and site leaders with collecting data and community input to identify areas of need and opportunity for school districts and partner agencies in developing financial, administrative, operational, and strategic policies and procedures in support of Community Schools.

Overview of the Five Stages for Building a Community Schools System

This Guide builds on the evidence and practices of Community Schools system leaders from across the country, who offered their iterative feedback throughout the updating of this tool. The document was validated through convening of multiple focus groups from systems leaders and the Community School Leadership Retreat that consisted of national leaders from fifty-four unique places.

In this Guide we introduce a five-stage framework for building a Community Schools System:

STAGE 1: Start a System of Community Schools

STAGE 2: Broaden Community Engagement

STAGE 3: Design a Collaborative Operating Framework

STAGE 4: Implement Systemically

STAGE 5: Sustain and Grow a Community Schools System

Change happens across the stages, as illustrated by the upward arrow running across the stages, a visual representation of a movement toward building, improving, collaborating, and strengthening a Community Schools system. As illustrated in Figure 2, each stage is additive to the previous, designed with corresponding milestones to move system-building efforts forward. Along the continuum, a Community Schools system builds a shared vision and values and engages in collaborative functions across its structure. Organizations can engage with the Guide at any given stage. The purpose of the Guide is to build a Collaborative Leadership Structure characterized by continuous improvement, depth, sustainability, and strengthening of a Community Schools system.

Figure 2. Five Stages for Building a Community Schools System

MILESTONES

Stage 5
SUSTAIN AND GROW A COMMUNITY SCHOOLS SYSTEM

- Expand and Deepen Community Schools
- Build Financial Capacity
- Build Political Capacity

Stage 4
IMPLEMENT SYSTEMICALLY

- Initiate Professional Learning Opportunities
- Align Key Functions
- Use Data for Continuous Improvement

Stage 3
DESIGN A COLLABORATIVE OPERATING FRAMEWORK

- Evaluate Key Functions
- Distribute Leadership
- Prepare Rollout Strategy

Stage 2
BROADEN COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

- Engage Broader Community
- Develop a Shared Vision & Purpose
- Customize a Results-Based Logic Model

Stage 1
START A SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

- Convene Innovators
- Assess Readiness
- Compile Rationale for Community Schools

FORM

FUNCTIONS

VALUES

VISION

Below we introduce the intent for each stage. We approximate that each stage equates to six-month sprints toward achieving the associated milestones, although variations by local contexts should be anticipated.

STAGE 1: Start a System of Community Schools

Associated milestones:

1. Convene Innovators
2. Assess Readiness
3. Compile a Rationale for Community Schools

Stage 1 presupposes that the community has begun its journey of building a Community School system by already having in place, or in mind, at least one Community School. In Stage 1, a dedicated group of innovators interested in building a Community Schools system comes together to ask, "What is our community's capacity to launch a successful Community Schools system?" The group could be comprised of various community actors, such as community members, funders, state and local policymakers, direct-service providers, or participants in similar systems. To evaluate readiness to begin the five-stage process, the innovators need to share knowledge, lived experiences, organizational expertise, and data to develop a rationale for systems building and use their networks and spheres of influence to recruit additional partners.

STAGE 2: Broaden Community Engagement

Associated milestones:

1. Engage Broader Community
2. Develop a Shared Vision & Purpose
3. Customize a Results-Based Logic Model

The innovators' conversations lead to learning communities with the goal to authentically expand and deepen the leadership base reflective of the community. Together, representatives across sectors, institutions, and organizations, inclusive of families, young people, and community members, design and commit to a broad vision for their community, develop clear results for children, students, and families, and customize a results-based logic model to show how inputs and strategies interact to lead to measurable impact.

STAGE 3: Design a Collaborative Operating Framework

Associated milestones:

1. Evaluate Key Functions
2. Distribute Leadership
3. Prepare Rollout Strategy

The designated leaders will clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms of participating partners. One primary role is to select an organization to facilitate an intermediary partnership that will provide operational and leadership support at the systems level, oversight, resource, and policy development for a sustainable system. The new intermediary will also develop a strategy to address scope, site selection, site coordination, and professional learning opportunities.

STAGE 4: Implement Systemically

Associated milestones:

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

As the system builds its professional learning opportunities, partners will receive capacity building that will strengthen implementation. At the same time, system leaders will continue to align practices, policies, and processes across the system, school sites, school district offices, agencies, and partner organizations. System leaders will collect and analyze data that are aligned with the results framework to support continuous improvement.

STAGE 5: Sustain and Grow a Community Schools System

Associated milestones:

1. Expand and Deepen Community Schools
2. Build Financial Capacity
3. Build Political Capacity

Sustaining and growing a Community Schools system requires constant attention. Leaders should not take their eyes off key systemic challenges that can derail change efforts such as leadership transitions, funding changes, and policies. Regular system scans across all four characteristics of effective systems building—shared ownership, spread, depth, and sustainability—can help identify areas that need attention. The system should refresh and strengthen its leadership and engage the community in a process of continuous improvement. The system must also attend to the key sustainability elements of financial and political capacity and have the funds, leadership, and policy support to ensure that the system will sustain leadership changes.

How to Use this Guide

The Guide is divided into five parts, one for each of the five stages. Each section offers an overview of the corresponding stage, articulates the associated milestones, and introduces a set of associated benchmarks in a rubric form. The rubric in each section of offers Community Schools Standards-aligned actions community-wide actors, intermediaries, and Community School sites should make across functions as they build toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure, which is also addressed at each stage within the rubric.

For more information and capacity building opportunities visit our website:
https://www.communityschools.org/

Stage 1:
Start a System of Community Schools

1. Convene Innovators

2. Assess Readiness

3. Compile a Rationale for Community Schools

Overview

Stage 1 begins to develop the first characteristic of effective system building: a shift in ownership and activity across several functions, including leadership development, data collection, alignment of shared goals, and efforts to build broad community engagement. At the end of Stage 1, a system emerges with shared ownership, a motivating shared vision, and growing capacity to broaden community support.

Initially, a small group of innovators interested in expanding Community Schools—citizens, funders, school leaders, state and local policymakers, participants in similar community systems, and providers—comes together to ask, "What is our community's capacity to launch a successful system building effort?" To evaluate community readiness, the innovators need to share personal, community-based, and organizational knowledge. Their conversations create learning communities in which innovators from a variety of sectors engage as equals—

despite differences in the types of authority and resources they command. Based on their findings, the innovators develop a rationale for building a system and use their contacts and talking points to recruit additional partners.

As the initial group of innovators expands, new participants get to know each other and share knowledge and their dreams of what a system of Community Schools might look like. They visit local Community Schools or jurisdictions where Community Schools are beginning to grow. They consider how a commitment to building a Community Schools system is likely to affect their personal and organizational interests. Eventually, the group reaches agreement on a broad vision for the system. The system goes public with its vision by developing a marketable brand and using local success stories to broadcast the idea of Community Schools and deepen community knowledge and support.

Milestones

Milestone #1: Convene Innovators

Innovators are people who see the value in a new idea and take the lead in helping others see its advantages. School superintendents, United Way chapters, and other non-profit officials, community leaders, government representatives, members of faith-based communities, college and university educators, and participants in similar systems are just some of these types of leaders. It is helpful to engage people who demonstrate:

- A sense of urgency that communities need to do more to help children and young people succeed

- An ability to see the glass half-full rather than half-empty

- A facility for working with others

- An openness to new ideas

To build a strong foundation for a systemic approach, it is important to look for ways to:

- Share leadership

- Broaden perspectives

- Dream big

- Acknowledge self-interest

- Encourage honest, shared exploration

- Acknowledge power differentials

Milestone #2: Assess Readiness

A primary objective of Stage 1 is to determine a community's initial readiness for system and to identify areas of strength and weakness. To what extent can the effort draw on the strategic leadership, existing infrastructure and management functions, technical and financial resources, staff, and networks of other groups and agencies? Are people ready for change? Attention should be paid to both the external environment in which system-building will occur and the internal, organizational environments that will influence the direction and energy of the effort.

Table 2, "Assessing Readiness," can help guide conversations and evaluate readiness. Assessments should be honest, confidential, and extend over several sessions. However, answers need not be exhaustive, and it is not necessary to delve into issues that address organizational costs and conflicting ideas about how to move forward. The same topics of leadership, commitment, and other characteristics of a sustainable system will be considered in more depth as the systems-building process evolves.

Findings should be evaluated. Do the facts point to sufficient community desire and organizational capacity to build a large-scale system of Community Schools? If not, areas in which capacity seems weakest should be examined alongside next steps that could improve readiness. If the current political and economic context is not favorable, considerations should be made as how to keep interest alive until the environment changes.

Table 2. Assessing Readiness

Assessing Readiness: Questions to Help You Start

- **What's the need?** What do the data say about children's readiness for school and their performance in school? Does performance vary across the community?

- **Demographic shifts.** What do recent data reveal about the changing student population in your school district? Are you ready for change?

- **Current Community Schools activity.** How many schools in your district define themselves as a Community School or by a similar name? Can you identify community partners already working with schools that may participate in building of a Community Schools system?

- **What's working?** In what ways have existing schools succeeded? What would other schools like to replicate?

- **Leadership and constituency.** To what extent are high-level leaders in the district and in the public, private, and non-profit sectors aware of Community Schools? What constituent and special interest groups could be mobilized to encourage district-wide support? Are there individual school board members or other local elected officials who might be especially responsive to the Community Schools strategy?

- **School system capacity and commitment.** Does your district encourage creativity, support innovation, and seek external resources? Does it have a policy governing relationships with community partners? How is the district organized to connect with community partners? Does your district have an office of community partnerships?

- **Collaborative strength.** What has been your district's and community's involvement in collaborative initiatives? Have the efforts been positive and/or lasting? Which of the initiatives still exist? Could they help convene a Community Schools conversation?

- **Related initiatives.** What groups in the community are engaged in work related to Community Schools? Is there a P-20 Council, a mayor's cabinet or cross-sector group, or an after-school, school-based health clinic, mental health clinic, mentoring, or other type of programmatic network? How might they be a resource for a Community Schools strategy?

- **Political and economic context.** What conditions in your community might argue for the development of a Community School? How can you highlight the benefits of Community Schools to address the realities of your current situation?

Milestone #3: Compile a Rationale for Community Schools

If the facts suggest that a community is ready for a Community Schools system, the next step is to **make the case through presentations/talking points that convey both the facts and shared beliefs and attitudes about Community Schools.** The case must communicate a clear and succinct rationale for Community Schools, highlighting ongoing work of schools, and facts that express internal and external readiness.

Pitfalls

There are four common pitfalls associated with Stage 1:

- Not taking the time to scan the environment to see what else is happening that could support or derail a Community Schools strategy

- Failing to reach out to key leaders of other collaborative efforts whose assets are vital to the success of the system of Community Schools-building efforts

- Overlooking what is already happening in schools that could demonstrate the power of a Community Schools system

- Neglecting the value of a powerful vision for mobilizing the entire community

How You Know You Are Making Progress

STAGE 1: Start a System of Community Schools			
MILESTONE (est. 6-month sprints) 1. Convene Innovators 2. Assess Readiness 3. Compile a Rationale for Community Schools			
Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Community Engagement	Conversations with local elected officials and executives to receive feedback	Open meetings to present community-wide data and invite feedback	Most students' households are engaged to share challenges, hopes, and desired opportunities to remain engaged
Alignment & Integration	The initiative collaborates with other community initiatives working to achieve similar goals		
Professional Learning Opportunities		Partners participate in site visits, community forums, and other opportunities designed to familiarize them with Community Schools, outline the assumptions and expectations of community-wide and site partners, and build common ground across the initiative	

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Data & Evaluation	Partners use data to inform their decision to move forward		Site teams make decisions about which data are most relevant and useful to collect based on result and indicator frameworks
Finance & Resources	Resources are earmarked to finance a Community School Coordinator position at each site		Site-level partners play a signifcant role in identifying and leveraging local revenue sources, including in-kind contributions from partner agencies
Policy & Practice	A convincing, evidence-based rationale to build a system of Community Schools is clearly articulated		
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Relationships with lead agencies and local partners are formed to begin imagining a shared vision	An emerging intermediary body creates organized opportunities to meet, facilitate discussions, forge relationships, and provides continuous opportunities for feedback and reaction	Community leaders, educators, students, and their caregivers are convened to examine student/family feedback, imagine their Community School, and identify assets

Stage 2:
Broaden Community Engagement

1. Engage Broader Community
2. Develop a Shared Vision & Purpose
3. Customize a Results-Based Logic Model

Overview

In Stage 2, the focus shifts to the shared ownership of a Community Schools system. The innovators' conversations lead to learning communities with the goal to authentically expand and deepen the leadership base reflective of the community. **Together, innovators engage broader community, develop a shared vision and purpose, and customizes a results-based logic model to show how inputs interact and lead to agreed-upon results.**

Milestones

Milestone #1: Engage Broader Community

Given that adoption of the Community Schools strategy is a whole-community, system-wide undertaking, **innovators need to expand and strengthen the leadership base of their system**. Participants need time to build trusting relationships with the people they are most likely to influence. They need to:

● Use existing peer relationships

● Engage school leaders

● Reach out to families

● Seek out other collaborative efforts focused on improving community conditions

● Look for leaders of other key institutions

● Do not overlook the business community

● Keep trying

Building relational trust and shared understanding as the group of innovators expands is important; however, there should be a recognition that the sense of urgency and degree of optimism may not be consistent within the group. Harmony can be created by:

● Meeting frequently

● Sharing leadership

● Visiting Community Schools

● Dreaming big

● Acknowledging self-interest

● Encouraging honest, shared exploration

Milestone #2: Develop a Shared Vision and Purpose

Participants in the system have imagined together what a system of Community Schools can accomplish. Now, they need to **commit to a broad vision of the Community Schools system they will build together**, and they must express that vision in easy-to-understand words. Much more than a writing exercise, the vision embraces the ideas and commitments that fuel creation of a Community Schools system. It provides the North Star that the system must regularly revisit to make certain that it remains true to its mission while moving toward the results and indicators to be specified in this stage. Such a vision statement might reflect the following:

- A statement of hope of an improved quality life for children, youth, families, and community

- An aspiration to require partnerships and specific actions

- A designated geography across one or more school districts and a shared tax base

With a shared vision carefully crafted, what was once an exploratory group is ready to emerge as a system. Participants become partners. The practical details of how to implement the vision will be developed as the system continues its work in subsequent stages.

Milestone #3: Customize a Results-Based Logic Model

In Stage 1, partners negotiated a broad vision for a Community Schools system. Now, they need to **specify long-term results that address children, youth, and families, schools, and communities as well as the indicators used to measure progress toward results**.

Many communities develop lists that include the following:

- Children are ready to enter school.

- Children succeed academically.

- Students are actively involved in learning and in the community.

- Students are physically, socially, and emotionally healthy.

- Students live and learn in stable and supportive environments.

- Families are actively involved in children's education.

- Communities are desirable places to live.

Given the long-term nature of the results, it is essential to develop indicators to measure progress toward each result. Some results related to, for example, immunization rates, test scores, or school attendance rates are probably available through schools or community partner agencies. Other results, such as service delivery or family attendance at adult education classes, are linked to other types of data collection. The idea is specifying results to be comprehensive without requiring the collection of an unwieldy mass of data. The overarching consideration is to determine which specific results bring schools and community partners together around a shared vision.

A results-based logic model (See Table 3) can help map the strategies a community will use to achieve its desired results. A logic model specifies the work partners would accomplish. As with the previous milestone, partners should collaborate to identify the activities, supports, programs, and structural changes they want to pursue, along with the resources they can bring to the table to support new opportunities.

Table 3. A Community Schools System Results-Based Logic Model

Clarify the destination		Measure the steps to get there		Practice the fundamentals		Organize form
Vision	**Impact**	**Results**	**Indicators**	**Principles**	**Functions**	**Infrastructure**
Schools are centers for creating communities where everyone belongs, works together, and thrives	Confident, well-prepared students Transformed schools Engaged, healthy, empowered students and families Local capacity for collaborative problem solving	**SYSTEM** Organizations efficiently and equitably contribute to Community School solutions **POPULATION** Children are ready to enter school Students are healthy physically, socially, and emotionally Students live and learn in stable and supportive environments Communities are desirable places to live Families are actively engaged in their children's education Students are actively learning in their community Students succeed academically	**SYSTEM** Amount of blended/braided funding Amount of in-kind contributions Alignment of policies and practices across organizations Social Return of Investment (SROI) **POPULATION** Early childhood education participation Students feel they belong and are competent Positive peer/adult relationships Crime rate Mobility Enrollment Attendance Chronic Absenteeism Tardiness Academic growth	Trusting relationships Inclusive decision-making Shared vision Continuous improvement	Community engagement Alignment and integration Professional learning opportunities Data and evaluation Finance and resources Policy and practice	Shared governance structures Strategic partnerships Learning opportunities Data systems Efficient & equitable contributions Actionable data

Pitfalls

There are three common pitfalls in this stage:

- Underestimating the importance of using results and related indicators to drive the work of the Community Schools system at the community and site levels
- Not developing performance measures for programmatic components
- Not being transparent about the work and seeking out additional partners

Table 4. Results Framework

Results	Indicators that Align with Each Result	
Children are ready to enter school	• Availability of early childhood education programs	• Attendance at early childhood education programs • Parents connected to their children's future school
Students succeed academically	• Attendance • Reading on grade level by third grade • Tardiness • Truancy	• Standardized test scores • Grades • Graduation rates • Dropout rates
Students are actively involved in learning and their community	• Chronic Absenteeism • Students feel they belong in school • Students feel competent • Schools are open to community	• Students connected to service learning in the school community
Students are healthy physically, socially, and emotionally	• Positive adult relationships • Positive peer relationships • Vaccinations • Student and families with health insurance	• Student families maximizing access to meal programs • Vision, hearing, and dental status
Students live and learn in stable and supportive environments	• Student mobility • Students, staff, and families feel safe in school	• Reports of violence or weapons
Families are actively engaged in their children's education	• Enrollment • Families support students' education at home • Family attendance at school-wide events and parent-teacher conferences • Family experiences with school-wide events and classes	• Family participation in school decision-making • Trust between faculty and families • Teacher attendance and turnover • Faculty believe they are an effective and competent team • Community-school partnerships

How You Know You Are Making Progress

STAGE 2: Broaden Community Engagement			
MILESTONES (est. 6-month sprints) 1. Engage Broader Community 2. Develop a Shared Vision & Purpose 3. Customize a Results-Based Logic Model			
Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community-Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Community Engagement	Open meetings present community-wide data and invite feedback	Communication with the public occurs regularly through open meetings, social networking sites, television and radio spots, newsletters, flyers, posters, and so forth	
Alignment & Integration	A clear and inspiring vision for a system drives the initiative A convincing, evidence-based rationale for a Community Schools system is clearly articulated		Planning and implementation at every school site are aligned with the community-wide vision
Professional Learning Opportunities			

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community-Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Data & Evaluation	A community-wide results and indicators framework is in place and used to track progress Data collection and evaluation are included as budget line items	Staff guide the development of a results and indicators framework Data-sharing agreements are negotiated to allow all partners to review school and community-wide data on agreed-upon results/indicators Evaluation strategies are designed to assess the systemic effectiveness of the initiative as well as progress toward results for children, families, schools, and communities	
Finance & Resources			
Policy & Practice			
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Partners continue to expand participation and develop trust and ownership in a community-wide vision Leadership levels, key roles, responsibilities, and communication methods are established	Discussions among community and site leaders to ensure buy-in to the community-wide vision, results framework, and rollout strategy	Site teams participate in planning for results frameworks and rollout strategies Lead agencies and local partners establish relationships based on a shared vision

Stage 3:
Design a Collaborative Operating Framework

1. Evaluate Key Functions
2. Distribute Leadership
3. Prepare Rollout Strategy

Overview

During Stage 3 the designated leaders will clarify roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms of participating partners. Two primary tasks are to a) select an intermediary leadership that will provide operational support and b) select leadership at the community-wide level that will promote the vision, provide administration resources and policy development for a sustainable system. Finally, the new system will develop a rollout strategy that addresses scope, site selection, site coordination, and professional learning opportunities.

Milestones

Milestone #1: Evaluate Key Functions

In Stage 1, policymaking partners began to create the context for change. Now, new questions arise. Who should do what? By when? **The Collaborative Leadership Structure describes the partners and functions that are required as system building progresses** (see the Introduction of this guide). The framework offers the sequence of actions needed for implementing a shared vision and how to get the job done.

Partners need to see that their participation is valued. They also need to agree to support activities in their respective areas of influence and expertise. A review ofthe comprehensive benchmark list organized by function and leadership level can guide partners in understanding how an organizing framework can facilitate their work.

Milestone #2: Distribute Leadership

In this stage, **ownership of the vision increases on all leadership levels of the Collaborative Leadership Structure as decision-making begins to shift from traditional hierarchal practices to distributed leadership, ateams ofteams approach,   to fulfill the necessary tasks identified in the evaluation of the key functions.** Community-wide leaders, intermediary leaders, and site leaders address the same functional areas; however, their roles and responsibilities differ dramatically. Community-wide leaders are primarily responsible for promoting the vision, developing policy, and resource alignment. Intermediary leaders are primarily responsible for planning, coordination, and management. Site leaders focus on site solutions, implementation, and impact. In the initial stages of developing a Community Schools system, the arrangement for an intermediary may be informal, with one or two organizations taking the lead. Over time, community leaders may recast the arrangement to become more inclusive and integrated. Ultimately, regardless of the organizational makeup, the intermediary needs to be of service to site and community leaders.

Milestone #3: Prepare a Rollout Strategy

Decide on the focus, direction, and scope of site-level expansion. A Community Schools system should spread both geographically and by grade level. To set the stage for success, the site selection process should ensure that prospective Community Schools demonstrate the basic leadership capacity for transformation into operating Community Schools. Some systems have provided planning grants to interested schools; others have selected sites with a history of school and community partnerships. Depending on data, available resources, and inquiry information, any or all of the following site selection criteria might apply:

- Prevalent effects of poverty

- Diminishing attendance and/or enrollment

- Disparities in data across populations

- Lack of student and family engagement

- School leadership readiness

- Neighborhood challenges

- Feeder pattern

Build a working budget for an individual Community School. Case studies have shown Community Schools produce a high return of investment.[3] The most significant costs for a Community School are a year-round, full-time Community School Coordinator, professional learning opportunities, and some flexible funds for responding quickly to innovations and solutions identified   in   the co-designing process. Although school districts provide space at no cost in the belief that schools are public facilities and that partners are dedicated to the vision and mission it is important to assess existing costs to evaluate future leverage.[4]

Hiring, supporting, and leading the facilitation of Community School development is a key decision. With the "lead agency" approach, a community partner hires and supervises a site Coordinator in consultation with the school principal, teachers, parents, and students. Like an intermediary at the community level, a site-level lead agency is usually a highly credible partner. The lead agency agrees to uphold the shared vision in terms of its organizational resources, relationships, and expertise. Many lead agencies bring additional resources from their own organization to the Community School and capture funds from public and private sources not otherwise available to schools. The lead agency approach offers the further advantage of demonstrating the school's desire and ability to work with community partners as well as its commitment to community engagement and collaborative partnerships.

---

[3] For return-on-investment studies, see for example: Bloodworth, M. R., & Horner, A. C. (2019). *Return on investment of a Community Schools coordinator: A case study*. Albuquerque, NM: Apex. Retrieved from **https://www. communityschools.org/wp-content/uploads/sites/2/2020/11/ROI_Coordinator.pdf** ; Martinez, L, & Hayes, C. D.
(2013). *Measuring social return on investment of Community Schools: A case study*. New York, NY: The Children's Aid Society and The Finance Project.

[4] Deich, S., & Neary, M. (2021). *Financing Community Schools: A framework for growth and sustainability*. Washington, DC: Partnership for the Future of Learning. Retrieved from **https:// communityschools.futureforlearning.org/assets/ downloads/Financing-Community-Schools-Brief.pdf**

While many Community Schools systems take a lead agency approach, some communities determine that the school system's direct management of a school site is preferable. In some cases, lodging both the intermediary and lead agency roles within the district is deemed the most efficient way to spread, deepen, and sustain the expansion of Community Schools. While building a system of Community Schools, both approaches can be integrated. Differences in culture, goals, staffing standards, and other factors can affect these relationships. Ways to resolve such issues include:

- Collaborating on a Coordinator job description that will be used regardless of who hires
- Developing a set of responsibilities of a lead agency (a school district or a partner)
- Building an understanding of the intermediary's role in supporting and evaluating the strategy
- Involving the school principal, teachers, and families in selection of a lead agency partner
- Including the school principal, teachers, and families in selection of the Coordinator
- Providing shared professional learning opportunities for all parties at the site

What It Takes to Be an Effective Community School Coordinator

Community School Coordinators play a unique role. They are by nature boundary-crossers, able to work in the school and the community and bridge the culture of each. They have the skills to reach to teachers and other school staff, and to reach out to families, residents, and community groups. They possess the planning and organizational ability to bring together school staff and partners to focus on results. Here is the skill-set to look for:

- Strong planning, coordination, and communication skills
- Political awareness
- Experience in several community sectors, including but not limited to schools
- Solid grounding in developmental theory and experiential learning
- The ability to see the "big picture" and attend to details
- An ability to listen, connect people, and make things happen

Pitfalls

There are five common pitfalls in this stage:

- Putting too much leadership responsibility on a single individual or organization
- Not thinking through how the same functions apply to various leadership levels even though functions will not receive equal attention at the same time
- Ignoring the importance of defining benchmarks for partners' accountability to one another
- Putting too much emphasis on dollars at the outset of planning and forgetting to look at how existing planning, research, and program development assets may be redirected to support the system
- Lacking a clear set of criteria for the selection of potential Community Schools for communication to all partners
- Overlooking the importance of determining whether a community partner or the school coordinates community and school resources at the site level

How You Know You Are Making Progress

STAGE 3: Design a Collaborative Operating Framework			
MILESTONES (est. 6-month sprints) 1. Evaluate Key Functions 2. Distribute Leadership 3. Prepare Rollout Strategy			
Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Community Engagement	Site visits to Community Schools for elected officials and potential partners as well as for initiative leaders, family members, and residents are well attended and designed to build community support Two-way communication with state and federal officials is ongoing		Site leadership platforms are developed and participate in planning results frameworks and roll out strategies
Alignment & Integration	A rollout strategy, including a plan and timeline for selecting Community Schools, is in place Community partners participate in developing the school system's strategic plan. The school system's plan reflects the results framework The results framework supports the school system's strategic plan	Conversations are convened to ensure that district school plans incorporate Community Schools' principles as related to the results-based framework RFPs and MOUs underscore the importance of alignment of resources to attain specified results	

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Professional Learning Opportunities		Pre-service training for Community School Coordinators is organized and facilitates their continued capacity building in appropriate, district-led professional learning opportunities Technical assistance and professional learning opportunities respond to the needs identified by participants	
Data & Evaluation	Partners facilitate data sharing through interagency agreements and necessary policy change	Accountability for achieving indicators in functional areas is distributed among partners	To organize its work, every site develops a results and indicators framework based on the community wide framework
Finance & Resources	Funding and resource arrangements for further planning are negotiated and MOUs established	Grant money is sought and used strategically to leverage additional resources	
Policy & Practice			
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Accountability for achieving indicators in functional areas is distributed among partners	An intermediary with norms, experience, and capacity consistent with the initiative's vision agrees to provide planning, management, and coordination across the initiative	Site teams representing school and partners, staff, families, and community members lead the school site team

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 flexibilityto 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	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 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 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)

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		Sites connected by the initiative's roll-out strategy collaborate with each other in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities

Site partners, within and across linked sites, participate in developing the school improvement plan that reflects each site's results framework

Sites integrate the activities of other community reform initiatives aimed at achieving similar results

The school and its partners integrate academic and non-academic support, services, and opportunities to attain agreed-upon results

Instructional content and methods, during and after school hours, reflect Community School principles in support of selected indicators |

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

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Policy & Practice	The district sets forth administrative guidelines enabling the effective operation of Community Schools Partners, including the school board, enact specific policies to support and sustain Community Schools Partners act to change policies within their own organizations to support scale-up School board and/or district policy allows community partners to use school facilities at no charge to implement activities aligned with site-level results Partners solicit and are responsive to resource and policy requests based on site data and practice knowledge 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	Sites package data-based findings into appropriate recommendations for changes in policy, resources, and/or training and professional learning opportunities	Policy barriers based on confidentiality and other requirements are communicated to community-wide leaders for action 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 Personnel policies of school sites, lead agencies, and partner agencies are aligned and reviewed regularly to foster positive working relationships across shared staff Sites communicate policy, resource, and professional learning opportunities needs to community-wide leadership based on data collection; they regularly scan across all functional areas

Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Collaborative Leadership	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		Leadership development opportunities for parents/family members and residents enable them to carry out their leadership tasks

Stage 5:
Sustain and Grow a Community Schools System

1. Expand and Deepen Community Schools
2. Build Financial Capacity
3. Build Political Capacity

Overview

Planning during Stage 5 focuses on the fourth characteristic of effective systems building—sustainability. Sustaining and growing a system of Community Schools requires that leaders monitor for environmental and systemic challenges that could derail change efforts. The system should refresh and strengthen its leadership and also engage the community in a process of continuous improvement. The Community Schools system must also attend to the key sustainability elements of financial and political capacity. Having the funds, leadership, and policy support ensures that the system will sustain across leadership changes.

Milestones

Milestone #1: Expand and Deepen Community Schools

Regular system scans across all four characteristics of effective systems building—shared ownership, spread, depth, and sustainability—can help identify areas that need attention. Here are some questions to explore each area:

Shared Ownership

- Are the system's vision and principles of Community Schools understood by all the partners at a deep level and used to inform funding, policy, and practice decisions?
- Do key leaders demonstrate sustained participation and commitment?
- Is shared ownership evident in the operation of the system's Collaborative Leadership Structure?

Spread

- Does building a system increase the number of Community Schools vertically (throughout the educational pathway) and horizontally (across several schools and school districts)?
- Do professional learning opportunities and communications activities ensure a flow of people steeped in the Community Schools strategy?

Use the **ROI App for Community Schools Coordinators** to:

- Document impact across partners and programs
- Inform and guide your state and district-wide scaling efforts
- Support implementation of your FSCS Program or Grant

The ROI app is the first part of the new Community Schools Data Hub. The ROI App and Data Hub will help Community Schools collect and report data to advocate for community schools locally and nationally.

Depth

- Does the system build capacity of students and their families to be their own agents of change?
- Do professional learning opportunities programs incorporate the vision and principles of Community Schools for educators, service providers, and other partners working with children and youth? Is there appropriate data and is it used effectively?
- Do data collection systems permit school-site personnel to track students on key indicators of success and allow policymakers to make informed policy and resource alignment decisions at the community level?

Sustainability

- Does the Community Schools system continuously engage new organizational and community leaders so that Community Schools remain a priority during leadership transitions?

- Is a constituency for Community Schools evident and sufficient to leverage redirected funding for Community Schools? How clearly do partner agencies' policies foster collaborative work, resource sharing, and strategies to support agreed-upon results for children, schools, families, and communities?

Milestone #2: Build Financial Capacity

Building the financial capacity of a Community Schools system poses three sets of challenges: the cost of planning and management at each school site; the cost of program and service delivery at each site; and costs to support the collaborative.

Calculate costs for school-site planning and management. Calculation of these costs during development of the roll-out strategy determines the number of schools in the initial systems building ef f ort. Being clear about the costs for Community School Coordinators is essential.

Calculate costs for programs and services. Most Community Schools make strategic use of existing resources provided by the school and community partners and draw on funds allocated from new grant programs, a combination of federal funding as well as grants from various state and local agencies, and local private sources, including United Way chapters and business.

The #CommunitySchools Costing Tool allows users to input information about their district, available resources, and desired elements, and receive an estimate of additional funding required to establish a Community School. Learn more at https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-costing-tool.

Whatever the funding source(s), it is important to recognize that development of a comprehensive set of supports and opportunities takes time, requires long-range planning and outside-of-box approaches to guide the leveraging and alignment of existing resources. Faith-based institutions, businesses, and civic groups can offer their assets in the form of human and social capital. These organizations and their members are a vital part of the system of support that Community Schools must mobilize to support student success.

Support the Collaborative Leadership Structure through intermediary services and other costs. The costs related to building the system's capacity extend to all the key functions needed to develop a Community Schools system. Included are the cost of personnel and related assets redirected to support the Collaborative Leadership Structure.

Milestone #3: Build Political Capacity

Political capacity refers to the willingness and skills of people to take the action needed to achieve agreed-upon results—in this case, a Community Schools system. School-site teams must consider how the principles of Community Schools can help schools achieve their mission. The participation of school and community partner staff, families, residents, and students builds personal, organizational, and neighborhood support for Community Schools. Together, they work to:

- Identify issues
- Select a set of priority results
- Plan and implement activities aligned with the curriculum and school improvement
- Plan to make measurable progress
- Revise their work for continuous improvement

It is essential to tap networks in which families and community members are already connected and to seek new people to Community Schools that bring an essential and diverse set of cultural and personal strengths, perspectives, and knowledge. It is essential that Community Schools do not replicate traditional parent education groups but rather engage in authentic family and community engagement. Policymakers will want to hear from them about how Community Schools are making a difference in their lives and the lives of their children.[5]

A Community Schools systems needs champions. School superintendents, United Way chapters, local government agencies, CBOs, principals and teachers, and community members are just some of the leaders who began their Community Schools work as innovators and over time become viewed as champions. Champions are typically highly motivated self-starters, but not all champions have the time to participate in a new venture. The following approaches may prove useful in motivating champions to participate on an ad hoc basis and eventually become fully engaged:

---

[5] Visit The Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships website to learn more about effective family and community engagement http://www.dualcapacity.org

Learn more about IEL's annual National Community Schools and Family Engagement Conference at https://iel.org/engage/

- Identify champions' skills, resources, and interests
- Specify the need
- Recognize the critical value of the efforts
- Provide feedback
- Ask for their observations and input
- Invite additional contributions

Communicating with the leadership networks of the Community Schools system, maintaining contact with leaders of other institutions, and keeping the public apprised of progress are other essential elements of building political capacity. Effective strategies involve carefully targeted communications:

- Use social media
- Publish a brief newsletter
- Publicize performance of each Community School and system-wide progress
- Reach out to the media
- Connect with local civic and business groups
- Develop a web site for the system
- Produce a video

Pitfalls

There are four key pitfalls in this last stage:

- Thinking that running a Community school is all about money and programs rather than about focusing on the importance of mobilizing families, residents, business and civic organizations, and the broader community in support of agreed-upon results
- Not being willing to ask the hard questions about how existing resources are used, whether they are achieving the desired results, and whether something needs to change
- Not realizing that building a system is inherently more a political than a technical challenge
- Neglecting routine scans of system functional areas to indicate where work needs to be strengthened

How You Know You Are Making Progress

STAGE 5: Sustain and Grow the Ecosystem of Community Schools			
MILESTONE (est. 6-month sprints) 1. Expand and Deepen Community Schools 2. Build Financial Capacity 3. Build Political Capacity			
Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Community Engagement	Partners continue to expand their participation and develop trust in and ownership of a community-wide vision A strategy for finding new champions has been designed and implemented An increasing number of people are active advocates for Community Schools The system-wide initiative's name and logo are recognized and used throughout the community	Staff facilitate expanded participation, trust, and ownership of a vision for a Community Schools system Communication with the public occurs regularly as planned Data on the performance of each Community School as well as on system-wide expansion are published and made easily accessible to the public and policy makers	Site visits to Community Schools for elected officials and potential partners as well as for initiative leaders, family members, and residents are well attended and designed to build community support

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Alignment & Integration	RFPs, grant opportunities, and other potential funding requests developed by school districts, United Ways, local government, and others are aligned with the initiative's results framework The district uses data collected by the initiative to improve the school system's strategic plan Partners regularly scan the initiative's operation across all functional areas to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and overall effectiveness in scale-up The school district uses data collected by the initiative to improve the school system's strategic plan	Staff assist partners and site leaders in conducting regular system scans at their respective levels and monitor performance across networks of Community Schools	School improvement plans provide for the coordination of school district resources to achieve agreed-upon results Sites regularly scan initiative operation across all functional areas as well as external environment to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities
Professional Learning Opportunities	Partners participate in site visits, community forums, and other opportunities designed to familiarize them with the principles and practices of community schools, the assumptions and expectations of community-wide and site partners and to build common ground across the initiative	Intermediary staff coordinate technical assistance to help the initiative implement and sustain its expansion plan Technical assistance and professional learning opportunities respond to needs identified by participants Staff ensure that participants and technical assistance providers jointly design, implement, and evaluate training Two-way communication with state and federal officials is ongoing	School staff and site level partners participate in joint Professional Learning Opportunities and planning time designed to deepen the integration between in-school and after-school teaching and learning

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Data & Evaluation	Relevant data on participation, operation, and outcomes inform policy and practice decisions to improve site-level implementation and expansion activities	Staff deliver technical assistance to sites to design and implement effective data collection Staff analyze and package data for various audiences Evaluation designs include comparison schools and show longitudinal trends	Sites regularly collect, analyze, and use relevant information on participation, implementation, and results to make continuous improvement in practice and recommendations for policy change
Finance & Resources	A long-range financing strategy is in place Reliable funding streams are coordinated to sustain priority programs and services at Community Schools Community partners play a significant role in identifying and leveraging new revenue sources Financing decisions ensure that expansion does not threaten core components of the initiative	Technical assistance helps partners develop a long-range financing plan to harness existing public and private resources and to secure new funding sufficient to meet projected costs of scheduled expansion Partners build capacity and work to develop a long-range financing plan to harness existing public and private resources and to secure new funding sufficient to meet projected costs of scheduled expansion	Grant money is sought and used strategically to leverage additional resources

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Policy & Practice	A statement of support for community-wide results and the expansion of Community Schools is included in the strategic plans of major partners (school board/district, city, county, United Way, community foundation, other funders) The school district has set forth administrative guidelines enabling the effective operation of Community Schools	Partners amend policies within their own organizations to support scale-up	
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Community issues that impact schools (e.g., safety, housing, immigration policy) are tracked, evaluated for their impact on the initiative's work, and considered for community-wide action		Parents and residents represent the concerns of Community Schools and their neighborhoods in decision-making forums at all levels

Summing Up

Congratulations! You've worked through the stages to build a Community Schools system. As you've learned, your work doesn't end now. Take time to reflect and celebrate. Make sure that you continue to broaden leadership, engage the community in the change you and your colleagues are working toward. Keep this resource handy and engage with it frequently. New people will join your team, new leaders will replace your current champions, and new opportunities and challenges will arise – these are all times to revisit this document and plan for building a Community School system. Finally, connect with other leaders in the Community Schools field. There are many leaders building and running Community School systems around the country – and their numbers are growing. Join networks, visit other communities, and keep learning. For resources, to join a network, and for capacity building and learning opportunities, visit **https://www.communityschools.org.**

Appendix:
How You Know You Are Making Progress (Rubric)

STAGE 1: Start a System of Community Schools			
MILESTONE (est. 6-month sprints) 1. Convene Innovators 2. Assess Readiness 3. Compile a Rationale for Community Schools			
Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Community Engagement	Conversations with local elected officials and executives to receive feedback	Open meetings to present community-wide data and invite feedback	Most students' households are engaged to share challenges, hopes, and desired opportunities to remain engaged
Alignment & Integration	The initiative collaborates with other community initiatives working to achieve similar goals		
Professional Learning Opportunities		Partners participate in site visits, community forums, and other opportunities designed to familiarize them with Community Schools, outline the assumptions and expectations of community-wide and site partners, and build common ground across the initiative	

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Data & Evaluation	Partners use data to inform their decision to move forward		Site teams make decisions about which data are most relevant and useful to collect based on result and indicator frameworks
Finance & Resources	Resources are earmarked to finance a Community School Coordinator position at each site		Site-level partners play a significant role in identifying and leveraging local revenue sources, including in-kind contributions from partner agencies
Policy & Practice	A convincing, evidence-based rationale to build a system of Community Schools is clearly articulated		
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Relationships with lead agencies and local partners are formed to begin imagining a shared vision	An emerging intermediary body creates organized opportunities to meet, facilitate discussions, forge relationships, and provides continuous opportunities for feedback and reflection	Community leaders, educators, students, and their caregivers are convened to examine student/family feedback, imagine their Community School, and identify assets

STAGE 2: Broaden Community Engagement

MILESTONES (est. 6-month sprints)
1. Engage Broader Community
2. Develop a Shared Vision & Purpose
3. Customize a Results-Based Logic Model

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) toward Milestones

Function	Community-Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Community Engagement	Open meetings present community-wide data and invite feedback	Communication with the public occurs regularly through open meetings, social networking sites, television and radio spots, newsletters, flyers, posters, and so forth	
Alignment & Integration	A clear and inspiring vision for a system drives the initiative A convincing, evidence-based rationale for a Community Schools system is clearly articulated		Planning and implementation at every school site are aligned with the community-wide vision
Professional Learning Opportunities			

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community-Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Data & Evaluation	A community-wide results and indicators framework is in place and used to track progress Data collection and evaluation are included as budget line items	Staff guide the development of a results and indicators framework Data-sharing agreements are negotiated to allow all partners to review school and community-wide data on agreed-upon results/indicators Evaluation strategies are designed to assess the systemic effectiveness of the initiative as well as progress toward results for children, families, schools, and communities	
Finance & Resources			
Policy & Practice			
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Partners continue to expand participation and develop trust and ownership in a community-wide vision Leadership levels, key roles, responsibilities, and communication methods are established	Discussions among community and site leaders to ensure buy-in to the community-wide vision, results framework, and rollout strategy	Site teams participate in planning for results frameworks and rollout strategies Lead agencies and local partners establish relationships based on a shared vision

STAGE 3: Design a Collaborative Operating Framework

MILESTONES (est. 6-month sprints)
1. Evaluate Key Functions
2. Distribute Leadership
3. Prepare Rollout Strategy

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Community Engagement	Site visits to Community Schools for elected officials and potential partners as well as for initiative leaders, family members, and residents are well attended and designed to build community support Two-way communication with state and federal officials is ongoing		Site leadership platforms are developed and participate in planning results frameworks and roll out strategies
Alignment & Integration	A rollout strategy, including a plan and timeline for selecting Community Schools, is in place Community partners participate in developing the school system's strategic plan. The school system's plan reflects the results framework The results framework supports the school system's strategic plan	Conversations are convened to ensure that district school plans incorporate community schools' principles as related to the results-based framework RFPs and MOUs underscore the importance of alignment of resources to attain specifed results	

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones			
Function	**Community Wide**	**Intermediary**	**Community School (Site)**
Professional Learning Opportunities		Pre-service training for Community School Coordinators is organized and facilitates their continued capacity building in appropriate, district-led professional learning opportunities Technical assistance and professional learning opportunities respond to the needs identified by participants	
Data & Evaluation	Partners facilitate data sharing through interagency agreements and necessary policy change	Accountability for achieving indicators in functional areas is distributed among partners	To organize its work, every site develops a results and indicators framework based on the community wide framework
Finance & Resources	Funding and resource arrangements for further planning are negotiated and MOUs established	Grant money is sought and used strategically to leverage additional resources	
Policy & Practice			
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Accountability for achieving indicators in functional areas is distributed among partners	An intermediary with norms, experience, and capacity consistent with the initiative's vision agrees to provide planning, management, and coordination across the initiative	Site teams representing school and partners, staff, families, and community members lead the school site team

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	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 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 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)

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		Sites connected by the initiative's roll-out strategy collaborate with each other in planning, implementing, and evaluating activities Site partners, within and across linked sites, participate in developing the school improvement plan that reflects each site's results framework Sites integrate the activities of other community reform initiatives aimed at achieving similar results The school and its partners integrate academic and non-academic support, services, and opportunities to attain agreed-upon results Instructional content and methods, during and after school hours, reflect Community School principles in support of selected indicators

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

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Policy & Practice	The district sets forth administrative guidelines enabling the effective operation of Community Schools Partners, including the school board, enact specific policies to support and sustain Community Schools Partners act to change policies within their own organizations to support scale-up School board and/or district policy allows community partners to use school facilities at no charge to implement activities aligned with site-level results Partners solicit and are responsive to resource and policy requests based on site data and practice knowledge 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	Sites package data-based findings into appropriate recommendations for changes in policy, resources, and/or training and professional learning opportunities	Policy barriers based on confidentiality and other requirements are communicated to community-wide leaders for action 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 Personnel policies of school sites, lead agencies, and partner agencies are aligned and reviewed regularly to foster positive working relationships across shared staff Sites communicate policy, resource, and professional learning opportunities needs to community-wide leadership based on data collection; they regularly scan across all functional areas

Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Collaborative Leadership	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		Leadership development opportunities for parents/family members and residents enable them to carry out their leadership tasks

STAGE 5: Sustain and Grow the Ecosystem of Community Schools

MILESTONE (est. 6-month sprints)
1. Expand and Deepen Community Schools
2. Build Financial Capacity
3. Build Political Capacity

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Community Engagement	Partners continue to expand their participation and develop trust in and ownership of a community-wide vision A strategy for finding new champions has been designed and implemented An increasing number of people are active advocates for Community Schools The system-wide initiative's name and logo are recognized and used throughout the community	Staff facilitate expanded participation, trust, and ownership in a scaled-up vision of Community Schools Communication with the public occurs regularly as planned Data on the performance of each Community School as well as on system-wide expansion are published and made easily accessible to the public and policy makers	Site visits to Community Schools for elected officials and potential partners as well as for initiative leaders, family members, and residents are well attended and designed to build community support

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Alignment & Integration	RFPs, grant opportunities, and other potential funding requests developed by school districts, United Ways, local government, and others are aligned with the initiative's results framework The district uses data collected by the initiative to improve the school system's strategic plan Partners regularly scan the initiative's operation across all functional areas to identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and overall ef f ectiveness in scale-up The school district uses data collected by the initiative to improve the school system's strategic plan	Staff assist partners and site leaders in conducting regular system scans at their respective levels and monitor performance across networks of Community Schools	School improvement plans provide for the coordination of school district resources to achieve agreed-upon results Sites regularly scan initiative operation across all functional areas as well as external environment to identify strengths, weaknesses, and opportunities
Professional Learning Opportunities	Partners participate in site visits, community forums, and other opportunities designed to familiarize them with the principles and practices of community schools, the assumptions and expectations of community-wide and site partners and to build common ground across the initiative	Intermediary staff coordinate technical assistance to help the initiative implement and sustain its expansion plan Technical assistance and professional learning opportunities respond to needs identified by participants Staff ensure that participants and technical assistance providers jointly design, implement, and evaluate training Two-way communication with state and federal officials is ongoing	School staff and site level partners participate in joint Professional Learning Opportunities and planning time designed to deepen the integration between in-school and after-school teaching and learning

Indicators (Action/Benchmarks) Toward Milestones

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Data & Evaluation	Relevant data on participation, operation, and outcomes inform policy and practice decisions to improve site-level implementation and expansion activities	Staff deliver technical assistance to sites to design and implement effective data collection Staff analyze and package data for various audiences Evaluation designs include comparison schools and show longitudinal trends	Sites regularly collect, analyze, and use relevant information on participation, implementation, and results to make continuous improvement in practice and recommendations for policy change
Finance & Resources	A long-range financing strategy is in place Reliable funding streams are coordinated to sustain priority programs and services at Community Schools Community partners play a significant role in identifying and leveraging new revenue sources Financing decisions ensure that expansion does not threaten core components of the initiative	Partners build capacity and work to develop a long-range financing plan to harness existing public and private resources and to secure new funding sufficient to meet projected costs of scheduled expansion	Grant money is sought and used strategically to leverage additional resources

Function	Community Wide	Intermediary	Community School (Site)
Policy & Practice	A statement of support for community-wide results and the expansion of Community Schools is included in the strategic plans of major partners (school board/district, city, county, United Way, community foundation, other funders) The school district has set forth administrative guidelines enabling the effective operation of Community Schools	Partners amend policies within their own organizations to support scale-up	
Progress Toward a Collaborative Leadership Structure			
Collaborative Leadership	Community issues that impact schools (e.g., safety, housing, immigration policy) are tracked, evaluated for their impact on the initiative's work, and considered for community-wide action		Parents and residents represent the concerns of Community Schools and their neighborhoods in decision-making forums at all levels

Learn More:

Institute for Educational Leadership: iel.org

Coalition for Community Schools: communityschools.org