Policies That Advance Community Schools

As noted in Chapter 1, the four pillars support and capitalize on rich, student-centered learning in and out of the classroom. Specific community schools may differ from one another, as schools and communities organize their local resources and use these pillars to transform teaching and learning, create positive school climates, and promote student success. In the most effective cases, community schools are an integral component of an equity strategy that recognizes and responds to structural inequities and in which the pillars are designed to support school transformation strategies aimed at improving teaching and learning. This approach can be implemented in a single school or as part of a systemwide initiative within a school district, city, or county.

Numerous studies show that community schools, when implemented effectively and given sufficient time to mature, can help to close achievement gaps for students from low-income families and English learners. Community schools are also associated with improvements in student attendance, engagement, behavior, and academic performance. These benefits help to create a more equitable society and increase the number of young people who are prepared to succeed in college, career, and civic life.

It is important to keep in mind that, while each of the four pillars contributes to a high-quality educational environment, the pillars reinforce each other, and it is this synergy that defines the essence of a comprehensive community school. For example, offering English classes for families on-site (a form of integrated student supports) is also a strategy for giving families greater opportunities to develop meaningful relationships with school staff, administrators, teachers, or volunteers at the school (active family and community engagement). Similarly, local businesses and community nonprofits who provide off-campus learning for students (expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities) are likely to find opportunities to participate in shaping school priorities and decisions (collaborative leadership and practices).

Policy Mechanisms

There are a range of policy mechanisms at the federal, state, and local levels to support community schools. Most fall into one of two categories: financial/resourcing support or implementation and technical support. Both types of support are important for successful implementation of community schools. It takes money to start and sustain this work and increased alignment and technical support to do the work well. Examples of the most common mechanisms follow:

- Federal and state community school grant programs
- Inclusion of community schools in a state funding formula
- Support for community schools in state budgets or through specific tax mechanisms

- Alignment of policies and resources across public agencies—such as health and human services, workforce development, and parks and recreation—to advance community schools
- Inclusion in school construction funds
- State provision of technical assistance or other support programs (such as networks of districts implementing a community schools strategy or of community school leaders)
- State Board of Education regulations
- Local school board policies and resolutions
- County/city resolutions or joint agreements with school districts
- Mayoral initiatives
- Local tax levies either directly for community schools or as part of a broader initiative to support children and youth

Key Policy Principles

Policies governing comprehensive community schools are most effective if they adhere to the following principles:

- Define community schools comprehensively, organized around four pillars.
- Specify the criteria by which schools will be selected for grants and other types of support.
- Provide specific language about the purpose of the four pillars, while allowing for flexibility in local implementation.
- Build a strong foundation by specifying key aspects of implementation, including hiring a full-time community school director for each school, broad and deep engagement in an assessment/planning process, and regular reporting around implementation and outcome metrics.
- Support school transformation strategies aimed at improving teaching and learning, rather than simply focusing on out-of-classroom supports and activities.
- Invest in professional development to support collaborative leadership structures and practices and to encourage and facilitate cross-agency collaboration.
- Identify a leadership structure and clearly defined next steps, including—where there will be more than one community school—language specifying a cross-sector steering committee or implementation team and a clear articulation of its authority. Baltimore and Los Angeles provide the best examples of this type of language.
- Ensure the participation of teachers, families, and communities at every stage of the process.
- Address issues of interagency collaboration, including data sharing with appropriate privacy protections.
- Specify which entities will need to be involved for successful local implementation.
- Invest in professional development to support continuous improvement, the process that follows the broad and deep engagement in an assessment/planning process.

Federal Opportunities through ESSA

The Every Student Succeeds Act, the 2015 law reauthorizing the Elementary and Secondary Education Act of 1965, includes a number of opportunities for the decentralization of decision making about the use of federal education dollars. Policy and funding opportunities within ESSA include the following:

- **Title I, Part A** requires that states set aside 7% of Title I funds for school improvement in the lowest-performing schools using evidence-based strategies for comprehensive or targeted support and intervention. This is a significant funding stream that can be used to support development of community schools, which qualify as an "evidence-based intervention."[4]

  More than a dozen states have seized this opportunity and identified community schools as a strategy to support underperforming schools in their initial ESSA plans. (See the Community Schools in ESSA State Plans chapter for a summary of those states' ESSA plan initiatives.) As one example, Pennsylvania's ESSA plan identifies community schools as an effective improvement strategy and includes extensive discussion of how the state will support community school initiatives. As schools improve, they may not be eligible for these funds, underscoring the importance of identifying ongoing funding streams.

- **Titles II and IV** authorize funding for states to provide programs and supports that attend to the whole child—emotionally, socially, physically, and academically—through educator professional development and the Student Support and Academic Enrichment Grants programs.

- **Title IV** authorizes funding to support 21st Century Community Learning Centers (21st CCLC) and Full-Service Community Schools. Although these two grant programs operate differently, they both can be used to support community schools. The 21st CCLC grant program, for example, supports expanded learning time and references the role of a coordinator as an allowable use of funds, signaling to practitioners that they should consider community schools.

- Finally, under **Title I**, districts can apply for Flexibility for Equitable Per-Pupil Funding, allowing them to develop and implement a school funding system based on weighted per-student allocations for low-income and otherwise disadvantaged students.

By leveraging several of these funding sources, communities can begin or advance a comprehensive community schools strategy. For example, funding streams from Title I can be used to hire resource coordinators or community school directors, as done in Cincinnati, OH, and Lincoln, NE. Title IV funds can also be used to fund community school directors, as well as to support the alignment of community resources. Other

ESSA programs, including the 21st CCLC and Promise Neighborhoods, can support specific pillars, such as expanded and enriched learning time and opportunities and integrated student supports that are part of a comprehensive community schools framework.

Exemplary State Policies

At the state level, we provide four types of policy exemplars: 1) grant programs to develop local community school models and/or support local community school planning and implementation; 2) state budget support for community schools; 3) technical assistance or other support programs for community schools; and 4) state board of education regulations advancing community schools. These policies were selected as exemplars because they include a comprehensive definition of community schools and attend carefully to implementation concerns, such as the selection of schools to receive support, and articulation of the planning time/processes. Some policies explicitly endorse community schools as an improvement strategy, recognizing that schools are more likely to make significant improvements by engaging partners than they are by working alone.

Grant programs to develop and support planning of local community schools. One of the most powerful—and straightforward—approaches to supporting community schools at the state level is the provision of funding through a grant program. Community school grants not only provide necessary dollars to plan and implement this strategy, they also help to specify the mechanisms of effective implementation essential to achieving positive results. It is important to account for start-up costs, which include the initial hiring of a community school director, planning time needed to form committees at school sites, an assessment of needs and assets, and development of partnerships with agencies providing additional supports and opportunities for students and families. Policies must also provide for sustainable funding to pay the annual salary of the full-time community school directors, who provide critical leadership in both the start-up and implementation of the strategy. Exemplary programs include the following:

- In 2014, **California's** Safe Neighborhoods and Schools Act (Proposition 47) reduced penalties for some felonies and redirected 25% of the savings (as a result of decreasing the state's prison population) to the California Department of Education for the purpose of reducing truancy and supporting students at risk of dropping out of school or who are victims of crime. These funds have been used to support the Learning Communities for School Success Program, which will provide grant funding for several strategies to keep students in school, including community schools.

- **Minnesota's** full-service community school program (Minnesota Statute 124D.231) passed the state legislature in 2015. Eligible schools are either currently on an improvement plan because they have been identified as not meeting federal

performance expectations or are located in a district that has an achievement and integration plan addressing racial segregation. This policy has two exemplary components. First, it presents a clear and comprehensive framework for establishing community schools as an improvement strategy, including: 1) creation of a school leadership team "responsible for developing school-specific programming goals"; 2) performance of a thorough baseline data analysis and development of a corresponding plan for expanded programming; and 3) requiring a program assessment and report to be conducted every 3 years. Second, it provides $150,000 in funding to eligible schools to plan, implement, and improve comprehensive community schools. Unfortunately, only 10 schools benefited from this grant program, given the minimal funding allocation (a total of $1.5 million in fiscal years 2016 and 2017).

- **New York's** Community Schools Grant Initiative (Education Law § 3641) was a 2-year effort that began in 2013. The initiative provided 3-year grants of $500,000 each "to eligible school districts for plans that target school buildings as 'community hubs to deliver co-located or school-linked academic, health, mental health, nutrition, counseling, legal and/or other services to students and their families in a manner that will lead to improved educational and other outcomes.'" Eligible applicants included: 1) high-need school districts, or 2) average-need school districts with a minimum Extraordinary Needs percentage of 50% (a mixture of students in poverty, students with limited English, and geographic sparsity) as most recently calculated by the State Education Department. Approximately 30 grants were awarded. The initiative was the precursor to New York's ongoing statewide budget support for the expansion of community schools described in the next section.

- In **Tennessee**, a proposed community schools grant program (House Bill 2472/Senate Bill 2393) presents a comprehensive vision of community schools as institutions that engage in a "deep needs assessment" with "substantial input from a majority" of local stakeholders to identify a range of community-based service providers. Notably, this legislation would direct resources to "priority" or "focus" schools in need of assistance due to low academic performance. This presents an alternative to the Tennessee Achievement School District, which has primarily intervened in low-performing schools by removing them from the control of local school districts and turning them over to charter school operators. While the bill has not yet received funding or been approved, it does have bipartisan sponsorship in the state legislature and presents an evidence-based approach to improving struggling schools.

- In 2016, **Utah** established the Partnerships for Student Success Grant Program (Senate Bill 67). Rather than providing grants to individual schools, the program allocates $500,000 grants to communities to improve educational outcomes for students from low-income families through the formation of cross-sector partnerships that use data to align and improve programs, practices, and services

designed to increase student success. Grantees must conduct a comprehensive needs assessment that includes goals, outcomes, and metrics based on the local community needs and interests. Grantees must also establish and maintain data systems that inform program decisions. Eligible applicants include Local Education Agencies (LEAs), and partnerships that include at a minimum: an LEA that has designated an eligible school feeder pattern; a local nonprofit organization; a private business; a municipality or county in which the schools in the specific feeder pattern are located; an institution of higher education within the state; a state or local government agency that provides services to students attending schools within the eligible school feeder pattern; a local philanthropic organization; and a local health care organization. Preference is given to qualified applicants with a higher percentage of students from low-income families in the schools targeted for services. LEAs must provide matching funds. Six grants had been awarded by 2017.

State budget support for community schools. Another approach to supporting community schools involves the provision of funding through the state budgeting process, including providing resources for community schools in the school funding formula and joint funding across departments, such as health and human services, workforce development, and early childhood education. As with state grant programs, this approach requires sufficient and sustained funding to successfully advance community schools. It is important to marry ongoing funding support with a coherent community schools framework, including an articulation of all four pillars of the approach, as well as an inclusive process for assessing local needs and assets and developing the mix of programs, supports, and opportunities that will be offered to students and families. Examples include the following:

- In **Kentucky**, the General Assembly created the Family Resource and Youth Services Centers (FRYSCs) as an integral part of the Kentucky Education Reform Act (KERA) of 1990. The mission of these school-based centers is to support academically at-risk students succeed in school by helping to minimize or eliminate noncognitive barriers to learning. Schools where at least 20% of the student population is eligible for free or reduced-price school meals may compete for FRYSC funding. The Family Resource and Youth Services Coalition of Kentucky Governing Body consists of a 13-person executive committee and a 16-person executive board representing the 11 FRYSC regions across Kentucky. In 2017, the centers received $51.5 million in funding. FRYSCs include community partnerships that provide vital programs, services, and referrals to students and their families. With the explicit goal of enhancing student academic success, each center offers a unique blend of programs and services to serve the special needs of its students and families. FRYSCs have established a record of success based on improved student performance in classwork, homework, and peer relations as reported by teachers. Families, too, report they experience greater satisfaction and involvement with the schools because of assistance through their local FRYSCs.

- **New York** has provided substantial and ongoing funding for the implementation of community schools through the annual state budget process, building on New York State's Community Schools Grant Initiative (described above). From 2013 to 2017, policymakers earmarked $355 million of the state's foundation aid formula for high-need districts to support the implementation of community schools. In addition, the 2015 state budget included $75 million in funding for interventions in persistently struggling schools, which included implementation of community schools. In 2017, state legislators approved additional funding for three technical assistance centers dedicated to helping start community school initiatives. The budget for 2018–19 increases the annual funding for community school interventions from $75 million to $200 million.

  At the school level, the statewide budget process translated to grants of up to $500,000 per school over 3 years for the first round of community schools. While this funding has provided valuable support for local community school initiatives, at times implementation has proven challenging due to lack of district or school level understanding of best practices. For maximum effectiveness, state budget allocations should be accompanied by strong technical support for districts looking to implement this strategy.

Technical assistance or other support programs for community schools. States may also support community schools by issuing guidance and technical assistance regarding the use of flexible federal funds for this purpose, fostering cross-agency alignment, forming children's cabinets, providing professional development, and forming support networks of schools. While this approach lacks direct funding for the implementation of community schools, it may be a useful step for states presently lacking the political momentum needed to push through more substantial funding proposals. Examples include the following:

- The **Maryland** Community School Strategy for Excellence in Public Education Act encourages the use of federal education funds to support community school implementation. The bill took effect on July 1, 2016, and will remain in effect until June 30, 2019. Note, however, a state commission reviewing the state formula has recommended that community schools be included in future measures. This Act requires the Maryland State Department of Education every 2 years to notify each local school system that federal Title I funds may be used for expenses associated with community school coordinators and for the coordination of school and community resources. The Department must also encourage local school systems to apply for federal funding under ESSA Title IV competitive grant programs to support after-school programming, community school coordinators, and the coordination of school and community resources. In addition, the Department must provide technical assistance to local school systems in applying for this federal funding. Unfortunately, the legislation does not ensure that the State Department of Education has adequate staffing capacity to provide technical assistance to local

school systems pursuing this funding option. This has proven to be a challenge in implementing the Maryland law and should be addressed if pursued in other jurisdictions.

- In 2012, **Michigan**'s governor aligned resources of education and human services agencies in the Pathways to Potential program. Pathways places Department of Human Services employees (called success coaches) in schools where high numbers of families are already receiving assistance through the department. These staffers work closely with school principals, social workers, attendance agents, and teachers to monitor and address barriers to school attendance. In the 2014–15 school year, 208 schools were implementing the Pathways model. Several counties are moving to a community school model where the success coach works with a community school coordinator to ensure resources are in place to serve students and families throughout the year. There are currently 24 Pathways schools implementing the community schools model.

State board of education regulations. State boards of education may issue a policy or resolution in support of community schools. While these resolutions tend to be shorter and less detailed than legislative bills, expressing state support for the implementation of community schools can lay the groundwork for developing more specific policy documents to follow at the state or local level. This approach does not, however, provide direct funding for community schools, which tends to be the most powerful policy lever to support meaningful change.

- The **West Virginia** State Community Schools Policy 2425 defines and provides guidance for implementing and maintaining sustainable community schools. The definition of community schools as "both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources" is drawn from national experts at the Coalition for Community Schools. The document specifies that local boards of education should hire or identify community school coordinators to support implementation at school sites. It also lays out a comprehensive vision for "fully developed" community schools as being "needs-driven" and striving to include the following components: engaging instruction; expanded learning opportunities; college, career, citizenship, health, and social support; community engagement; early childhood development; family engagement; and youth development activities. Local boards of education that decide to implement the state guidance can receive technical assistance through the West Virginia Department of Education Office of Special Programs, which also developed a resource guide, "Building Community and School Partnerships for Student Success."

State Model Legislation

Many of the real-world legislative examples discussed above draw upon model legislative language developed by the Coalition for Community Schools, Communities in

Schools, the National Education Association (NEA), the American Federation of Teachers (AFT), and The Center for Popular Democracy (CPD). In particular, the NEA model legislation provides suggested language for competitive and formula community school grant programs. The joint report from CPD, Coalition for Community Schools, and Southern Education Foundation *Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools* contains similar model language for state grant and formula funding programs supporting community schools.

Chapter 8 provides model legislation that builds upon these existing resources and grounds suggested language in research-based principles drawn from the Learning Policy Institute and National Education Policy Center report *Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence.*

Exemplary Local Policies

At the local level, policy exemplars fall into three categories: 1) school board resolutions and policies in support of community schools as a districtwide intervention strategy; 2) county/city resolutions or joint agreements; and 3) mayoral initiatives. These policies were selected as exemplars because they include a comprehensive definition of community schools, place an emphasis on broad-based local input regarding important school-site decisions, clearly define next steps for different individuals or groups responsible for implementing the community schools strategy, and lay out clear parameters regarding effective collaboration among these different groups.

School board resolutions and policies. Local school boards throughout the United States have approved policies and resolutions in support of community schools. As with state board of education regulations, these documents tend to be brief and employ high-level language. However, they can be an important first step in authorizing local education agencies to implement community schools.

- In 2016, the **Baltimore** City Board of School Commissioners approved a community school strategy. The policy lays out a vision for community schools that "are inclusive and equitable, use a racial equity framework in order to ensure the success of children, and serve as an effective strategy to address concentrated poverty." In addition, the policy documents a continuum of community school implementation, ranging from "engaged schools" to "partnership schools" to "full-service community schools." Key features of community schools, as detailed in the strategy, include enhanced academics and student well-being, full-time site coordinators, restorative and positive school climate practices, and an extensive planning process. The policy also establishes a Community School Steering Committee with responsibility for partnership development, conflict resolution, and evaluation of community schools. It provides a strong example by laying out a clear vision for support of community schools, including detailed definitions of shared terminology, and specifying next steps for implementation.

- **Cincinnati** has implemented a districtwide community schools approach, known as community learning centers or CLCs. Community partners provide up to $6 million worth of services per school aligned to priorities established by school decision-making committees, which set measurable goals, develop action plans, and approve budgetary decisions. The policy documents supporting this work include a set of guiding principles for CLCs, approved by the Cincinnati Public Schools Board of Education in 2001, calling for a collaborative planning process to identify school-site service partners. An accompanying document lays out parameters for partnerships with community-based organizations. Partnerships co-located in schools must be financially self-sustaining and integrated into the school's operation and governance with measurable outcomes aligned to school and district goals. Both documents provide high-level guidance for the CLC work and represent an important commitment from the district to support this strategy. A memorandum of understanding (MOU) template provides additional guidance and support for community partnerships.

  Building on this foundation, the Board of Education passed a districtwide CLC policy (Board Policy 7500) in 2009, stating that "each school should also be a community learning center in which a variety of partners shall offer academic programs, enrichment activities, and support to students, families, and community members." According to this policy, each CLC should have a Resource Coordinator who oversees a needs assessment process with community input and coordinates service agreements with community partners. The policy also references the Local School Decision Making Committees (LSDMCs), the role of which is defined in an accompanying community involvement policy (Board Policy 9142) that was adopted by the Board in 1981 and has been updated regularly to reflect the evolving role of community involvement in the district. In their current form, LSDMCs are composed of parents, teachers, non-teacher staff, and community members. The LSDMC has authority to approve the school budget, make hiring decisions for principal vacancies, vote on the CLC lead agency at the school site (which in turn employs the CLC resource coordinator), and vote on the selection of CLC service providers. The rich infrastructure of board-approved documents that accompanies Cincinnati's overarching CLC policy demonstrates how a series of more specific policies can complement a broad statement of support for community schools.

- **Los Angeles's** 2017 school board resolution, "Embracing Community School Strategies in the Los Angeles Unified School District," is a strong model because it provides a comprehensive definition of community schools as consisting of the four research-based pillars. It also specifies a school design process that includes assessing local community needs, actively engaging community partners, developing a strategic plan, and providing a designated staff member who oversees the planning process and ensures the alignment of solutions to needs. Notably, this process will be overseen by a Community Schools Implementation Team (CSIT) with broad-based representation from school district staff affiliated with academic and

student support departments, labor union representatives, university partners, and representatives from nonprofit or community-based partner agencies that provide services in schools. The CSIT is responsible for crafting a report to the board of education that includes "a proposed implementation procedure by which a school site, having expressed the desire to become a community school, may proceed systematically through a community school transformation process, after undergoing a school/community-based asset and needs assessment." The report will also analyze the optimal number of school sites for an initial community school's cohort, a proposal to "responsibly scale the number of community schools throughout LAUSD, mechanisms to ensure school sites are transparent in decision-making processes and accountable to community concerns, and an assessment of the direct costs to be borne by the district for each community school." Similar, but less detailed, resolutions were passed in Hartford, Houston, and Tulsa.

- The **Pittsburgh** Public Schools Board passed a 2016 policy that lays out a comprehensive vision for community schools, including services to enhance academic and student well-being, family engagement, and parent and community advocacy on behalf of children. The policy establishes a central district community school steering committee to formally designate community schools through an application process. It also outlines elements that the Board "considers essential to a community school," including committed school leadership, site coordination, central district support, broad-based input from the school community regarding the financing and operation of services, coordination and sharing of data on student and school indicators, and secure funding sources. Finally, the policy states that "The Superintendent or his/her designee shall be responsible for preparing administrative regulations necessary to implement this policy." Included in these regulations would be guidance for engaging families, students, and community members when assessing student and community needs, planning the community school, and ongoing oversight of implementation and evaluation; school site decision-making structures; and evaluation of programs and partners. As with some exemplary state policies, this policy did not include funding, which has limited its impact and prompted a new round of advocacy for resources.

County/city resolutions or joint agreements. City councils and city/county government agencies can also play a role in issuing policies supporting community schools. These resolutions are often focused on intergovernmental collaboration, with an emphasis on partnering with the local school district as the entity directly responsible for overseeing community schools. San Pablo, CA, and Multnomah County, OR, issued local government resolutions supporting local community schools.

- **Hartford, CT's** Community Schools (HCS) feature a model that encompasses a broad array of services and interventions for students and parents/families, including the provision of after-school programs. The program began in 2008, with a Hartford Board of Education policy providing a framework to grow community

schools in the district aided by funding from diverse public and private sources. City government reorganized several departments into a new Department of Families, Children, Youth and Recreation to better align services, supports, and opportunities inside and out of school. Seven community schools—each of which is partnered with a lead agency—plans, implements, and sustains services and initiatives centered on the community school model. The initiative is guided by a collaborative of Hartford Public Schools, local funders, city departments, and intermediaries. Hartford Community Schools is currently funded by the Hartford Foundation for Public Giving, Hartford Public Schools, the Office for Youth Services, and the United Way of Central and Northeastern Connecticut. Additional funding sources include the Connecticut State Department of Education, other foundations, federal and state contracts, and in-kind agency contributions. The collaboration among government agencies and community organizations has helped sustain the initiative through five changes in superintendents.

- In **Multnomah County, OR,** the Schools Uniting Neighborhoods (SUN) initiative is a collaboration between several local school districts, the Multnomah County Department of School and Community Partnerships, and Portland's Bureau of Parks & Recreation. Because this effort has been in place for more than 20 years, it offers many valuable lessons about the relationship of policy and leadership to change on the ground. To support this collaboration, the agencies developed an intergovernmental agreement, which includes a program description and the responsibilities of all parties including collaboration, appropriation of funds, and participation in program evaluation efforts. It also documents specific responsibilities for the school district, including appointment of a district liaison to support interagency communication, use of school facilities, transportation, partnership protocols, data sharing, and the responsibilities of district principals at participating school sites. Responsibilities of the county include delivering services by the Department of County Human Services and Mental Health Divisions, Health Department, and Library, appointing a SUN Service System Coordinator, and adhering to regulations for county service providers. Finally, responsibilities of the city include appointing a city liaison to the initiative and adhering to regulations for city service providers. This document provides a concrete example of how local government agencies can work together in supporting students and families with a community schools approach.

- In **San Pablo, CA,** the City Council passed a 2012 resolution authorizing support for full-service community schools. The resolution describes community schools as providing "comprehensive academic social and health services for students, students' family members, and community members that will result in improved educational outcomes for children and youth." It also acknowledges "an initiative to establish Full-Service Community Schools in San Pablo, places where school, city and community stakeholders come together to provide diverse, mutually aligned resources to assist the academic, social, civic and health needs and achievement for

our students, their families and the community." The city manager and youth service program manager coordinate the full-service community schools work, along with a Youth Futures Task Force, focused on addressing youth violence. San Pablo funds its community schools with revenue from a local 10-year sales tax increase. The resolution outlines specific action steps, including amending the City Council Priority Work Plan to include a full-service community school initiative in all San Pablo schools and authorizing support for establishing five local elementary schools as community schools. Five schools, along with Helms Middle School, are now part of a districtwide Full Service Community Schools initiative in the West Contra Costa Unified School District, which includes the city of San Pablo.

Mayoral initiatives. Mayoral support can also help to drive the local implementation of community schools. When this is the case, the mayor may exert influence through budgetary proposals (as in Philadelphia, PA) and by directing city government or local school district resources to support community schools (as in New York City).

- **New York City** provides an example of how community groups and partners can build the political will necessary to advance a community schools strategy districtwide. Building on a multiyear organizing effort to advance community schools, Mayor Bill de Blasio put forth an ambitious community schools initiative, setting a goal of establishing more than 200 community schools by 2017. New York City's Community School Strategic Plan is a comprehensive document published in June of 2014 that lays out the vision for reaching this goal, which was surpassed in the fall of 2017. The guide provides a strong framework for other districts, as it encompasses all four pillars of the community school model and details a funding strategy and a plan for system-building efforts, including establishing a data framework, prioritizing parent and community engagement, and encouraging city agency collaboration. This collaboration is supported by the leadership of the Deputy Mayor for Strategic Policy Initiatives, based in City Hall, the new Department of Education Office of Community Schools, the New York City Children's Cabinet (with data-sharing agreements across all 23 cabinet agencies and mayoral offices), and a Community Schools Advisory Board.

  The initial funding for community schools in 2014 came from repurposing a state-level grant focused on improving attendance, which provided $52 million in funding for 45 community schools.[5] Managed by the United Way of New York City, these community schools partnered with community-based organizations that received, on average, $300,000 in funding per year. Additionally, the Mayor chose to turn all schools in New York City identified for improvement ("renewal schools") into community schools, leveraging federal funding for school improvement efforts. This top-down approach allowed for a rapid scaling up of community schools. However, each school still conducted a needs assessment that allowed staff, families, and community partners to tailor their approach and programming to local needs and interest—a key community school principle that creates an important foundation for

success.

In New York City, the Mayor, not the local school board, is responsible for selecting a Chancellor and setting priorities for the Department of Education. Mayor de Blasio's leadership in setting the vision and developing a strategic plan for implementing community schools at scale can serve as an inspiration for other local leaders.

- In **Philadelphia, PA**, Mayor Jim Kenney has identified community schools as a top priority for his administration's Office of Education. The first cohort of nine community schools started in 2016. A second cohort of three additional schools began in 2017. The Mayor's Office of Education works closely with the local school district to carry out this initiative, in which participating schools have a full-time coordinator who works with the school and community to identify pressing student, family, and community needs and coordinate with service providers and city agencies to bring services into the school to address those needs. A recent Research for Action progress report found that the Mayor's Office of Education was largely "on track" with establishing best practices for a citywide coordinating entity in the first year of the initiative, while site-level progress was largely "on track" and "emerging."

  Mayor Kenney has directed substantial resources to supporting this work, including advocating for passage of a controversial beverage tax, which has been the primary funding source for creating community schools and expanding quality pre-k programs. The Mayor initially pledged to transform 25 city schools into community schools as part of his Five Year Financial and Strategic Plan for Fiscal Years 2018—2022. However, beverage tax litigation slowed down the expansion, and the goal was subsequently downgraded to 20 schools due to shortfalls from the projected revenue. In fiscal year 2017, the community schools initiative served 4,500 children and their families at a current funding level of $3.4 million. This example from Philadelphia shows how mayoral leadership can play an important role in funding and supporting community school initiatives.

Model Local Legislation

The model legislative language proposed in Chapter 8 of this playbook builds on the above examples and is grounded in research-based principles drawn from the Learning Policy Institute and National Education Policy Center report *Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence.* As with the state model, this model local legislation was constructed with best practices in mind.

Implementation Resources

Research shows that effective implementation and fidelity to the pillars increase the success of community schools, with longer operating and better implemented

programs yielding more positive results for students and schools. The following lessons and resources are derived from community schools research, as well as lessons learned from the field, as articulated in the implementation standards developed by the Coalition of Community Schools.

Characteristics of high-quality implementation

Effective implementation requires attention to several factors:

- Pay attention to all four pillars. Understand that each pillar matters and, together, the pillars reinforce each other to yield better results. Moreover, the pillars are integrated into the school day in ways that support the transformation of instruction and learning opportunities, rather than being treated as "wraparound services" that stand apart from the instructional program. For example, after-school programs complement and supplement what happens in the core instructional program, and student supports include schoolwide programs that promote a positive school climate, such as restorative practices.

- Engage in a thoughtful assessment of assets and needs within the school community. This will support higher-quality implementation of the four pillars and lead to a problem-solving approach that includes input from a range of local stakeholders. Doing so represents collaborative leadership and family/community engagement in action and ensures that specific programs and services offered and the mix of community partners align with community needs and desires. For example, such a process might reveal an increase in the number of new immigrants and inform programs that address specific needs for English classes or help navigating workforce training opportunities.

- Understand that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to community schools. Each community school should reflect the needs—and strengths—of the school itself and the broader community. Community schools are most effective as a school reform strategy when students, families, teachers, school staff, administrators, and partners are deeply involved in the design and implementation process.

- Align resources from multiple agencies and organizations toward a set of shared indicators and results. Efficiently and effectively using school and community resources will help support student learning and development. Allocate sufficient time for the planning process to: 1) ensure broad-based input about community needs; 2) identify resources to address those needs; and 3) match students and families with appropriate supports, services, and opportunities.

- Allow sufficient time (3-5 years, according to research) for these partnerships to build and take hold. Leading indicators, such as improved attendance and family involvement, are helpful in measuring initial progress toward desired outcomes. It

will likely take longer for improved academic outcomes, such as higher test scores and graduation rates, to emerge.

Potential Implementation Challenges

Successfully implementing community schools is not simple or easy. But good knowledge exists about how to speed implementation while avoiding common pitfalls. The following cautions should be considered:

- Align the pillars with teaching and learning goals. Avoid undermining the potential effectiveness of community schools by focusing only on addressing out-of-school harms/barriers to learning. While these supports are critical to student success, they must be tightly linked to a comprehensive strategy for addressing in-school factors, especially improvements to teaching, learning, and school climate.
- Leverage the expertise and assets of the school community. At times, students, educators, and families in low-income communities are seen through a deficit lens. This can both foster a "service" mentality (an over-emphasis on the "services" provided by outsiders to needy families and students) and undermine a culture of community with shared responsibility and diverse assets to support learning and youth development. Rather, value and capitalize on such assets as local knowledge, cultural knowledge and competency, and knowledge of other languages.
- Support and encourage a community-driven process. As states and districts seek to implement high-quality community schools at scale, they may be tempted to manage the process by developing prescriptive plans that don't allow for the local customization and/or ownership required for the schools to be effective.
- Recognize that leadership culture and habits matter; implementing community school concepts requires more than good intention. Most school and district leaders have not received training or support in key elements of community schools, such as developing collaborative leadership practices and building respectful and trusting partnerships with families and communities. To be successful, implementation should include guidance, support, opportunities for professional development, and a culture of continuous improvement and mutual accountability.
- Support a careful and inclusive planning process that begins with "the willing" and provides frequent opportunities for meaningful family/community engagement and collaborative leadership. For maximum success, scale the community schools approach slowly, starting with communities where students, families, teachers, and school staff are asking for the change to occur, and invest adequate resources, including a full-time community school director at each site, and make technical assistance available. Another approach is to have schools apply to become community schools, demonstrating a commitment on the part of the principal and other staff members to participate in trainings and fully engage families in a collaborative planning and implementation process.

Implementation Resources

Chapter 2—Policies that Advance Community Schools

- Building Community Schools: A Guide for Action, National Center for Community Schools
- Community School Standards, Coalition for Community Schools
- Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence, Learning Policy Institute
- Community Schools: A Whole-Child Framework for School Improvement, Coalition for Community Schools
- Community Schools: Problem Solving Machines, Roosevelt Middle School Case Study, Center for Popular Democracy
- Community Schools: Resources, American Federation of Teachers
- Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools, Center for Popular Democracy
- ESSA Resources, Coalition for Community Schools
- Leading with Purpose and Passion: A Guide for Community School Directors, National Center for Community Schools
- Partnerships, Not Pushouts—A Guide for School Board Members: Community Partnerships for Student Success
- Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships, Coalition for Community Schools
- The Six Pillars of Community Schools Toolkit, National Education Association
- Transforming Schools Revitalizing Neighborhoods: A Guide for Resource Coordinators, Cincinnati Public Schools Community Learning Centers
- What the Four Pillars of Community Schools Look Like in Action (Infographic), Learning Policy Institute

Chapter 3—First Pillar: Integrated Student Supports

- Building Community Schools: A Guide for Action, National Center for Community Schools
- Community School Standards, Coalition for Community Schools
- Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence, Learning Policy Institute
- Leading with Purpose and Passion: A Guide for Community School Directors, National Center for Community Schools
- Making the Grade: A Progress Report and Next Steps for Integrated Student Supports, Child Trends
- National Evaluation: Five-Year Summary Report, Communities in Schools
- Policy Brief: Principles of Effective Practice for Integrated Student Support, City Connects, City Connects
- Wraparound Replication Cookbook, School and Main Institute

Chapter 4—Second Pillar: Expanded and Enriched Learning Time and Opportunities

- Continuous Quality Improvement in Afterschool Settings: Impact Findings from the Youth Program Quality Intervention Study (Executive Summary), David P. Weikart Center for Youth Program Quality
- Expanded Learning Time: Expectations for Implementation, Mass 2020 and Massachusetts Department of Elementary and Secondary Education
- Financing Expanded Learning Time in Schools: A Look at Five District Expanded-Time Schools, National Center on Time & Learning and The Wallace Foundation
- Governance Structures for City Afterschool Systems: Three Models, The Wallace Foundation
- Growing Together, Learning Together: What Cities Have Discovered About Building Afterschool Systems, The Wallace Foundation
- Quality Standards for Expanded Learning, California Department of Education, Afterschool Division, and the California Afterschool Network
- Time Well Spent, Partnership for Children and Youth

Chapter 5—Third Pillar: Active Family and Community Engagement

- A Dual Capacity-Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, Partners in Education
- Best Practices in Local Control Funding Formula (LCFF) Implementation: Developing a Culture of Authentic Parent Engagement and Shared Decision Making, Californians for Justice
- Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools, Center for Popular Democracy
- Early Childhood Community School Linkages: Advancing a Theory of Change, John W. Gardner Center for Youth and Their Communities and Institute for Educational Leadership
- Effective Family and Community Engagement Strategies, Hanover Research for LEAD Connecticut
- Engaging Families and Community Partners for Equity and Excellence: 2015–2020 Action Plan, Hartford Public Schools
- Family Engagement Toolkit, Oakland Unified School District
- Handbook on Family and Community Engagement, School Community Network
- Keeping Students at the Heart of LCFF: Student Engagement in Year One of LCFF, Californians for Justice
- Patterns of Practice: Case Studies of Early Childhood Education & Family Engagement in Community Schools, Institute for Educational Leadership
- The Head Start Parent, Family, and Community Engagement (PFCE) Framework; Promoting Family Engagement and School Readiness from Prenatal to Age 8, U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, Office of Head Start
- Tools and Resources for Schools, Albuquerque Public Schools
- Transforming Schools Revitalizing Neighborhoods: A Guide for Resource Coordinators, Cincinnati Public Schools Community Learning Centers

Chapter 6—Fourth Pillar: Collaborative Leadership and Practices

- Building a Leadership Team, Coalition for Community Schools
- Community School Standards, Coalition for Community Schools
- Family Leadership, Governance and Site Planning Toolkit, San Francisco Unified School District
- National Standards for Family School Partnerships, National PTA
- Partnership Effectiveness Continuum: A research-based tool for developing, assessing, and improving partnerships, Education Development Center
- Principles of Effective Partnerships, Center for Community Schools
- Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy, Coalition for Community Schools
- School Leadership Teams Overview, New York City Department of Education
- Shared Use for Schools (Multiple Resources), Safe Routes to School National Partnership

About The Partnership for the Future of Learning

The **Partnership for the Future of Learning** is a national network dedicated to an affirmative, equitable, evidence-based vision of a racially-just remodeled public education system. This playbook makes available research and tools to create a future of learning together, for all of us.

[1] Rogers, J. S. (1998). Community schools: Lessons from the past and present; Kirp, D. L. (2011) Kids first: Five big ideas for transforming children's lives. New York: Public Affairs. Note that while this kind of help is especially beneficial to poor children, who otherwise do without, middle-class families would also benefit from the after-school and summer activities; what's more, having a clinic on the premises means that a parent doesn't have to leave work for their child's doctor's appointments.
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[6] Child Trends describes integrated student supports this way: "Integrated student supports (ISS) are a school-based approach to promoting students' academic success by developing or securing and coordinating supports that target academic and nonacademic barriers to achievement. These resources range from traditional tutoring and mentoring to provision of a broader set of supports, such as linking students to physical and mental health care and connecting their families to parent education, family counseling, food banks, or employment assistance. While ISS programs take many forms, integration is key to the model—both integration of supports to meet individual students' needs and integration of the ISS program into the life of a school." Moore, K. A., & Emig, C. (2014). *Integrated student supports: A summary of the evidence base for policymakers* (white paper) Bethesda, Maryland: Child Trends.
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