Outlining the Community School Model

Introduction

Outlining the Community School Model is a comprehensive course designed to equip educators, administrators, and community leaders with a thorough understanding of the Community School Model and its application. This course aims to provide a detailed exploration of the model's core principles, implementation strategies, and real-life impacts to enhance educational outcomes and community engagement. In the first section, we explore the foundational aspects of the Community School Model. We begin by defining what constitutes a community school and exploring its underlying philosophy. Finally, section one concludes with a comprehensive examination of the impact and outcomes of community schools. This section presents real-life examples and case examples to illustrate how community schools positively influence student achievement, engagement, and overall well-being. By analyzing these outcomes, we will understand the transformative effects of the Community School Model and its potential to foster a supportive and effective educational environment.

Section two introduces seven essential principles, or pillars, of the model, including Integrated Student Supports, Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities, Family and Community Engagement, Collaborative Leadership and Practice, Strong and Proven Curriculum, High-Quality Teaching, and Positive Behavior Practices. Each pillar will be examined in detail, highlighting its characteristics, high-quality implementation practices, and practical applications within a community school setting. The final section of the course focuses on the planning and implementation stages necessary to establish a successful community school system. We will cover the five key stages of building a Community Schools Model, from starting a system and broadening community engagement to designing a collaborative operating framework, implementing systemically, and ensuring sustainability and growth. This section provides a step-by-step guide to creating and maintaining a community school, addressing

common challenges, and leveraging strategies for long-term success. Through this course, you will gain valuable insights into the Community School Model and learn how to effectively apply its principles to create a thriving educational community.

Section 1: Introduction to the Community School Model

1.1 Understanding the Concept of a Community School

The Coalition for Community Schools (2024) defines community schools as "both a place and a set of partnerships between the school and other community resources. Its integrated focus on academics, health and social services, youth and community development along with community engagement leads to improved student learning, stronger families and healthier communities." Community schools are public educational institutions that embrace a holistic approach to learning and student development. This model transforms schools into collaborative environments where educators, families, local community members, and students unite to enhance the conditions for student success and well-being (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). Community schools are tailored to address the specific needs of their communities, drawing on insights from those who are most familiar with the students—namely, families, teachers, and the students themselves. To support the full spectrum of a student's needs, these schools often collaborate with external organizations and local government entities. Their goal is to ensure that students are healthy, well-nourished, safe, and prepared to engage effectively in their learning. Each community school is uniquely tailored to address the specific needs, resources, and priorities of its local context, meaning that no two community schools are exactly the same (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Despite these variations, all community schools share a

foundational commitment to partnership and a reimagining of relationships grounded in trust and respect.

Community schools often operate year-round and extend their hours to serve students and families beyond the traditional school day. These schools function as comprehensive academic and social hubs, where educators, families, and community members collaborate to foster innovative learning and address external challenges like poverty, racism, and violence that may affect students' educational experiences (Partnership for the Future of learning, 2019). They might offer services such as health clinics providing medical and psychological care, or support for specific needs like vision and asthma treatments. By extending school hours and remaining open during summer, community schools provide additional learning opportunities and enrichment activities, which help mitigate summer learning loss. They also engage families as active learners and partners, offering opportunities for skill development such as learning English or preparing for citizenship exams, and supporting community improvement efforts like securing safety measures or addressing local hazards (Partnership for Future Learning).

In community schools, the collaboration between youth, families, and community members results in a holistic approach across five key areas (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023):

1. **Quality Education:** Community schools provide high-quality curricula and instruction, ensuring all students meet rigorous academic standards. They leverage community resources for learning and involve students in addressing local issues.

2. **Youth Development:** These schools foster the growth of students' skills and talents, helping them build positive relationships with peers and adults while contributing to their communities.

3. **Family Support:** Services such as family resource centers, early childhood programs, and coordinated health, mental health, and social services are designed to enhance family life by building on individual strengths.

4. **Family and Community Engagement:** Active participation from family members and residents in the design, support, monitoring, and advocacy of school and community programs is encouraged.

5. **Community Development:** Community schools aim to strengthen local leadership, social networks, economic stability, and physical infrastructure, ensuring a comprehensive approach to community improvement.

Effective community schools integrate these services to achieve specific outcomes, aligning efforts across these areas for maximum impact.

Historical Context and Evolution

Community schools have a rich and evolving history, deeply rooted in the vision of education reformers and social advocates. Their story begins over a century ago with John Dewey's influential 1902 speech to the National Education Association. Dewey advocated for a holistic approach to education that extended beyond traditional classroom walls, envisioning schools as community hubs that engaged educators, families, and local resources to support student development and well-being (Quinn and Blank, 2024). In the early 20th century, as urbanization and industrialization reshaped American cities, educators and reformers sought to transform schools into "social centers" that could address the needs of urban communities (Quinn and Blank). Schools were envisioned as places where a wide array of social and civic needs could be met, from promoting community values to providing basic services. The Great Depression of the 1930s brought a new wave of community schooling efforts. Social reformers, drawing on Dewey's ideas, saw schools as crucial in addressing economic and social upheaval. Schools like

Franklin High in East Harlem emerged as community centers, supporting both educational and social needs while fostering democratic engagement and community solidarity.

The 1960s and 1970s saw a resurgence of interest in community schools, driven by movements for racial equality and social justice. Advocates sought to use community schools as a means to improve education in underfunded and segregated urban schools, emphasizing community control and participation as tools to address educational inequities (Quinn and Blank, 2024). Today's community schools, which began to gain traction in the early 1990s with models like the Beacon Schools in New York City and the Children's Aid Community Schools, build on this historical foundation. Modern community schools focus on forming strong partnerships with local organizations and extending their services beyond traditional school hours. They aim to meet a wide range of student and family needs, from health services to enrichment programs, while addressing systemic barriers such as poverty and discrimination. Although community schools cannot single-handedly resolve all issues facing disadvantaged neighborhoods, they continue to provide essential resources and support that foster student success and community well-being. By connecting schools with local assets and engaging families as active partners, community schools strive to create equitable educational opportunities and strengthen the fabric of their communities (Quinn & Blank).

1.2 Impact and Outcomes of Community Schools

Community schools offer a significant advantage in promoting equity and addressing systemic barriers that limit opportunities for students and families, particularly those based on race and socioeconomic status (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). They act as essential components of an equity strategy

by providing access to resources and offering support tailored to local needs, which helps to level the playing field for students facing challenges due to poverty, discrimination, or other obstacles. These schools function as both academic and social hubs, utilizing community assets—such as local nonprofits, businesses, and cultural institutions—to enhance educational experiences. By extending school hours and integrating services like health clinics or enrichment programs, community schools address out-of-school factors that can undermine student success. This comprehensive approach not only helps bridge the achievement gap but also offers a strong return on investment, with up to $15 in social value for every dollar spent.

Another one of the most prominent outcomes of community schools is improved academic performance. Research indicates that students enrolled in community schools tend to show notable improvements in their academic achievements, attendance, and graduation rates when compared to their peers in traditional school settings (Flynn, 2021). This enhanced academic success can be attributed to the comprehensive support system that community schools provide, integrating academic, social, and emotional resources. Additionally, increased communication and engagement is a key benefit. Families in community school settings experience greater stability and higher levels of involvement with teachers, leading to stronger communication between parents, teachers, and school administrators. Over time, schools adopting community school frameworks show improved engagement among all stakeholders, further contributing to the school's success (Flynn). Community schools also foster improved attitudes toward learning. Students, particularly in elementary and middle school, often develop more positive attitudes about school and demonstrate increased academic confidence, which in turn supports their long-term educational growth (Flynn). Lastly, improved health outcomes are frequently associated with community schools. Families report enhanced access to both physical and mental

health services, including preventive care, for their children. Students who receive school-based mental health services show significant declines in depression symptoms and notable improvements in self-esteem, underscoring the holistic approach of community schools in addressing students' well-being (Flynn).

Real-Life Examples

Gibsonton Elementary School in Gibsonton, Florida, provides a compelling example of how the community school strategy can directly impact student performance. Located in an area economically disadvantaged and left behind in Tampa's rapid growth, Gibsonton serves a predominantly Hispanic student population (58% in 2023) (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). By addressing students' and families' specific needs, the school significantly improved standardized test scores and attendance records. Through outreach efforts, the school expanded on-campus food services, provided backpacks full of supplies, and brought adult education to the community. A campus washer and dryer were also installed to support students' basic needs. Gibsonton responded to a significant student concern about safety by collaborating with the county to install new streetlights and sidewalks around the school, ensuring safer routes to and from campus (In the Public Interest et al.).

To further support academic success, Gibsonton focused on boosting daily attendance by partnering with families and raising awareness about its importance. This resulted in four consecutive years of improved attendance records between 2019 and 2023 (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). The increased attendance led to more instructional time and fostered greater student agency and goal-setting across all grades. Before adopting the community school model, Gibsonton earned a grade of "D" on the Florida State Assessment during the 2017-2018 school year. Just a year later, in 2018-2019, the school raised its grade to a "C." By 2023, Gibsonton was only 14 points away from achieving a "B" rating,

the highest score the school had achieved since the inception of the state assessment system (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). This demonstrates how community school strategies can lead to substantial academic improvements and enhance student success.

Felicitas & Gonzalo Mendez High School in Los Angeles showcases how a community school strategy can significantly improve school safety through the integration of restorative justice practices and culturally relevant curricula (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). Mendez High School, part of the Los Angeles Unified School District (LAUSD), has been operating as a community school since it opened in 2009, though it received formal community school funding in 2020 after the historic LAUSD teacher strike. From its inception, the school realized the importance of community partnerships. As their Community School and Restorative Justice Coordinator explained, "Schools can't do it all," emphasizing the need to connect with community organizations to provide a comprehensive support system for students (In the Public Interest et al.). The school conducts annual needs assessments to tailor services, such as offering a mobile health clinic, arts enrichment classes, and after-school clubs.

Mendez High integrates social justice and culturally sustaining practices into its curricula, offering programs like Advanced Placement for All and Computer Science for All, and its approach to school safety is driven by restorative justice principles (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). In 2019, Mendez students successfully campaigned to end the district's policy of random weapon searches, highlighting the school's commitment to student leadership and social justice. The results of these efforts are impressive: 85% of students reported feeling safe at Mendez in 2019, compared to less than 70% of students nationally. Between 2011 and 2021, the school had zero expulsions. By 2020, the school's graduation rate had reached nearly 90%, with a corresponding 90% college-going rate (In the Public Interest et al.). This underscores how the community school model,

combined with restorative justice, can create a safer, more supportive school environment while simultaneously improving academic outcomes.

Section 1 Key Terms

Academic Performance - The measurable outcomes of students' learning, often evaluated through standardized tests, grades, and graduation rates.

Community School - A public school that forms partnerships with local organizations and resources to provide a comprehensive approach to education, focusing on academics, health, social services, and community engagement to support student success.

Culturally Relevant Curriculum - Educational content that reflects the diverse cultural backgrounds and experiences of students, promoting inclusivity and engagement.

Equity - Fairness in education, ensuring all students have access to the resources and support they need to succeed, regardless of socioeconomic status, race, or other factors.

Local Context - The specific needs, resources, and characteristics of the community surrounding a school, which influence the design and implementation of school programs.

Poverty - A socio-economic condition that affects students' access to basic resources like food, healthcare, and housing, impacting their educational opportunities.

Systemic Barriers - Obstacles that arise from institutional policies, practices, or societal norms, limiting access to resources and opportunities for certain groups.

<u>Zone of Proximal Development</u> - A concept in education that refers to the difference between what a student can do independently and what they can achieve with guidance and support.

Section 1 Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on your understanding of the Community School model. How do you see this holistic approach impacting student success in your school setting?

2. Community schools tailor their programs to local needs. How does your school currently address the specific needs of your students and community? What partnerships could enhance these efforts?

3. Consider the five key areas of the Community School model (quality education, youth development, family support, family and community engagement, community development). In which area does your school excel, and where could it improve?

4. Community schools aim to provide equitable resources to all students. What are some of the systemic barriers in your school that may prevent equal access to resources, and how could you address them?

5. What challenges might your school face in transitioning to a community school model, and how could these be addressed to ensure successful implementation?

Section 1 Activities

1. **Curate Resources for Family Support:** Compile a list of local resources that families at your school could benefit from, such as food banks, housing

assistance, and health services. Share this resource list with your school community.

2. **Interview Community Partners:** Reach out to existing or potential community partners to discuss how they can further support the school. Document potential partnership opportunities and how these align with the school's needs.

3. **Observe a Community School in Action:** If possible, arrange to visit a nearby community school. Take detailed notes on their practices, partnerships, and student outcomes, and reflect on how these could be implemented at your own school.

4. **Engage in Peer Collaboration:** Collaborate with fellow educators to identify the current state of youth development in your school. Brainstorm ways to improve students' relationship-building skills and community involvement.

5. **Examine Historical School Data:** Look at historical academic, attendance, and behavioral data from your school. Identify any areas where community school strategies could have positively impacted these outcomes.

Section 2: Community School Pillars

Community schools are built on the belief that strong connections between educators, families, and local resources are essential for the success of students and their communities. Despite their diverse settings and specific approaches, all community schools share core features known as the "pillars" of community schools. While the Coalition for Community Schools recognizes four pillars, the National Education Association recognizes six pillars that differ slightly; as such, this course will introduce components of both sets (Loyola University Chicago, 2024; National Education Association, 2024):

1. **Integrated Student Supports:** Providing a range of services and resources to meet the academic, health, and social needs of students.

2. **Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities:** Offering additional learning time and enriching opportunities beyond the standard school day to enhance student growth and achievement.

3. **Family and Community Engagement:** Actively involving families and community members in the educational process to foster collaboration and support.

4. **Collaborative Leadership and Practice:** Ensuring shared leadership and practices among educators, families, and community partners to create a cohesive and effective educational environment.

5. **Strong and Proven Curriculum:** Delivering a rigorous, well-rounded academic program that includes challenging and culturally relevant materials across all content areas.

6. **High-Quality Teaching:** Employing fully licensed and skilled teachers who focus on individualized instruction and foster higher-order thinking skills.

7. **Positive Behavior Practices:** Emphasizing positive interactions and restorative discipline to promote a supportive and respectful school climate.

In quality schools, these pillars translate into conditions that foster meaningful learning and development (Maier et al., 2017). These schools are characterized by a challenging curriculum that promotes deeper learning, well-trained and collaborative teachers, and a supportive environment where students feel respected and valued. The focus is on creating a positive school climate, where high expectations and a culture of trust and shared responsibility prevail. Resources are well-utilized, and additional support is provided to meet the diverse needs of students. By establishing these pillars, community schools create an

educational environment where every student has the opportunity to succeed. The comprehensive support systems, expanded learning opportunities, active community involvement, and collaborative leadership all contribute to a high-quality educational experience that addresses both academic and nonacademic needs (Maier et al.). This holistic approach helps to overcome barriers and ensures that all students, regardless of their background, have access to the resources and support they need to thrive.

Pillar 1: Integrated Student Supports

Community schools adopt a holistic, whole-child approach that seamlessly integrates academic learning with social and emotional support. This comprehensive model recognizes that students' academic success is deeply intertwined with their overall well-being (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). By addressing both educational and life challenges, community schools aim to create an environment where students can thrive in all aspects of their lives. At the heart of this pillar is the provision of a broad range of on-site services. These can include medical, dental, and mental health care; academic tutoring; and various family support programs such as job training, housing assistance, and nutrition services. Additionally, community schools often offer conflict resolution training, trauma-informed care, and restorative practices to mitigate conflicts and reduce disciplinary issues like suspensions.

The evidence supporting integrated student supports is compelling. Research shows that students who receive these comprehensive services demonstrate significant improvements in attendance, behavior, social well-being, and academic performance (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Community school directors play a crucial role in this by forging partnerships with local service providers and ensuring that these supports are effectively integrated into the school environment. It's important to note that simply having these supports

available does not automatically make a school a "community school." The true strength of integrated student supports lies in how they are identified, provided, and coordinated. Successful community schools engage students and families in identifying needs and resources, and they work collaboratively with community partners to create a well-coordinated support system (Partnership for the Future of Learning).

The growing economic disparities and challenges faced by many students underscore the need for these supports. With many students experiencing issues such as food and housing insecurity or inadequate health care, community schools provide essential services that help level the playing field (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). By addressing these out-of-school challenges, community schools help ensure that students arrive at school ready to learn and succeed. Public support for integrated student supports is strong, with many voters and educators recognizing the importance of addressing these barriers to learning. As awareness of the impact of poverty on education continues to grow, more districts and states are incorporating these supports into their community school policies, reflecting a broad commitment to creating equitable learning opportunities for all students.

Characteristics of High Quality Implementation

High-quality implementation of Pillar 1, Integrated Student Supports (ISS), hinges on several critical factors. Firstly, it is essential that integrated student supports are closely connected to other community school pillars and the core instructional program of the school (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Effective management of these supports requires a dedicated resource coordinator or community school director who collaborates with a diverse team, including students, parents, teachers, school staff, and community partners. This collaborative approach ensures that integrated supports are not managed in

isolation but are an integral part of the school's operations. Incorporating integrated student supports into the broader context of teaching and learning is crucial. These supports should contribute to a positive school climate where students feel safe and valued, which in turn enhances their ability to benefit from high-quality instruction. Integrating these supports into school improvement plans can help ensure they are effectively realized and contribute to overall educational success (Partnership for the Future of Learning).

It is also important to create a school environment where providers of integrated student supports are seen as central to the educational experience, rather than as supplementary (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). This can be achieved by involving providers in schoolwide professional development and allowing them to lead training sessions on support services for students. This level of integration ensures that support providers are viewed as essential partners in the educational process. The infrastructure for delivering integrated student supports should be aligned across the school, district, and state education departments. It should integrate resources from schools, homes, and community services, including public and non-profit sectors such as housing and health services, as recommended by research from the UCLA Center for Mental Health in Schools (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019).

Effective integrated student supports are designed to enhance the capabilities and assets of students, families, communities, and school teams. They should provide both learning opportunities and service provision, with a focus on measurable indicators of success (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Regular monitoring and the flexibility to adjust plans as needed are key to ensuring that supports meet their objectives. Finally, schools should be given the flexibility to choose and implement services in ways that best meet their needs. Successful schools often adopt a "whatever it takes" attitude, persistently working through challenges to achieve the goals set by their collaborative teams.

Pillar 1 in Action

Integrated student supports are brought to life through practical, impactful initiatives that address both academic and nonacademic barriers to student success. One prominent example of this in action is Communities in Schools (CIS), a national dropout prevention program that has been making a difference for nearly 40 years; CIS operates across 2,300 schools in 25 states, impacting the lives of 1.5 million students (Maier et al., 2017). At its core, CIS integrates a wide array of community resources directly into the school environment. This approach aims to tackle the root causes of student disengagement and dropout rates by providing essential services where students spend most of their day. The services offered by CIS include health screenings, tutoring, food, clothing, and shelter, addressing the comprehensive needs of students and their families.

Each CIS-affiliated school benefits from having a full-time site coordinator. This coordinator, who is an employee of the local CIS affiliate, acts as a vital bridge between the school and the broader community. Their role is crucial in establishing and maintaining relationships with local businesses, social service agencies, health care providers, and volunteer organizations (Maier et al., 2017). The site coordinator conducts thorough needs assessments at the start of the school year, allowing for the development of personalized support plans tailored to the specific needs of students and their families. Collaboration is central to the CIS model. Site coordinators work closely with school support teams and community partners to implement these support plans effectively. This collaboration often includes school-wide initiatives such as clothing or school supply drives, career fairs, and health services, which benefit the entire student body. For students with more intensive needs, the supports are tailored to provide more direct assistance, ensuring that those who need it most receive targeted help. Through its comprehensive approach, CIS exemplifies how integrated student supports can enhance student outcomes by addressing a range of needs

in a coordinated manner. By leveraging community resources and fostering strong partnerships, CIS helps ensure that students are not only academically prepared but also supported in their overall well-being, paving the way for greater success both in and out of the classroom (Maier et al., 2017).

Pillar 2: Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities

Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities (ELT/O) play a crucial role in enhancing educational experiences, especially in schools serving low-income communities. This pillar extends learning beyond the traditional school day, incorporating additional time before and after school, during summer breaks, and other non-school periods (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). By doing so, ELT/O provide students with valuable opportunities to grow academically, socially, emotionally, and physically, complementing the core curriculum rather than replicating it.

ELT/O are designed to broaden students' learning experiences and interests. In many under-resourced schools, the primary focus during regular school hours is limited to subjects tested by high-stakes standardized exams, such as English language arts and mathematics. This narrow focus can restrict students' exposure to other important subjects like social studies, science, art, and physical education. ELT/O address this gap by offering enrichment activities that go beyond the standard curriculum, providing students with opportunities to engage in projects, explore new interests, and receive additional support (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Maier et al. (2017) explains the different types of ELT/O:

1. **Community-Based Learning:** ELT/O often involve partnerships with community organizations that bring unique resources and expertise into schools. These partnerships might include after-school programs, summer camps, and mentorship opportunities that offer hands-on, real-world

learning experiences. Further, teaching and learning in the school integrate advanced content and skills with real-world experiences. The curriculum is closely linked to the local community and reflects students' identities, cultures, and experiences (Community Schools Forward, 2023). This approach encourages meaningful, inquiry-based learning and problem-solving.

2. **Enrichment Activities:** Rather than focusing solely on test preparation, ELT/O allow for a broader range of activities. These can include project-based learning, where students work on complex problems and develop critical thinking skills, or experiential learning, where they engage in real-world tasks. Such activities help foster deeper learning and student engagement.

3. **Additional Support:** ELT/O also provide targeted support for students who need it most. This can include one-on-one tutoring, small group instruction, and personalized mentoring. By extending the learning day, schools can offer more individualized attention and support that might not be possible within the confines of a traditional schedule.

The responsibility for offering these extended and enhanced learning opportunities falls to school staff, external providers, and community partners.

Expanded and enriched learning opportunities are crucial for addressing disparities in educational access and achievement. While affluent communities often provide students with ample academic support and enrichment activities—such as tutoring, sports, arts, and experiential learning camps—these resources are less accessible to students from low-income backgrounds. This unequal access exacerbates achievement gaps between high- and low-income students (Partnership for the Future of Schools, 2019). ELT/O initiatives aim to bridge these gaps by extending learning time and offering supplementary academic and enrichment experiences outside of the regular school day and year. These

opportunities can significantly boost student outcomes, including better attendance, behavior, academic performance, graduation rates, and the development of social and emotional skills. They also help reduce juvenile delinquency (Partnership for the Future of Schools).

Characteristics of High Quality Implementation

High-quality implementation of Pillar 2, Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities (ELT/O), involves several key characteristics that ensure effective integration and impact. At the core of high-quality implementation, expanded learning is fully integrated into the school's operations and priorities (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). District leaders demonstrate a strong commitment to forming effective expanded learning partnerships, while school site leaders make clear that afterschool programs are a key priority. Successful programs consistently monitor attendance and proactively address any issues that may affect student participation. They engage with families to resolve attendance concerns and foster strong relationships with both students and their families, providing support as needed.

An effective staffing structure is also crucial, blending roles across the school day and after-school periods. Many districts employ school day teachers as "academic liaisons" for expanded learning programs, bridging the gap between regular school hours and extended learning opportunities (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). This seamless integration is supported by district policies that promote collaborative staffing, including investments in planning time, supportive union contracts, and appropriate compensation. Teachers, unions, and other school staff actively participate in the development and implementation of expanded learning programs. Professional development is tailored to help educators and partners align regular day programming with out-of-school-time initiatives, fostering consistent practices and shared language. Finally, community

involvement is essential throughout the process. From program design to evaluation and improvement, community participation ensures that expanded learning opportunities are relevant, effective, and continuously refined to meet the needs of students.

Pillar 2 in Action

Pillar 2 is vividly illustrated through the practices of community schools like Young Achievers Math and Science Pilot School (YA) in Boston and the Oakland Unified School District in California (Maier et al., 2017). At YA, the focus is on creating learning experiences that are not only academically rigorous but also deeply relevant to students' lives and communities. YA has developed a strong commitment to integrating social justice themes into its curriculum. Students engage in field-based and community-based learning projects centered around environmental issues. These projects are supported by partnerships with over 50 local organizations, including Boston Harbor National Park and the University of Massachusetts-Boston. These collaborations help YA offer a variety of enriching experiences such as environmental curricula, yearlong retreats, field trips, and research projects. Such partnerships are essential for providing students with meaningful and diverse learning opportunities that extend beyond traditional classroom settings (Maier et al.).

Similarly, in Oakland, the Unified School District uses the Linked Learning initiative to bridge academic instruction with real-world experiences. This district-wide program integrates college preparation with technical education and work-based learning. Students can select from 24 career pathways that combine rigorous academics with hands-on work experiences (Maier et al., 2017). Community organizations and local businesses play a crucial role by offering internships, job shadowing, and volunteer opportunities. These partnerships not only provide practical learning experiences but also support and mentor teachers who guide

students through their career-focused education. This approach ensures that students gain valuable insights and skills relevant to their future careers while benefiting from the expertise and networks of local community partners (Maier et al.).

Pillar 3: Family and Community Engagement

The third pillar of community schools, Active Family and Community Engagement, is vital to building trust, empowering stakeholders, and leveraging local resources to address educational inequities. Community schools actively engage families and community members in ways that create supportive relationships, ensure participation in decision-making, and integrate local expertise into school operations (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). This pillar focuses on fostering a partnership between educators, families, and community members, not just as participants, but as essential contributors to the school's vision for student success. Family and community engagement in community schools is a continuous process that begins with simple outreach and grows into shared leadership. Schools establish systems, structures, and support to ensure this engagement is meaningful and sustainable. Families feel welcomed and valued, while educators understand that strong relationships with these stakeholders enhance the learning environment. In this model, schools are positioned to serve as hubs for the community, offering extended services, activities, and learning opportunities, which may include staying open during weekends or summers to engage families and provide needed support (Partnership for the Future of Learning).

Research on community schools emphasize the importance of these partnerships, revealing that schools often collaborate with local organizations and volunteers to support students and their families (Maier et al., 2017). In addition, culturally and linguistically relevant communication fosters trust between schools and families,

ensuring that all community members feel included and respected. Leadership teams within these schools frequently include family and community representatives who play active roles in planning and overseeing school activities, reflecting the strong commitment to community ownership of school strategies (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019).

Characteristics of High Quality Implementation

High-quality implementation of Pillar 3, Family and Community Engagement, involves several key practices that ensure effective collaboration and integration. A major challenge is overcoming uncoordinated programs and competing priorities within schools and districts (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). To address this, it is important to enhance the coherence of engagement efforts and provide necessary professional development for teachers and school staff. Successful family and community engagement can lead to shifts in school culture, beliefs, and practices, fostering a more inclusive and supportive environment.

Effective engagement results in staff and families feeling more comfortable and confident in partnership activities, promoting cross-cultural understanding. Staff members become committed to working with families, recognizing the value of these partnerships in enhancing student learning (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Families, in turn, view themselves as active partners in their children's education and support their learning more effectively. According to the U.S. Department of Education's Dual Capacity Building Framework for Family-School Partnerships, high-quality implementation requires several characteristics: School and district staff should integrate local community knowledge into school practices and curriculum while demonstrating cultural competency to build trusting relationships with families (Partnership for the Future of Learning). Families must have easy access to information about their children's learning and the workings of the school system.

Consistent, bidirectional communication channels are crucial to keep families informed about their children's progress and school activities. Additionally, providing parents with capacity-building opportunities helps them engage in advocacy and support their children's education (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Strong, cross-cultural networks built on trust and respect are essential. These networks encompass relationships between families and teachers, among parents, and with community agencies and services. Expanding learning opportunities should leverage the knowledge and resources of families and communities, creating rich, hands-on learning experiences both in schools and local neighborhoods. Schools should actively involve families and community members in decision-making processes, including planning, assessments, and evaluations. Integrated student supports should be developed collaboratively with families and community members to ensure they meet needs and facilitate ongoing engagement. Finally, incorporating trusted community organizations into the school environment, managed by a full-time community school director, helps strengthen these connections and supports effective implementation.

Pillar 3 in Action

In Redwood City, CA, the community schools showcase Pillar 3 by offering a variety of programs and services designed to support and engage families. These include leadership coaching for parents, English and computer skills courses, volunteer opportunities, and social events like movie nights (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). These initiatives have successfully increased family participation in schools, which has had a direct impact on school and student outcomes; one study found that over 70% of families with enrolled students participated in these supplemental programs, primarily benefiting the most socioeconomically disadvantaged families (Partnership for the Future of Learning). As a result, students whose families were engaged demonstrated gains in English language development, math, and positive attitudes toward school. These

outcomes are aligned with research from Chicago schools, which also found that strong family and community engagement leads to increased trust between stakeholders, a better school climate, and improved attitudes toward education. These improvements in turn lead to higher student attendance, better academic achievement, and a greater sense of support among students.

Pillar 4: Collaborative Leadership and Practice

Pillar 4: Collaborative Leadership Practices is essential to the success of community schools, serving as the foundational element that binds and strengthens the previous three pillars. Collaborative leadership creates a shared vision and goals through participatory practices, distributing responsibilities among all stakeholders, including teachers, administrators, nonteaching staff, union leaders, families, students, and community partners (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). In many community schools, collaboration is central to the daily operations, evident in practices such as professional learning communities, site-based teams focused on improving school policies and instruction, labor-management collaborations, and teacher development strategies like peer assistance and review (Partnership for the Future of Learning).

A collaborative leadership structure extends beyond school staff to involve families, community members, and local organizations. This inclusive leadership model helps scale community school efforts by incorporating diverse perspectives and expertise. Collaborative practices may include school governance and program planning, where stakeholders assess the school's context, distribute resources, and ensure continuous improvement (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). It also involves the coordination of services and supports, along with systems to maintain positive relationships between school staff and the community. Through these shared leadership practices, community schools create a more cohesive and integrated environment, where all members actively

contribute to the success of students and the school as a whole (Partnership for the Future of Learning).

Characteristics of High Quality Implementation

High-quality implementation of Pillar 4, Collaborative Leadership and Practices, involves several essential elements that enhance stakeholder engagement and support continuous improvement. Effective implementation starts with investments in capacity-building and professional learning opportunities for all involved parties, ensuring they can collaborate effectively and engage in ongoing enhancement of practices (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). A central component of high-quality implementation is the formation of a representative leadership team. This team should include a diverse group of stakeholders such as students, families, teachers, school staff, union representatives, principals, community school directors, community partners, and residents. This team, which may operate at the school, district, or state level, is crucial for guiding collaborative planning, implementation, and oversight.

The leadership team is responsible for developing the school improvement plan, which addresses both academic and nonacademic outcomes. Principals work closely with community school directors, partners, and staff to integrate families and community partners into the school's operations and culture. At every level of decision-making, stakeholders collaborate to create a unified vision and mission focused on student success, driving the planning efforts of educators, families, and community partners (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). Dedicated full-time community school directors play a pivotal role in leading site-based needs and assets assessments, aligning resources, and facilitating communication among partners. They are also integral members of school leadership teams and manage data collection and analysis. School personnel and community partners form working teams that address specific issues identified in the assessment.

Regular analysis of individual student data, participant feedback, and aggregate outcomes by the site leadership team is crucial for evaluating program quality and progress, allowing for data-driven strategies for improvement (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). A successful strategy for strengthening shared ownership among school personnel, families, and community partners is also essential. Celebrating successes and advocating for community schools is a key aspect of maintaining momentum. School personnel, families, unions, community partners, and leaders should publicly recognize achievements and promote the community school model within their organizations and broader communities. At the systems level, collaborative practices engage all initiative-level partners, including school districts, local officials, children's cabinets, community partner organizations, and advocates. Regular meetings among these partners help discuss implementation, share experiences, and plan improvements to policies, practices, and procedures, fostering a cohesive and effective community school system.

Pillar 4 in Action

In Lincoln, NE, collaborative leadership is exemplified through the School Neighborhood Advisory Council (SNAC), which includes a diverse group of stakeholders such as parents, youth, neighborhood residents, educators, community-based organizations, and service providers. These councils reflect the surrounding community's diversity and play a pivotal role in planning, communicating, and overseeing school programs (Partnership for the Future of Learning, 2019). SNAC members make recommendations for specific programs and activities, while the principal and community school director collaborate to make final decisions. This structure ensures that the school's direction aligns with the community's needs and leverages local expertise to improve student outcomes.

Pillar 5: Strong and Proven Curriculum

According to the NEA (2024), a strong and proven curriculum extends beyond mere test preparation, integrating diverse subjects like social studies, foreign languages, the arts, and music. This approach ensures that students acquire both foundational and advanced knowledge across multiple content areas, thereby enriching their learning experiences and broadening their perspectives. In Community Schools, educators deliver a varied academic program designed to meet the diverse needs of students. This curriculum includes rigorous coursework such as Advanced Placement (AP) or International Baccalaureate (IB) programs, and it encompasses a wide range of subjects including physical education and the arts. Additionally, the curriculum is supported by enrichment activities before and after the regular school day, which may include sports, arts, and homework assistance, helping to foster a holistic educational environment.

Moreover, the curriculum is crafted to be culturally relevant and challenging, addressing students' learning needs while encouraging them to understand and appreciate diverse perspectives. It is also designed to support family and community engagement through programs like English-as-a-Second-Language classes, GED preparation, and job training. By focusing on a comprehensive curriculum, Community Schools aim to equip students with critical 21st-century skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication. This holistic approach not only prepares students for academic success but also for meaningful participation in their communities and the broader world (NEA, 2024).

Characteristics of High Quality Implementation

The successful implementation of a strong and proven curriculum in Community Schools requires several key components, all aimed at delivering a broad, enriching, and inclusive academic experience for students. High-quality implementation ensures that the curriculum extends beyond traditional test

preparation and provides students with opportunities to explore a wide range of subjects and learning experiences (NEA, 2024). This variety fosters intellectual curiosity and equips students with both foundational and advanced knowledge that prepares them for future academic and career success. At the core of effective implementation is the commitment to offering rigorous coursework, which challenges students to engage in higher-order thinking and problem-solving. These programs are complemented by other subjects that enrich students' academic lives, ensuring that they gain well-rounded educational experiences. Additionally, the curriculum is designed to be adaptable, responding to the diverse learning needs of students and allowing for differentiated instruction that meets individual academic levels and interests.

Furthermore, high-quality implementation emphasizes cultural relevance. Schools take care to ensure that the curriculum reflects the diverse backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives of the student body. This cultural responsiveness helps create a more inclusive learning environment where students see themselves represented in the material, making the learning process more meaningful and engaging (NEA, 2024). When students can connect their personal experiences to what they are learning, they are more likely to engage deeply with the curriculum and achieve greater academic success.

In addition to offering diverse and challenging coursework, a strong curriculum is designed to help students develop essential 21st-century skills, such as critical thinking, creativity, and effective communication (NEA, 2024). Schools that implement this pillar well create learning environments where students are encouraged to think critically, engage in creative problem-solving, and communicate their ideas clearly. These skills are essential for success not only in academic pursuits but also in the workforce and community participation. To support these goals, schools must also incorporate a range of academic support strategies. These can include in-class interventions, after-school tutoring, and

technology-assisted learning, all aimed at addressing individual learning gaps and ensuring that all students have the support they need to thrive. High-quality implementation requires continuous assessment of student progress and adjustments to the curriculum to meet evolving needs.

Pillar 5 in Action

Lakewood Elementary School in Durham, North Carolina, demonstrates the transformative power of implementing a strong and proven curriculum within the Community Schools framework. Prior to adopting the community school strategy, Lakewood faced significant academic challenges, ranking in the bottom five percent statewide and with only 25% of students proficient in reading (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). However, through intentional engagement with families and the shift to culturally responsive teaching, Lakewood was able to significantly improve its academic performance. The turnaround began in 2018 when Lakewood became one of four schools selected by the Durham Public Schools Board of Education to pilot the community school strategy. The school began with increasing family engagement to foster stronger communication between parents and teachers. This effort led to remarkable increases in participation, with Parent Teacher Association (PTA) attendance growing by 460% and involvement from Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) families increasing by over 1,000% (In the Public Interest et al.).

This heightened family involvement helped inform the school's approach to addressing student learning needs. By tailoring their curriculum to better reflect the diverse cultural backgrounds of their students, Lakewood ensured that lessons resonated more deeply with the student population, making learning more relevant and accessible (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). The results of these changes were significant. During the 2018–2019 school year, Lakewood's state report card grade improved from an "F" to a "C," and the school's measures of

academic growth increased by 16 percentage points. Grade-level proficiency also jumped by 17.6 percentage points. These outcomes underscore how implementing a strong, culturally responsive curriculum within the community school model can directly contribute to improved student achievement (In the Public Interest et al.). By engaging families, listening to community needs, and adapting the curriculum to be more inclusive, Lakewood Elementary showcases the power of a proven curriculum to drive academic success and build stronger connections between schools and their communities.

Pillar 6: High-Quality Teaching

High-quality teaching is a cornerstone of the Community Schools model, playing a crucial role in fostering meaningful and sustainable educational change. According to the NEA (2024), effective teaching is not just about delivering content; it's about transforming how students learn and ensuring that all students receive the support needed to achieve their full potential. In Community Schools, teachers are fully licensed, deeply knowledgeable in their subject areas, and adept in their teaching practices. The focus is on maximizing instructional time for learning rather than test preparation. Educators are committed to identifying individual student needs and designing learning opportunities tailored to address those needs effectively. High-quality teaching in Community Schools involves several key practices (NEA):

- **Focused Instruction:** Teachers center their instruction around higher-order thinking skills such as problem-solving, critical thinking, and reasoning. This approach ensures that students not only acquire essential knowledge but also develop the skills necessary for academic and personal success.

- **Collaborative Planning:** Educators work together to plan lessons, analyze student work, and make necessary adjustments to the curriculum. This

collaborative effort helps in refining teaching strategies and ensuring that they meet the evolving needs of students.

- **Mentorship and Coaching:** Experienced teachers serve as mentors and coaches to novice teachers. This mentorship involves sharing expertise, providing guidance, and collaboratively identifying effective teaching methods. Such collaboration helps in spreading best practices throughout the school and continuously improving instructional quality.

- **Personalized Learning:** The curriculum is designed to be flexible and responsive to individual student needs, interests, and learning styles. Personalized learning strategies include differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and the use of various academic support strategies to address diverse learning needs.

- **Integration with Community Services:** Teachers coordinate with community service partners to ensure that all programs support student learning. This holistic approach helps in aligning educational efforts with broader community resources and support systems.

In addition to these practices, high-quality teaching encompasses the use of various academic support strategies:

- **Classroom-Based Strategies:** Teachers continually adjust their teaching methods based on ongoing assessment of student performance.

- **After-Hours and Vacation-Break Strategies:** Programs such as after-school tutoring and summer bridge programs provide additional learning opportunities outside regular school hours.

- **Technology-Assisted Strategies:** Digital tools and online learning applications are used to enhance understanding and provide additional support.

- **Community-Based Learning:** Instruction connects classroom learning with real-world contexts and community resources.

By focusing on these elements, Community Schools ensure that teaching is not only effective but also transformative, helping students reach high levels of achievement and personal growth (NEA, 2024).

Characteristics of High Quality Implementation

At the core of this pillar is the commitment to developing a teaching workforce that is not only highly qualified but also deeply invested in providing personalized and impactful instruction. Effective implementation begins with ensuring that all teachers are fully licensed and possess strong content knowledge in their subject areas. Beyond this, schools prioritize professional development opportunities that equip educators with the skills needed to engage students in higher-order thinking and foster critical academic skills like problem-solving and reasoning (NEA, 2024). A key feature of high-quality implementation is the emphasis on focused instruction. Teachers in Community Schools design lessons that go beyond rote learning and test preparation, focusing instead on cultivating students' ability to think critically, analyze complex information, and apply knowledge in practical contexts. This instructional approach is further strengthened by a collaborative planning process in which teachers work together to design curriculum, review student performance, and make necessary adjustments. Through this ongoing collaboration, educators ensure that their teaching strategies are responsive to student needs and aligned with the school's academic goals.

Mentorship and coaching are integral components of effective implementation. In Community Schools, experienced teachers serve as mentors and coaches to less experienced colleagues, fostering a culture of continuous improvement. This mentorship allows for the exchange of best practices, offering guidance on effective teaching techniques, and supporting the development of novice teachers

(NEA, 2024). By cultivating these peer-to-peer learning opportunities, schools enhance overall instructional quality and ensure that teaching practices remain adaptive and student-centered. Personalized learning is another hallmark of high-quality implementation. Recognizing that each student learns differently, Community Schools employ differentiated instruction, project-based learning, and flexible curriculum designs to address individual learning styles and needs. Teachers use ongoing assessments to tailor their instruction and provide targeted academic support. This personalized approach ensures that all students, regardless of their starting point, receive the attention and resources they need to succeed academically. Integration with community services further strengthens high-quality teaching. Teachers work closely with community partners to ensure that in-school learning is supported by external resources (NEA, 2024). This integration includes coordinating with after-school programs, tutoring services, and community-based organizations to provide students with a holistic learning experience. By aligning classroom instruction with community services, schools create a support network that extends beyond the school day, offering students additional opportunities for growth and development.

Pillar 6 in Action

Greco Middle School in Tampa provides a compelling example of how high-quality teaching can transform both teacher retention and student outcomes. After identifying that teachers desired greater communication with the administration and more consistent discipline practices, the school used the community school strategy to foster a more supportive and collaborative environment for educators. This intentional focus on the needs of teachers not only improved the school's working conditions but also had a direct impact on its academic performance (In the Public Interest et al., 2024).

Through the community school framework, Greco introduced several key initiatives aimed at enhancing the professional experience of teachers. The school provided more opportunities for collaborative planning, allowing grade-level teachers to work together regularly, share best practices, and address common challenges (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). Additionally, Greco Middle School allocated funds for teacher supplies and offered paid professional development, ensuring that educators had access to the resources and training needed to continuously improve their instructional methods. The results were striking. Teacher retention rates at Greco Middle School nearly doubled, jumping from 48% in the 2021–2022 academic year to 84% in 2022–2023 (In the Public Interest et al.). This dramatic increase in retention meant fewer teachers transferred to other schools within the district, contributing to greater continuity in instruction and stronger relationships with students. With only three teachers transferring out of the school in 2022–2023, compared to more than ten the previous year, the stability among the teaching staff contributed to improved academic outcomes for students (In the Public Interest et al.).

This focus on teacher support and high-quality teaching also led to a measurable improvement in student performance. Greco Middle School's score on Florida's annual academic report card rose from a "D" to a "C" in just one year (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). This progress demonstrates how investing in teachers through professional development, collaboration, and support can lead to better educational outcomes for students. By prioritizing high-quality teaching as part of the community school strategy, Greco Middle School exemplifies how the Community Schools model can drive positive, sustainable change in school culture and student success (In the Public Interest et al.).

Pillar 7: Positive Behavior Practices

Positive Behavior Practices are integral to the Community Schools model, focusing on prevention and fostering a positive school climate to support student success. By prioritizing prevention and constructive discipline, these practices aim to create a learning environment where students feel valued and motivated to succeed. In Community Schools, the emphasis is on (NEA, 2024):

- **Preventing Problem Behavior:** The goal is to prevent negative behaviors before they occur. Effective classroom management and preventive discipline strategies are key to achieving this. By focusing on positive interactions and relationships, educators can address issues proactively and maintain a conducive learning environment.

- **Positive Relationships and Modeling:** Educators model positive behavior through their own actions, demonstrating respect and compassion. This approach helps to build a supportive school community where negative behaviors and truancy are addressed in a way that holds students accountable while reinforcing their value as members of the school community.

- **Restorative Discipline Practices:** Instead of punitive measures like suspension and expulsion, restorative practices such as peer mediation, community service, and conflict resolution are employed. These methods help students learn from their mistakes and contribute to a positive school climate where respect and empathy are central values.

In the pursuit of creating a supportive and effective educational environment, several key concepts are essential to understand. These terms and frameworks help educators and school communities effectively manage behavior, enhance classroom dynamics, and address disciplinary issues in a constructive manner (NEA, 2024).

- **Attendance:** Regular school attendance is crucial for student success. Effective schools engage students and ensure consistent attendance as a foundational element of their approach.

- **Positive Behavioral Interventions & Supports (PBIS):** PBIS is a framework designed to promote appropriate behavior through a structured approach that includes early intervention, a multi-tiered support model, and the use of data to guide decisions. Components of PBIS include:

    - **Common Approach to Discipline:** Establishing a consistent discipline strategy.

    - **Positive Expectations:** Creating and teaching a few clear, positive behavior expectations.

    - **Encouraging and Discouraging Behaviors:** Implementing strategies to encourage positive behaviors and discourage negative ones.

    - **Monitoring and Evaluation:** Regularly assessing the effectiveness of the discipline system.

- **Peer Mediation Program:** This involves students helping other students resolve conflicts in a safe and confidential setting with the aid of trained student mediators.

- **Restorative Justice:** This approach focuses on repairing harm and engaging all stakeholders in the resolution process. It shifts the focus from punishment to learning and community-building.

- **Restorative Practices:** These practices build social capital and discipline through participatory learning and decision-making. Restorative justice is a specific practice within this broader approach.

- **School-to-Prison Pipeline:** This term refers to disciplinary practices that push students out of the educational system and into the juvenile and criminal justice systems. Many of these students face underlying issues such as learning disabilities or socio-economic challenges and would benefit more from educational and counseling support.

- **Zero Tolerance:** Zero-tolerance policies enforce strict, predetermined consequences for rule violations, often leading to suspensions or expulsions. While intended to maintain safety and order, research shows that these policies can be counterproductive, leading to higher dropout rates and disproportionate impacts on marginalized students.

Positive Behavior Practices in Community Schools are about creating an environment where students can thrive academically and socially by focusing on prevention, building positive relationships, and using restorative approaches to discipline.

Characteristics of High Quality Implementation

High-quality implementation of Positive Behavior Practices is essential for fostering a safe, supportive, and respectful learning environment. These practices emphasize the importance of prevention, constructive discipline, and the cultivation of a positive school climate where students are encouraged to thrive both academically and socially. To ensure successful implementation, several key elements must be prioritized, each contributing to a culture of mutual respect, accountability, and personal growth. A fundamental aspect of high-quality implementation is the proactive focus on preventing problem behaviors. This involves creating a positive school climate where students feel valued and understood, reducing the likelihood of negative behaviors occurring in the first place (NEA, 2024). Effective classroom management strategies, paired with preventive discipline techniques, are central to this approach. Educators play a key

role in establishing a positive tone in the classroom by modeling appropriate behavior, reinforcing positive interactions, and promoting respect among students. By addressing potential behavioral issues early, schools can prevent escalation and maintain an environment conducive to learning.

Also central to these preventive strategies is the emphasis on positive relationships and role modeling. Teachers and staff are expected to model the behaviors they wish to see in students, fostering an environment where respect, empathy, and compassion are the norm. This approach strengthens the student-teacher relationship and encourages students to adopt similar behaviors, leading to more meaningful engagement and a sense of belonging within the school community (NEA, 2024). Schools that excel in this area consistently prioritize the development of these relationships, which helps students feel supported and more accountable for their actions. Restorative discipline practices form another core element of high-quality implementation. Unlike punitive approaches, which often alienate students and push them further away from the school environment, restorative practices aim to repair harm and rebuild relationships. Schools that implement these practices successfully use methods such as peer mediation, community service, and conflict resolution to address behavioral issues (NEA). These restorative approaches encourage students to learn from their mistakes, take responsibility for their actions, and reintegrate positively into the school community. Restorative discipline not only addresses the immediate issue but also helps to build a long-term, respectful, and empathetic school culture.

In addition, high-quality implementation involves the use of Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports (PBIS). PBIS provides a structured framework for promoting positive behaviors and addressing challenges through data-driven, tiered interventions (NEA, 2024). Schools following PBIS principles establish clear, positive behavior expectations, consistently reinforce appropriate behaviors, and provide targeted support for students who struggle with behavioral challenges.

Regular monitoring and evaluation are critical to ensure the effectiveness of PBIS, allowing educators to make informed adjustments to interventions as needed. Another essential aspect of positive behavior practices is the involvement of peer mediation programs. These programs empower students to resolve conflicts with the help of trained peer mediators, promoting accountability and collaboration among students. By taking an active role in conflict resolution, students learn valuable communication and problem-solving skills, which contribute to a healthier school climate.

Finally, effective implementation includes a commitment to addressing systemic issues, such as the school-to-prison pipeline and zero-tolerance policies. Schools with high-quality positive behavior practices actively work to dismantle these harmful disciplinary structures by offering alternatives to suspension and expulsion (NEA, 2024). Rather than enforcing strict, predetermined consequences for infractions, schools focus on understanding the underlying causes of behavioral issues, such as socio-economic challenges or learning disabilities, and provide appropriate educational and counseling support.

Pillar 7 in Action

Luther Burbank High School in Sacramento is a shining example of how Positive Behavior Practices can transform a school's culture and climate. For over 30 years, the school has implemented the community school strategy, leading to a campus environment where safety and support are prioritized without the need for school police (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). Beginning in 1992, when the Sacramento City Unified School District started utilizing state funding for community school programs, Luther Burbank adopted a holistic approach to student support through the creation of Student Support Centers. These centers emphasized inclusive decision-making, where students and families played an active role in shaping the school environment. One of the key practices introduced

was community circles, a form of restorative justice that promotes open dialogue, relationship-building, and conflict resolution within the classroom. Community circles gave students a platform to voice concerns and resolve conflicts constructively, fostering a sense of accountability and community (In the Public Interest et al.).

Teachers at Luther Burbank noted the significant impact of restorative justice on student behavior. The restorative process helps students accept responsibility for their actions and equips them with an actionable plan for moving forward in a productive manner, rather than perpetuating cycles of misbehavior followed by punitive responses from the administration (In the Public Interest et al., 2024). This shift from punitive discipline to restorative practices has had a profound impact on creating a positive school climate. The school's approach to behavior also involves hiring community members as school monitors to proactively engage with students, particularly when tensions arise; these monitors help de-escalate potential conflicts and build trust among students (In the Public Interest et al.). When further intervention is needed, the school collaborates closely with students' families to better understand their circumstances and provide appropriate support. This holistic, family-centered approach ensures that students receive both academic and emotional support, addressing the root causes of behavioral issues.

By integrating these Positive Behavior Practices, Luther Burbank High School has created a nurturing environment where students feel respected, valued, and supported. The emphasis on restorative justice, community involvement, and proactive engagement with families has not only enhanced student behavior but also eliminated the need for police presence on campus, demonstrating the power of the Community Schools model to foster safe, supportive learning environments (In the Public Interest et al., 2024).

Section 2 Key Terms

Collaborative Leadership and Practice - Ensuring shared leadership and practices among educators, families, and community partners to create a cohesive and effective educational environment.

Community-Based Learning - Partnerships with community organizations that bring unique resources and expertise into the school, integrating real-world experiences with the curriculum.

Expanded Learning Time and Opportunities (ELT/O) - Additional learning time and enriching opportunities beyond the standard school day to enhance student growth and achievement.

Family and Community Engagement - Actively involving families and community members in the educational process to foster collaboration and support.

High-Quality Teaching - Employing fully licensed and skilled teachers who focus on individualized instruction and foster higher-order thinking skills.

Integrated Student Supports - Providing a range of services and resources to meet the academic, health, and social needs of students.

Positive Behavior Practices - Emphasizing positive interactions and restorative discipline to promote a supportive and respectful school climate.

Restorative Discipline Practices - Approaches such as peer mediation, community service, and conflict resolution that help students learn from their mistakes and contribute to a positive school climate.

Strong and Proven Curriculum - Delivering a rigorous, well-rounded academic program that includes challenging and culturally relevant materials across all content areas.

<u>Zero Tolerance</u> - Policies that enforce strict, predetermined consequences for rule violations, often leading to suspensions or expulsions.

Section 2 Reflection Questions

1. Reflect on your experiences with family and community involvement in your school. What strategies have been effective in fostering strong partnerships, and what areas could benefit from greater engagement?

2. How does your school approach behavior management and discipline? Discuss the effectiveness of these practices in promoting a positive and supportive school climate.

3. How does collaborative leadership manifest in your school? Analyze the effectiveness of current practices and discuss ways to enhance shared decision-making among all stakeholders.

4. How do zero-tolerance policies impact student behavior and school climate? Discuss any experiences or observations related to these policies and their outcomes.

5. Analyze how extended learning opportunities have influenced students' academic and social development in your school. What evidence or observations support this impact?

6. What indicators do you use to assess high-quality teaching in your school? Discuss how these indicators inform instructional practices and professional development.

7. How does your school's curriculum reflect diverse perspectives and meet the needs of all students? Reflect on any adjustments that could be made to improve inclusivity.

8. Reflect on the effectiveness of support systems available in your school. How well do they address students' non-academic needs, such as mental health or family support?

9. Consider the enrichment opportunities available in your school. How might extending learning time beyond the standard school day impact student achievement and engagement?

10. How does your current school provide support for students' academic, health, and social needs? Reflect on any gaps you see in these supports and propose potential improvements.

Section 2 Activities

1. **Support Services Audit:** Review the range of student support services currently available at your school. Identify any gaps or areas for improvement and propose actionable solutions.

2. **Enrichment Opportunities Inventory:** Create an inventory of enrichment activities offered at your school. Evaluate their impact on student engagement and academic performance.

3. **Family Engagement Assessment:** Analyze current family engagement practices in your school. Conduct surveys or interviews with families to gather feedback on their experiences and suggestions for improvement.

4. **Curriculum Review:** Examine the curriculum used at your school to ensure it is rigorous, culturally relevant, and aligns with diverse student needs. Identify areas for potential enhancement.

5. **Teaching Quality Checklist:** Develop a checklist based on the high-quality teaching practices outlined in the section. Use it to evaluate and reflect on your own teaching and that of your colleagues.

6. **Community Partnership Exploration:** Research local community organizations and resources that could enhance learning opportunities for your students. Propose potential partnerships and collaboration ideas.

7. **Behavior Management Training Needs Assessment:** Assess the training needs related to behavior management and positive discipline in your school. Develop a plan for addressing these needs through professional development.

8. **Extended Learning Program Proposal:** Design a proposal for extending learning time and opportunities in your school. Include details on how it will be implemented, monitored, and evaluated.

9. **Zero Tolerance Policy Impact Analysis:** Review your school's discipline and/or zero-tolerance policies and their impact on student outcomes. Consider alternative approaches to discipline and their potential benefits.

10. **Collaborative Leadership Model Evaluation:** Review the current leadership structure at your school. Assess how collaborative practices are implemented and their effectiveness in achieving school goals.

Section 3: Planning and Implementing the Community School Model

To begin this section on building community schools, it's essential to understand that the Community Schools strategy is not simply a model or program. Instead, it represents a comprehensive approach designed to transform education systems

into collaborative, community-wide efforts that are sustainable and inclusive. This strategy is grounded in principles that foster relational trust, shared accountability, continuous learning, and the strategic use of resources to enhance the lives of students, families, and the broader community (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023). Section 3 will begin by discussing the vital role of collaborative leadership in community schools, exploring the connection between different levels of leadership. Lastly, this section will examine the five stages of building a Community Schools model as outlined by the Coalition for Community Schools.

3.1 The Vital Role of Collaborative Leadership

A key feature of this strategy is the emphasis on shared decision-making, where schools, districts, and various stakeholders come together to create a leadership framework that values diverse voices and perspectives. This collaborative leadership is central to building a Community Schools system, as it enables the distribution of ownership and accountability among cross-sector partners. Through these collaborative activities, the voices of youth, families, and community residents are incorporated into the decision-making process, ensuring that the resulting policies and practices align with the specific needs of the community. The Coalition for Community Schools explains the structure of this leadership model which connects different levels of leadership:

1. **Community-wide leadership** includes elected officials and executive officers from various sectors who construct the overarching vision, align policies, and allocate resources to sustain and expand the Community Schools system. This leadership plays a critical role in networking and policy development to ensure that resources are effectively aligned within the community.

2. **School-site leadership** involves families, residents, principals, teachers, community partners, and students who focus on the planning and implementation of initiatives that lead to measurable outcomes for students, families, and the local community. This level of leadership ensures that the actions taken are consistent with the school's academic goals and community needs.

3. **Intermediary leadership** serves as a link between community-wide and school-site leadership. This group manages the coordination, communication, and strategic planning necessary to keep the initiative on track and ensure that community-level actions positively impact students and practitioners at the school level.

This collaborative structure is designed to foster continuous development and coordination, leading to systemic change over time. However, building a sustainable Community Schools system requires ongoing adaptation and engagement, as external factors such as leadership changes and shifts in resources may influence the process. To maintain and grow this system, partners must commit to community engagement, alignment and integration, professional learning, data and evaluation, finance and resource management, and the development of supportive policies and practices (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023).

3.2 Five Stages of Building a Community Schools Model

The Coalition for Community Schools' five stages provide a structured approach to creating, implementing, and sustaining a Community Schools system. This outline is built on the insights and best practices gathered from Community Schools system leaders across the nation, who contributed their feedback. The Coalition's five stage framework is comprised of the following:

1. **Start a System of Community Schools:** Initiating the process by laying the foundational elements necessary for a Community Schools system.

2. **Broaden Community Engagement:** Expanding involvement by engaging more stakeholders within the community.

3. **Design a Collaborative Operating Framework:** Creating a structured, collaborative approach to operating the Community Schools system.

4. **Implement Systemically:** Applying the framework and strategies across the system in a coordinated manner.

5. **Sustain and Grow a Community Schools System:** Ensuring the longevity and expansion of the system by continuously improving and adapting to changing needs.

The framework is designed to be dynamic, with change occurring across all stages, continuously progressing toward building, enhancing, and strengthening a Community Schools system. Each stage builds upon the previous one, with specific milestones designed to propel system-building efforts forward. Along this continuum, a Community Schools system fosters a shared vision and collective values, engaging in collaborative functions throughout its structure. Organizations can engage with the framework at any stage, making it a versatile tool for fostering continuous improvement, sustainability, and the deepening of a Community Schools system (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023).

Stage 1: Start a System of Community Schools

Stage 1 of building a Community Schools system focuses on laying the foundation for effective system-building by enabling a shift in ownership and activity across key functions. These include leadership development, data collection, aligning shared goals, and broadening community engagement. By the end of this stage, a

system should emerge with shared ownership, a motivating shared vision, and the growing capacity to broaden community support (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023). Stage 1 can be broken down into three milestones (Coalition):

1. **Convene Innovators:** The first step in this stage is to gather a small group of innovators—community members, funders, school leaders, policymakers, and participants in similar community systems—who are interested in expanding Community Schools. These innovators work together to assess the community's capacity to launch a successful system-building effort. Their conversations create a learning community where individuals from various sectors engage as equals, sharing their personal, community-based, and organizational knowledge. This collaboration helps to develop a rationale for building a Community Schools system and allows the group to recruit additional partners by leveraging their networks.

2. **Assess Readiness:** Next, the innovators evaluate the community's readiness to build a Community Schools system. This assessment involves examining the community's strategic leadership, existing infrastructure, management functions, resources, and the readiness of people for change. By honestly assessing these factors, the group can identify areas of strength and weakness, which will inform the next steps. If the current political and economic context is not favorable, strategies should be considered to keep interest alive until conditions improve. The findings from this assessment help determine whether the community has sufficient desire and organizational capacity to support a large-scale Community Schools system. To thoroughly evaluate a community's readiness for building a Community Schools system, it's crucial to examine the following areas and formulate questions accordingly:

   o Identifying Needs

- Understanding Demographic Changes

- Evaluating Current Activities

- Recognizing Success

- Assessing Leadership and Support

- Examining Capacity and Commitment

- Analyzing Collaborative Strength

- Reviewing Related Initiatives

- Considering Political and Economic Factors

By exploring these areas through targeted questions, participants can gain a comprehensive understanding of their community's strengths and challenges. This process will equip them with the insights needed to navigate the complexities of establishing a successful Community Schools system.

3. **Compile a Rationale for Community Schools:** If the community is deemed ready, the next step is to create a compelling rationale for establishing a Community Schools system. This rationale should include clear, evidence-based talking points that convey the benefits and necessity of Community Schools, highlighting existing successes and the readiness of both internal and external stakeholders. This case for Community Schools will be used to mobilize support and deepen community knowledge about the initiative.

Throughout Stage 1, it's important to be mindful of potential pitfalls, such as neglecting to assess the external environment, failing to engage key leaders of other collaborative efforts, overlooking existing successful initiatives, and undervaluing the power of a strong vision for mobilizing community support.

Progress in this stage is indicated by the successful convening of innovators, a thorough assessment of readiness, and the development of a well-articulated rationale for Community Schools (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023).

Stage 2: Broaden Community Engagement

Stage 2 of building a Community Schools system centers on expanding the leadership base and deepening community engagement. This stage is about shifting from a small group of innovators to a broader coalition that can carry the Community Schools vision forward. The focus is on engaging the wider community, developing a shared vision and purpose, and customizing a results-based logic model that will guide the system's growth and development. By the end of this stage, a solid foundation of community ownership and a clear, actionable plan should be in place (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023). Stage 2 can be broken down into three milestones:

1. **Engage Broader Community:** The first milestone in this stage involves expanding the leadership base by engaging a wider group of stakeholders. This includes leveraging existing relationships with peers, engaging school leaders, reaching out to families, and connecting with other collaborative efforts in the community. Innovators should seek out leaders from key institutions, including the business community, and build relational trust within the group. It's essential to acknowledge that not everyone will share the same level of urgency or optimism, so efforts should focus on meeting frequently, sharing leadership responsibilities, visiting existing Community Schools, and fostering honest exploration. Harmony within the group can be nurtured by recognizing and addressing these differences, which helps to create a unified, collaborative effort.

2. **Develop a Shared Vision and Purpose:** Once the broader community is engaged, the next step is to develop a shared vision and purpose for the

Community Schools system. This vision should be the guiding star for the entire initiative, reflecting the community's aspirations for improved quality of life for children, youth, families, and the community as a whole. The vision must be expressed in clear, easy-to-understand language, so it can be embraced by all stakeholders. Crafting this vision is not just an exercise in writing; it's about building consensus around the goals and commitments that will drive the Community Schools system forward. As the vision takes shape, the group transitions from an exploratory phase to a unified system ready to take action.

3. **Customize a Results-Based Logic Model:** The final milestone in Stage 2 involves customizing a results-based logic model that aligns with the shared vision. This logic model specifies the long-term results the Community Schools system aims to achieve, such as improved academic success, healthier students, and more engaged families and communities. Indicators must be developed to measure progress toward these results, ensuring they are comprehensive but manageable. The logic model serves as a roadmap for how inputs—like resources, programs, and partnerships—interact to produce the desired outcomes. This process involves collaboration among partners to identify the activities and resources needed to support the vision, ensuring that everyone is aligned and committed to achieving the system's goals.

The potential pitfalls to avoid in stage 2 include underestimating the importance of using results and indicators to drive the work, failing to develop performance measures for programmatic components, and not being transparent about the work with potential new partners. Progress in this stage is indicated by successful engagement of the broader community, the development of a clear and shared vision, and the creation of a customized results-based logic model that will guide

the Community Schools system's implementation (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023).

Stage 3: Design a Collaborative Operating Framework

Stage 3 of building a Community Schools system focuses on clarifying roles, responsibilities, and accountability mechanisms among participating partners. This stage is about moving from planning to action, ensuring that the right leadership is in place at various levels, and that a strategic rollout of the Community Schools system is effectively coordinated. By the end of this stage, the system should have a clear operating framework that supports sustainable development and expansion (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023). Stage 3 can be broken down into three milestones:

1. **Evaluate Key Functions:** The first milestone in this stage involves evaluating the key functions required for implementing the shared vision of the Community Schools system. This evaluation focuses on clarifying who will do what and by when, within the Collaborative Leadership Structure. Partners need to recognize the value of their participation and agree to support activities within their areas of influence and expertise. A review of the comprehensive benchmark list, organized by function and leadership level, helps partners understand how the organizing framework facilitates their work and ensures that each function is adequately addressed.

2. **Distribute Leadership:** In this milestone, leadership responsibilities are distributed across different levels within the Collaborative Leadership Structure. Decision-making begins to shift from traditional hierarchical practices to a distributed leadership model, known as a "teams of teams" approach. This approach involves community-wide leaders, intermediary leaders, and site leaders, each addressing the same functional areas but with different roles and responsibilities. Community-wide leaders focus on

promoting the vision, policy development, and resource alignment; intermediary leaders handle planning, coordination, and management; and site leaders concentrate on implementation and impact at the school level. Over time, the leadership arrangement may evolve to become more inclusive and integrated, ensuring that all levels of leadership are aligned and working toward the system's goals.

3. **Prepare a Rollout Strategy:** The final milestone in Stage 3 is preparing a rollout strategy for the Community Schools system. This strategy should outline the focus, direction, and scope of site-level expansion, ensuring that the system spreads both geographically and by grade level. The site selection process is crucial and should ensure that prospective Community Schools demonstrate the basic leadership capacity for transformation. Criteria such as the prevalence of poverty, attendance or enrollment trends, disparities in data, student and family engagement, and neighborhood challenges should be considered. Additionally, a working budget should be established, with a focus on key costs like hiring a full-time Community School Coordinator, providing professional learning opportunities, and maintaining flexible funds for innovation. The rollout strategy also includes selecting a lead agency or community partner to hire and supervise the site Coordinator, ensuring that the shared vision is upheld and resources are effectively managed.

Throughout Stage 3, it's important to be aware of potential pitfalls, such as placing too much leadership responsibility on a single individual or organization, neglecting to define benchmarks for partner accountability, or overlooking the importance of clear site selection criteria. Progress in this stage is indicated by the successful evaluation of key functions, the distribution of leadership responsibilities, and the preparation of a comprehensive rollout strategy that

supports the sustainable growth of the Community Schools system (Coalition for Community Schools).

Stage 4: Implement Systemically

Stage 4 of building a Community Schools system focuses on deepening and systematizing the implementation of Community Schools principles across all levels. This stage emphasizes embedding the Community Schools vision into daily practices and policies, aligning key functions, and using data for continuous improvement. By the end of this stage, the system should have a well-established and effective operational framework that supports ongoing refinement and integration of Community Schools principles (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023). Stage 4 can be broken down into three milestones:

1. **Initiate Professional Learning Opportunities:** The first milestone in Stage 4 involves establishing comprehensive professional learning opportunities for all stakeholders involved in the Community Schools system. This includes educators, partners, and leaders who need to apply Community Schools principles to their work. Effective professional learning helps address gaps in expertise, ensures alignment with the Community Schools vision, and builds capacity in areas such as evaluation, community building, and finance. Key actions include providing targeted training, embedding principles into educator preparation programs, and facilitating mentorship and collaborative planning.

2. **Align Key Functions:** The second milestone focuses on ensuring that key functions are aligned with the Community Schools vision and effectively implemented at the site level. Site leaders, including principals and Coordinators, need support to align their work with system goals while addressing local priorities. This involves enabling effective site-level management, ensuring regular communication between site Coordinators

and intermediary staff, and fostering flexibility in addressing local needs while maintaining alignment with system-wide objectives. This alignment is critical for ensuring consistency and coherence in the application of Community Schools principles.

3. **Use Data for Continuous Improvement:** The final milestone in Stage 4 emphasizes the importance of using data to drive continuous improvement across the Community Schools system. This includes collecting and analyzing data to inform decision-making, to help identify areas needing improvement, and to support ongoing refinement of practices. Key actions include maintaining accurate program records, using surveys and questionnaires effectively, and communicating findings to drive improvements. Regular reviews of site performance and system-wide impact help ensure that data-driven insights lead to actionable changes and sustained progress.

Throughout Stage 4, it is crucial to be mindful of potential pitfalls to avoid, such as inadequate communication mechanisms, insufficient professional learning opportunities, and reliance on incomplete or inaccurate data. Progress in this stage is indicated by the successful implementation of professional learning opportunities, effective alignment of key functions, and the use of data to drive continuous improvement and refinement of the Community Schools system (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023).

Stage 5: Sustain and Grow a Community Schools System

Stage 5 of building a Community Schools system focuses on ensuring sustainability, the fourth characteristic of effective systems building. This stage emphasizes the need to monitor environmental and systemic challenges that could impede progress, refresh and strengthen leadership, and engage the community in continuous improvement. The Community Schools system must

also address key sustainability elements, including financial and political capacity, to ensure long-term viability across leadership changes (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023). Stage 5 can be broken down into three milestones:

1. **Expand and Deepen Community Schools:** The first milestone in Stage 5 involves regularly assessing the system across all four characteristics of effective systems building: shared ownership, spread, depth, and sustainability. This evaluation helps identify areas that require attention and includes the following actions:

    - **Shared Ownership:** Ensure that the system's vision and principles are deeply understood and used by all partners to inform decisions. Key leaders should demonstrate sustained participation and commitment, and shared ownership should be evident in the operation of the Collaborative Leadership Structure.

    - **Spread:** Document the impact of the system across partners and programs, and guide state and district-wide scaling efforts. Ensure that professional learning opportunities and communications activities support the flow of individuals experienced in the Community Schools strategy.

    - **Depth:** Build the capacity of students and families to be agents of change. Ensure that professional learning programs incorporate Community Schools principles and that data collection systems support tracking of key indicators and informed policy decisions.

    - **Sustainability:** Engage new organizational and community leaders to keep Community Schools a priority during leadership transitions. Develop a strong constituency and leverage redirected funding for

Community Schools, and ensure partner agencies' policies support collaborative work and resource sharing.

2. **Build Financial Capacity:** The second milestone focuses on building the financial capacity necessary for sustaining the Community Schools system. This involves:

   ○ **Cost Calculation:** Calculate the costs for school-site planning and management, program and service delivery, and supporting the Collaborative Leadership Structure. Use tools like the Community Schools Costing Tool to estimate additional funding needs and plan for long-term resource alignment.

   ○ **Resource Leveraging:** Strategically use existing resources and seek new funding from federal, state, and local sources, including private sector contributions. Engage faith-based institutions, businesses, and civic groups to provide human and social capital, essential for the system's support.

3. **Build Political Capacity:** The final milestone emphasizes building political capacity to support the Community Schools system. This includes:

   ○ **Engaging Stakeholders:** Involve school and community partners, families, and residents in identifying issues, setting priorities, and planning activities. Build support through authentic family and community engagement and ensure that policymakers are informed about the system's impact.

   ○ **Identifying Champions:** Identify and engage champions who can advocate for Community Schools. Recognize their skills, resources, and interests, and motivate them to contribute. Effective communication strategies include using social media, publishing

newsletters, publicizing progress, and connecting with local civic and business groups.

Throughout Stage 5, it is important to avoid common pitfalls such as focusing solely on financial and programmatic aspects without mobilizing community support, failing to critically assess existing resources and results, overlooking the political nature of building a system, and neglecting routine scans to identify areas needing improvement. Progress in this stage is indicated by the successful expansion and deepening of Community Schools, building robust financial and political capacity, and ensuring the system's sustainability across leadership changes (Coalition for Community Schools, 2023).

Section 3 Conclusion

Planning and implementing the Community School model is a comprehensive and dynamic process that demands collaborative leadership, community engagement, and continuous improvement. The five stages outlined by the Coalition for Community Schools provide a clear and structured approach to guide communities through system-building efforts. By convening innovators, assessing readiness, broadening engagement, and designing an operational framework, schools and communities can lay a solid foundation for sustainable transformation. As the system progresses, embedding key functions, aligning resources, and using data for ongoing refinement are crucial for long-term success. The final stage of sustaining and growing the Community School system emphasizes the importance of financial and political capacity, community ownership, and leadership resilience. A well-established Community School system is not only about delivering programs but creating an enduring, adaptable framework that can evolve with the needs of students, families, and the community. By following these stages, stakeholders can ensure that the

Community School model remains a powerful tool for improving education and fostering equity, engagement, and shared success across all levels of the system.

Section 3 Key Terms

<u>Capacity</u> - The ability of a system or organization to achieve its objectives, including the skills, resources, and leadership needed for implementation and sustainability.

<u>Collaborative Leadership</u> - A leadership structure that values diverse voices and perspectives, emphasizing shared decision-making among schools, districts, and stakeholders.

<u>Collaboration</u> - A cooperative effort between multiple stakeholders, including schools, families, and community partners, working toward a common goal.

<u>Community Engagement</u> - The active involvement of community members in the decision-making process, fostering shared ownership and responsibility.

<u>Continuous Improvement</u> - An ongoing process of using data, feedback, and evaluation to make incremental progress toward system goals.

<u>Financial Capacity</u> - The resources and funding necessary to support the implementation and sustainability of a Community Schools system.

<u>Intermediary Leadership</u> - Leadership that connects and coordinates efforts between community-wide leadership and school-site leadership, ensuring alignment and collaboration.

<u>Logic Model</u> - A framework that outlines the inputs, activities, and outcomes of a program or system, used to guide planning and evaluation.

Resource Leveraging - The strategic use of existing resources and the acquisition of new funding to support the growth and sustainability of a system.

Shared Vision - A common set of goals and values that guide the efforts of all stakeholders in a Community Schools system.

Sustainability - The capacity to maintain and grow a system over time, ensuring that it remains viable and effective despite changes in leadership, funding, or other external factors.

Systemic Change - Transformational change that affects the entire system, including policies, practices, and relationships among stakeholders.

Section 3 Reflection Questions

1. Think about the role of capacity-building in your school. What skills or resources do you feel are lacking when it comes to implementing systemic change, and how might these be developed?

2. Reflect on your experiences with professional learning. How has ongoing professional development influenced your ability to implement broader school-wide initiatives like Community Schools? What areas of professional learning could be expanded to support these efforts?

3. In your school, how effectively is data used for continuous improvement? Are there areas where data could be better utilized to guide decisions and enhance outcomes?

4. What role does intermediary leadership play in your current school system? Reflect on how this type of leadership can support or hinder the alignment of school-site and community-wide goals.

5. Reflect on your understanding of sustainability. What strategies have been most effective in sustaining long-term initiatives at your school, and where do you see the greatest challenges?

6. Consider the logic model approach to planning and evaluation. How might a structured logic model enhance the effectiveness of your school's initiatives, and what would need to be included in such a model?

7. Think about your school's current approach to sustaining initiatives over time. What lessons from past programs could be applied to build long-term sustainability for future initiatives?

8. In what ways is systemic change evident within your school or district? Identify any barriers to systemic change and discuss potential strategies to overcome them.

9. How well does your school involve the broader community in the early stages of planning and decision-making? What could be done to ensure that community voices are heard and integrated from the beginning?

10. Reflect on how a shared vision for student success might differ among various stakeholders in your school. How can these differences be reconciled to build a more unified approach?

Section 3 Activities

1. **Survey Development:** Create a survey to gather input from parents, students, and community members about their current involvement in school initiatives and where they would like to see more collaboration.

2. **Conduct a Needs Assessment:** Perform a needs assessment of your student population to identify any gaps in services or supports. Propose solutions based on the holistic approach of the community school model.

3. **Vision Statement Review:** Review your school's current vision statement. Analyze how well it aligns with the Community Schools model and propose revisions or additions to foster a more collaborative approach.

4. **Stakeholder Meeting Observation:** Attend a school or community meeting where key decisions are made, and observe the level of community involvement. Reflect on how these meetings could be more inclusive and participatory.

5. **Data Utilization Analysis:** Analyze how data is currently used in your school for decision-making. Identify gaps where data could be better used to guide continuous improvement and outcomes.

6. **Logic Model Drafting:** Create a draft logic model for a new initiative you would like to implement in your school. Include key inputs, activities, outputs, and outcomes that align with the Community Schools framework.

7. **Financial Capacity Evaluation:** Evaluate your school's current financial capacity to sustain community-based initiatives. Propose ideas for improving financial sustainability through grants, fundraising, or partnerships.

8. **Family Engagement Audit:** Conduct an audit of your school's family engagement practices. Identify which strategies are most effective and where gaps exist in reaching a wider spectrum of families.

9. **Feedback Loop Design:** Design a feedback loop that gathers continuous input from teachers, students, and community members on ongoing

initiatives. Ensure that feedback is used for iterative improvements and shared decision-making.

10. **Action Plan Creation:** Based on the section's content, create an action plan for implementing one of the Community Schools pillars at your school, including timelines, responsibilities, and evaluation measures.

Course Conclusion

As we conclude the course *Outlining the Community School Model*, it is essential to reflect on the comprehensive journey we have undertaken. This course has equipped learners with a deep understanding of the Community School Model, encompassing its core principles, implementation strategies, and real-life impacts. We began by laying a solid foundation, defining what makes a community school unique and exploring its underlying philosophy. This understanding was further enriched by examining real-life examples, which demonstrated the positive influence of community schools on student achievement, engagement, and overall well-being.

Moving into the second section, examining the seven essential pillars, we gained insights into the multifaceted approach that characterizes successful community schools. The exploration of each pillar highlighted not only the theoretical aspects but also practical applications and high-quality implementation practices. Lastly, we addressed the crucial planning and implementation stages required to establish and sustain a community school. The step-by-step guide provided practical strategies for starting a system, engaging the community, designing a collaborative framework, implementing the model systemically, and ensuring its long-term growth and sustainability. This practical approach aimed to prepare learners for the challenges and opportunities involved in creating a thriving community school. Through this course, you have gained valuable knowledge and

insights that will enable you to effectively apply the Community School Model principles in your own educational context. By integrating these principles, you can contribute to building a supportive and impactful educational environment that fosters student success and community engagement. As you move forward, we hope you will leverage this understanding to drive meaningful change and advance the mission of community schools in your professional practice.

Case Example

Mr. Green, a dedicated elementary school principal in a mid-sized city, has been working to implement the Community School Model to address ongoing challenges at his school. The school serves a diverse student population with varying socioeconomic backgrounds. Despite Mr. Green's commitment to creating a supportive environment, he has encountered several significant obstacles related to fragmented support services and limited community engagement:

- **Fragmented Support Services:** Mr. Green's school had previously struggled with disconnected support services, including academic assistance, health services, and counseling. This lack of coordination resulted in gaps where students did not receive the comprehensive support they needed to thrive. Many students were left without adequate resources to address their diverse needs, impacting their academic and personal development.

- **Limited Community Engagement:** Engaging the local community in school activities and decision-making processes was another significant challenge. Although Mr. Green recognized the value of community involvement, there were insufficient structured opportunities for parents and community members to participate actively. This disconnect led to missed opportunities for leveraging community resources and fostering a collaborative approach to student success.

- **Staff Resistance to Change:** Mr. Green encountered resistance from some staff members who were hesitant to adopt new practices associated with the Community School Model. This resistance stemmed from concerns about additional workload, changes to established routines, and uncertainty about the effectiveness of the new model. The reluctance of some staff to embrace these changes posed a barrier to implementing the model smoothly and uniformly across the school.

- **Insufficient Funding:** Another significant challenge Mr. Green faced was securing adequate funding to support the various components of the Community School Model. The integration of support services, expanded learning opportunities, and community engagement efforts required financial resources that were not readily available. Limited funding constrained Mr. Green's ability to fully implement the model and sustain its initiatives over time.

- **Parental Involvement:** Despite efforts to engage parents, Mr. Green found it challenging to involve them actively in addressing these issues. Some parents were unaware of their children's needs or the resources available at the school, while others were hesitant to get involved, believing that the school should handle the situation independently. This lack of parental involvement further complicated efforts to create a supportive and collaborative school environment.
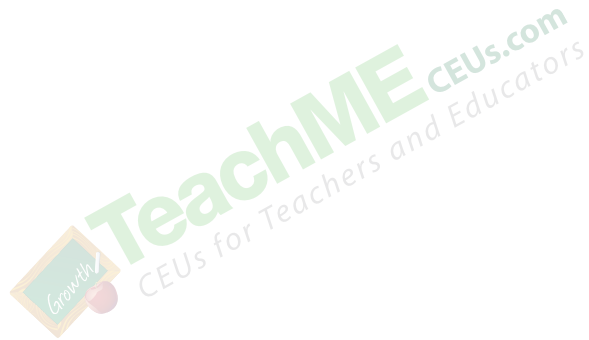
As you analyze this case example, consider how you might address the challenges Mr. Green faced and enhance the implementation of the Community School Model in a similar context.

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