Preparation to Become a Community School:

A Readiness Toolkit

Recommendations for New Mexico Public Schools

desiring to begin a Community Schools planning year or

going into Community Schools implementation year 1.

This guide will also assist schools to prepare for grant applications.

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Preparation to Become a Community School:
A Readiness Toolkit
2023

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The NMPED Community Schools team supports *all* community schools and public schools who want to become a community school. Visit our website to access a plethora of tools, grant applications, and opportunities for support: **Community Schools – New Mexico Public Education Department (state.nm.us)**

Community Schools 101

Community schools are a whole child, **comprehensive strategy** to transform schools into places where **educators, local community members, families, and students work together** to **strengthen conditions** for student learning and healthy development. As partners, they organize in-and-out of school resources, supports, and opportunities so that young people thrive. The New Mexico CS model closely follows research and up-to-date data on outcomes for CS and supports the full **CS strategy** and the **6 Key Practices**.

There are currently **91 community schools** with **grant funding** from NMPED. Including CS without this funding, there are an estimated 150 CS throughout NM. The **NMPED CS team** **supports** all of these community schools and all public schools (including charter schools) that wish to become a community school to support the whole child.

In the landmark case of the Martinez Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit, Judge Sarah Singleton found that there is "an inadequate education system for New Mexican students."[1] In 2022, NM was ranked 50th in the nation for child well-being, including data on factors such as child poverty and school enrollment.[2] New Mexico faces substantial challenges in the attainment of educational quality and child well-being and is developing solutions to meet the requirements of the Martinez Yazzie Consolidated Lawsuit. The Learning Policy Institute (LPI) has conducted research on the unique challenges of NM education and proposed that the community schools strategy offers a possible solution: "Given the high percentage of New Mexico students facing a multitude of nonacademic barriers to learning, such as adverse childhood experiences, poverty, and food insecurity, the community school approach offers education stakeholders a way to bridge schools with the communities they serve to tackle student barriers together."[3]

The evidence and research show that as community schools (CS) are implemented with full fidelity, they "can positively influence a variety of student outcomes and enhance the effectiveness of
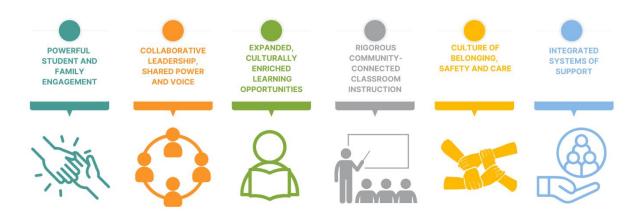
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[1] "Yazzie/Martinez V. State of New Mexico Decision." *Center on Law and Poverty*, 2019.

[2] "Kids Count Places New Mexico 50th for Child Well-being." *New Mexico Voices for Children*, 8 Aug. 2022.

[3] Terrazas, Denise, and Tim Bedeaux. *LESC Hearing Report: The Community School Landscape in New Mexico: Challenges and Recommendations*. Legislative Education Study Committee, June 2019.

schools, particularly those schools serving a high proportion of students and families living in poverty."[4] In a study of community schools with high quality implementation in New York, it was found that there was a significant positive impact on student attendance, graduation rates, students' sense of connectedness, reduction in disciplinary incidents, on-time grade progression, math achievement, and credit accumulation.[5]

With the plethora of data and evidence to support the CS strategy, NM law recognized community schools as a strategy to ensure student success and established the CS statute in 2013.[6] In response to the need for support of CS, in 2019, the New Mexico (NM) State Legislature passed an amendment to the Community Schools Statute and added a grant fund for NM community schools (CS) disseminated through NMPED.[6] The NMPED community schools grant fund is not a grant program, but rather a support for whole school transformation and full implementation of the community school strategy.

| POWERFUL STUDENT AND FAMILY ENGAGEMENT | COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP, SHARED POWER AND VOICE | EXPANDED, CULTURALLY ENRICHED LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES | RIGOROUS COMMUNITY-CONNECTED CLASSROOM INSTRUCTION | CULTURE OF BELONGING, SAFETY AND CARE | INTEGRATED SYSTEMS OF SUPPORT |

Key Practices of the Community School Strategy include:

- **Powerful Student and Family Engagement** - (a) values the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds as empowered partners in decision making and encourages partnerships with parents or caregivers to develop and promote a vision for student success; (b) offers courses, activities and services for parents or caregivers and community members; and (c) creates structures and opportunities for shared leadership.[6]
- **Collaborative Leadership, Shared Power and Voice** - practices that build a culture of professional learning, collective trust, shared responsibility and democratic processes using strategies that at a minimum include a site-based leadership team and a community school coordinator.[6]

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[4] "AIR's Community Schools Work | American Institutes for Research." *American Institutes for Research*, 2021
[5] Johnston, William R., Celia J. Gomez, Lisa Sontag-Padilla, Lea Xenakis, and Brent Anderson, Developing Community Schools at Scale: Implementation of the New York City Community Schools Initiative. Santa Monica, CA: RAND Corporation, 2017.
[6] "Community Schools Statute, CH. 22, ART. 32 NMSA 1978

- **Expanded, Culturally Enriched Learning Opportunities** - including before-school, after-school, weekend, summer and year-round programs, that provide additional academic support, enrichment activities and other programs that may be offered in partnership with community-based organizations to enhance academic learning, social skills, emotional skills and life skills and are aligned with the school's curriculum.[6]
- **Rigorous, Community-Connected Classroom Instruction** - community-based curriculum in which the content of instruction is centered on local knowledge, service learning and problem-solving around community issues.[6]
- **Culture of Belonging, Safety and Care** - student behavior, including through the provision of positive discipline practices, restorative practices, and other positive behavioral supports and interventions for students.[7]
- **Integrated Systems of Supports** - address non-academic and out-of-school barriers to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and providers that may include school-based or school-linked health care, case management services and family stability supports coordinated by a community school coordinator and that are culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of students and their families.[6]

Readiness Toolkit

The Readiness Toolkit outlines clear, concrete actions public schools and public charter schools can take to prepare for whole school transformation into a community school. It is recommended that schools preparing for planning or implementation year 1 take these essential steps that will build community, prepare for collaborative leadership, garner district support and prepare students, families, community, school staff and the principal. This Readiness Toolkit will also prepare schools to apply for grant applications, such as the NMPED grant. Research shows there are three key indicators for readiness:

1) **Commitment to the Community School Strategy:**
   a. Community schools are a new way of doing school. Traditional structures of public education are transformed into collaborative, democratic processes with a clear, strategic, evidence-based strategy to see outcomes. These outcomes include positive student, community and staff outcomes.
   b. The community school strategy is founded in collaborative leadership and executed by the school's **site-based leadership team** which acts as the governing body of the school; includes the **principal**, **community school coordinator**, teachers and other key staff, families, students, and multiple community partners (invested and mutually beneficial); and shows documented indicators and outcomes of whole school transformation. The

community school strategy consists of collecting, analyzing, and tracking qualitative and quantitative, new and historical data over time of the school and community (neighborhood and district); and using that data to inform the priorities of the school's **strategic plan** with a detailed **root cause analysis** (that shows multiple root causes), a data-driven **needs assessment** report, and a school and community-based **asset assessment** map/report. The community school strategy is supported by a **systemic** and **sustainable funding plan** that involves blended, braided, and leveraged funding; and leveraging in-kind services and funding from community partners.

c. The two tools in this readiness toolkit include preparation to create a CS Strategic Plan and ways to improve your current plan.

Community School Readiness Toolkit   CS Strategic Plan Report   CS Strategic Plan Template

2) **Commitment to Collaborative Leadership**

a. Collaborative leadership is the foundation for a successful community school. Collaborative leadership, shared power and voice is the inclusion of stakeholders in shared decision making about a CS shared vision, goals and creating participatory practices for distributing responsibilities and leveraging the collective expertise of all participants. This site based leadership team (SBLT) co-create a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility as they make decisions together. Collaborative leadership, shared power and voice provides the relational "glue" that connects and reinforces the other Key Practices, making it foundational and critical for the success of a community school strategy. Such collaborative efforts necessitate honest conversations around identity, power, and turf and can build pride and power among traditionally marginalized communities. Collaborative leadership creates sustainable and humane community school workplaces for CS students, staff and educators.

b. The tools for this indicator include a community wide survey, principal self-assessment, School Board Report, and a Commitment to Collaborative Leadership report.

3) **Commitment to Community School Sustainable Funding**

a. Research shows that the most successful community schools with the greatest outcomes have braided, blended and leveraged funding to support the CS Coordinator position and initiatives. This funding can be from a vast variety of sources including private, public, non-profits, federal funding, community partners, etc. By the end of the 4th year, community schools should have funding for the full implementation of the strategy and the CS Coordinator position outside of NMPED grant funding. The

principles of this financial plan are: sustainable, transformative, collaborative and innovative.

b. The tool for this indicator is a sample proposal budget.

Indicator 1: COMMITMENT TO THE COMMUNITY SCHOOL STRATEGY

Community School Readiness Toolkit

CS Strategic Plan Report

CS Strategic Plan Template

PLANNING YEAR 0: Find a **template** for the CS Strategic Plan Report for schools preparing to enter planning year. The following question can help the school team prepare for the CS Strategy:

Question 1:
Why does the school's leadership team want to become a community school? What is the school leadership teams understanding of the **community school strategy**? What are the team's overall goals for whole school transformation?

Question 2:
Describe the current schools collaborative leadership team or the process the schools leadership team will use to build the **site-based leadership team (SBLT)**. What are the goals for who will sit on this team? How will your school's leadership team ensure equity of voice and collaborative decision making on the SBLT? When will you start meeting and how often?

Question 3:
What does the school's leadership team see is the role of the **community school coordinator**? How will the school prepare for a full-time CS Coordinator?

Question 4:
Who are the community school's current community partners with a **community-based organization**? What is your understanding of a mutually beneficial community partner? What is the process and timeline for creating mutually beneficial partnerships at the community school?

Question 5:
Part 1: What is your community school **financial sustainability plan**, which can include leveraging of federal, state, local, and other spending? What is the leadership team's plan to have the CS Coordinator

position and the CS strategy fully funded outside of the grant seed funding by the end of the grant period (by year 4)?

Part 2: How does your Planning Year Budget Proposal relate to the *planning* of the CS strategy and Family and Community Engagement Initiatives to build the site-based leadership team?

IMPLEMENTATION YEAR 1: The **CS Strategic Plan Template** is for schools who wish to align and strengthen their school plan. The **Community School Strategic Plan** defines the blend of academic and nonacademic supports and resources that will be delivered to students, families and the school to meet the needs and root causes identified in the needs assessment and root cause analysis process in order to create the conditions for students to learn and thrive. This initial CS Strategic Plan is created during the planning year of the community school process.

Indicator 2: COMMITMENT TO COLLABORATIVE LEADERSHIP

Community School Readiness Toolkit   Community Wide Survey   Principal Self-Assessment   School Board Report   Commitment to Collaborative Leadership

PLANNING YEAR 0 AND IMPLEMENTATION YEAR 1: The templates for the Community Wide Survey, Principal Self-Assessment, School Board Report, and Commitment to Collaborative Leadership is found in the **Readiness Toolkit** on the CS Website. The following gives a summary of each of these readiness tools:

- The **Community Wide Survey** content considers the opinions and thoughts of 1) students, 2) staff, 3) families & community partners and complete a 4) **principal self-assessment**. The questions and self-assessment for the surveys are found in the readiness toolkit.
- The **School Board Report** indicates the commitment of the district and school board or state charter school board to support the community school strategy and support community partners. It includes efforts to pass a School Board Resolution to support community schools at the district or charter school level.

- The **Commitment to Collaborative Leadership** indicates that the school Principal, District Superintendent, at least one School Board Member and one school-level Community Partner have read and agree to Collaborative Leadership Commitments in preparation to become a community school. See the readiness toolkit for the signature template.

Indicator 3: COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY SCHOOL SUSTAINABLE FUNDING

Community School Readiness Toolkit

Budget Proposal Template

PLANNING YEAR 0 AND IMPLEMENTATION YEAR 1: The Budget Proposal template allows schools to look at a few different budget samples that include the CS Coordinator, professional development and CS pipeline service providers. School team leaders can create their own mock budget based on the samples provided.

Uses for the Readiness Toolkit

Prepare a school site community school readiness report

- It is suggested that as schools assess their readiness and use the tools in this Readiness Toolkit, the school team create a report on findings. Do not leave any data or information out of the report as it can inform next steps.
- This report can be created by an admin or other staff member.

Prepare for grant applications

- The report created from this toolkit will equip schools to prepare for possible grants.
- There are several grant applications available for schools as they launch the planning year 0 and implementation year 1 of the community school strategy. These include the NMPED Community Schools Grant and the Federal Full-Service Community Schools (FSCS) Grant.

Gather and analyze data

- This pertinent data, especially from the CS strategic plan preparation and the surveys, is valuable information for school teams to analyze. What are the schools strengths in preparation to become a community school? What are areas that the school team can work on to prepare?

Report for other funding

- The completed report can also be used to submit to other funding sources such as businesses, non-profits, community organizations or other funding sources.

APPENDIX OF TERMS

Community school strategy: transforms a school into a place where educators, local community members, families, and students work together to strengthen conditions for student learning and healthy development. As partners, they organize in-and-out of school resources, supports, and opportunities so that young people thrive. The six key practices of the strategy are powerful student and family engagement, collaborative leadership, shared power and voice, expanded, culturally enriched learning opportunities, rigorous community-connected classroom instruction, culture of belonging, safety and care and integrated systems of support.

Community school strategic plan: is created by the SBLT that defines the blend of academic and nonacademic supports and resources that will be delivered to students, families and the school to meet the targeted goals to support whole school transformation. The plan addresses at least one root cause.

Community school: is a locally driven school transformation strategy that promotes child well-being. Community schools leverage and coordinate the resources of the whole community to build a thriving school for students, families, school staff, including educators, and community partners.

Collaborative leadership, shared power and voice: practices that build a culture of professional learning, collective trust and shared responsibility using strategies that at a minimum include a site-based leadership team and a community school coordinator.

Community school coordinator: facilitates alignment of school, family and community resources. CS Coordinator facilitates joint planning with principal and school leadership team; recruitment, facilitation, and convening of partners; collaboration with school staff; facilitate regular partner meetings; data use to determine services and program needs and gaps and recruit partners to fill gaps. Facilitates close communication among the principal, teachers, other school staff, and community partners and records of conversations and meetings between coordinator and team members that include interventions and changes in practice. Regularly scheduled meetings between the principal and coordinator. Facilitates school and partnership data collection, sharing, and analysis. Coordinator facilitates data sharing agreements between school and partners. Data are reviewed regularly by the Site Leadership Team and partners. Coordinator is trained in the use of appropriate data collection and analysis.

Community school principal: A community school principal centers collaborative leadership and democratic processes at the heart of their leadership. The CS principal understands that conversations and goals surrounding academic success must also include academic and nonacademic barriers. The solutions to these challenges and needs are found in collaborative leadership with community partners, families, staff and students. The CS principal understands that the site-based leadership team holds the governing and decision-making body of the community school. The CS principal opens the doors of the school for before, after and summer programs and welcomes community partners into the school. The CS Principal works closely with the CS Coordinator as a joint administrative team to facilitate the SBLT.

Culture of belonging, safety and care: student behavior, including through the provision of positive discipline practices, restorative practices, and other positive behavioral supports and interventions for students.

Community-based organization: that shows a mutually beneficial partnership. A community-based partner is defined as a nonprofit organization, faith- and community-based organization, institution of higher education, healthcare institution, business, advocacy organization, or other community entities.

Expanded, Culturally Enriched Learning Opportunities: including before-school, after-school, weekend, summer and year-round programs, that provide additional academic support, enrichment activities and other programs that may be offered in partnership with community-based organizations to enhance academic learning, social skills, emotional skills and life skills and are aligned with the school's curriculum.

Financial Sustainability: The community schools strategy is built on sustainable funding sources through braided, blended and leveraged funding. This funding can be from a vast variety of sources including private, public, non-profits, federal funding, community partners, etc. By the end of the 4th year, community schools should have funding for the full implementation of the strategy and the CS Coordinator position outside of NMPED grant funding. The principles of this financial plan are: sustainable, transformative, collaborative and innovative.

Integrated Systems of Support: address non-academic and out-of-school barriers to learning through partnerships with social and health service agencies and providers that may include school-based or school-linked health care, case management services and family stability supports coordinated by a community school coordinator and that are culturally and linguistically responsive to the needs of students and their families.

Key Practices: are the process of centering and taking on a shared responsibility for developing the resources and addressing the needs unique to the community, provides an avenue to build strong, trusting relationships, engage in inclusive decision-making, and create a thriving community. It is in this environment that schools are able to generate optimal, "whole child" conditions for student learning and development. This is accomplished through the integrated implementation of the 6 Key Practices: powerful student and family engagement, collaborative leadership, shared power and voice, expanded, culturally enriched learning opportunities, rigorous community-connected classroom instruction, culture of belonging, safety and care and integrated systems of support.
Planning Grant: A one-year, one time planning grant of up to $50,000 for each eligible public school

Powerful student and family engagement: (a) values the experiences of people from diverse backgrounds as empowered partners in decision making and encourages partnerships with parents or caregivers to develop and promote a vision for student success; (b) offers courses, activities and services for parents or caregivers and community members; and (c) creates structures and opportunities for shared leadership.

Rigorous, community-connected classroom instruction: student behavior, including through the provision of positive discipline practices, restorative practices, and other positive behavioral supports and interventions for students.

Root cause analysis: the site-based leadership team conducts a root cause analysis which is a systematic investigation of the contributing and foundational (or "root") causes of the problems that the school and community identify in the needs assessment. In practice, root cause analysis is an approach to problem solving that uses data analysis and discussion to dig deeper than the surface symptoms of a problem to uncover the underlying causes.

Site-based leadership team: co-create a culture of professional learning, collective trust, and shared responsibility as they make decisions together. The SBLT is an interdisciplinary, school-based leadership team that includes the school principal, the community school coordinator, teachers, other school employees, families, community partners, tribal partners, nonprofit organizations, unions and neighboring community residents that guides collaborative planning, implementation and oversight. This team is closely related to the key practice of collaborative leadership, shared power and voice, which provides the relational "glue" that connects and reinforces the other Key Practices, making it foundational and critical for the success of a community school strategy. The SBLT becomes the governing body for the community school, making shared decisions on the strategy and plans for the whole school. The SBLT leadership and capacity should provide long-term sustainability around school goals, decision making and plans (even if there is leadership change at the school such as the principal). Such collaborative efforts necessitate honest conversations around identity, power, and turf and can build pride and power among traditionally marginalized communities.