

Community School Toolbox

These principles and practices help build a successful, sustainable Community School effort.



More resources, including planning guides, are available at savetxschools.org.

Conditions for Learning

1	The school has a core instructional program with qualified teachers, a challenging curriculum, and high standards and expectations for students.
2	Students are motivated and engaged in learning -- both in school and in community settings, during and after school.
3	The basic physical, mental and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.
4	There is mutual respect and effective collaboration among parents, families and school staff.
5	Community engagement, together with school efforts, promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive and respectful and connects students to a broader learning community.

Community School Coordinator

Every Community School has a Community School Coordinator, someone who connects academics with student and family supports. They also recruit and coordinate campus partners, and make sure that the Community School plan is successful.

A Community School Coordinator can be an existing or new staff position, or can come from a nonprofit or community partner.



Shared Leadership

Community Schools are neither top-down nor bottom up in their planning. They operate on a shared leadership model between the principal, teachers and staff, parents, students and community members. Planning is done together, with a high level of transparency. This takes time and practice, but the benefit is a large group of stakeholders taking responsibility for the youth of their community. Go to savetxschools.org for resources on shared leadership in practice.



Coordinated Resources

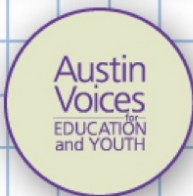
Q: How much does a Community School cost?

A: Community Schools use resources efficiently and leverage services and supports from community partners, bringing in at least \$3 for every \$1 invested. Resources, including funding, services and volunteer efforts are coordinated, with partners working towards shared goals. Local, state and federal funding can also support Community School efforts.



Q: How long does a Community School take to plan?

A: Most efforts can be planned and started in 6-9 months. Good ideas can be implemented immediately during the planning process.



www.savetxschools.org

BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING A COMMUNITY SCHOOL



Spring 2015

Austin Voices for Education and Youth / Save Texas Schools

What is a Community School?

A Community School is 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 and community engagement leads to improved **STUDENT LEARNING, STRONGER FAMILIES** and **HEALTHIER COMMUNITIES**.

School is a Welcoming
Community Hub



Elements of a Community School

- Engaging High-Quality Academic Programs
- College, Career and Service Focus
- Community Partnerships
- Coordinated Supports for Families and Students
- Expanded Learning Opportunities (After School and Summer)
- Strong Early Childhood Programs

Parents, Teachers, Students and
Community Plan Together

The Community School Process



1 Investigate Community Schools

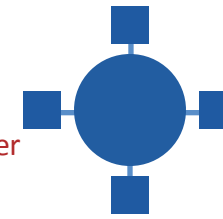
This is a time to form your vision. There are over 5,000 Community Schools across the U.S. Spend time going online, reading about Community Schools, and making site visits if possible. Think about what best practices you'd like to bring to your campus.



Keep in mind that every community has similarities and differences. Don't get trapped into doing a "cookie cutter" approach. Learn from others, and then make your Community School design your own.

2 Form a School Community Partnership Team

Your School Community Partnership Team will lead the Community School planning process. You want to invite members of your current site-based decision making team, as well as other parents, teachers, students, and community members, to take part. You may also invite representatives of local nonprofits and community organizations with whom you have strong relationships.



3 Assess Strengths & Needs of School

A Community School plan is built on strengthening existing programs and systems, as well as filling in gaps, meeting needs and adding new opportunities for your school. It is also about understanding the strengths and needs of your community, and connecting community assets with your campus.



Collecting data for your plan may be done in a number of ways, including community dinners with breakout groups, interviews, focus groups, school and community data, and surveys.

The School Community Partnership Team will examine bring data from all sources together, and form action teams around key areas to write the Community School plan.

4 Write Community School Plan

The Community School Plan includes basic elements found in Campus Improvement Plans (as required by the TEA), along with elements needed to address barriers to learning, fill gaps and strengthen existing programs, and leverage campus and community supports and partners. The plan should include goals, strategies and action steps, along with a plan to obtain and coordinate resources.



5 Find a Lead Partner

For a Community School to be successful, its plan needs to be owned by both the school and the community. Central to this is finding a lead partner, either a nonprofit or community-based organization, that has shown dedication to your campus. This partner will walk with you, recruiting other partners and resources.



Every Community School will also have many other partners who provide services, programs and volunteers. Your lead partner can help you hold regular meetings with your community partners to strengthen planning and coordination.

Finally, your lead partner may provide a staff member to be your Community School Coordinator, or this person may come from existing or new staff.

6 Parents & Teachers/Staff Vote on Plan

After your School Community Partnership Team has developed your Community School plan, and has made sure that a large and diverse representation from your school and community has had opportunities for input, you will ask teachers and parents to vote to approve the plan. At least 75% of each group needs to agree to the plan. This high level of consensus will provide a solid foundation for success.



7 Gain School Board Approval

The final step in becoming a Community School is presenting the plan to your local school board. Ideally, you have worked with school board trustees, as well as school district personnel, throughout the development of your plan. There may be resource requests or other expanded supports that are part of your plan, worked out well in advance of your presentation. With a good process, this final step becomes a celebration of school-community partnership.



← The Path to Becoming a Recognized Community School in Texas →