

# Community School Checklist

Every Community School Plan should address these elements.

- ☐ **Vision and Mission Statement**
- ☐ **Academic Programs**  
Engaging, High-Quality and Challenging
- ☐ **College, Career and Service Focus**
- ☐ **Highly-Qualified and Experienced Teachers**  
Classroom Supports and Professional Development
- ☐ **Effective and Coordinated Systems**  
Attendance, Discipline, Communication, Safety
- ☐ **Coordinated Supports for Students & Families**  
Wraparound Services, Mentoring, Tutoring, Community School Coordinator
- ☐ **Expanded Learning Opportunities**  
After-school, summer and enrichment programs
- ☐ **Early Childhood Programs**  
High-quality pre-school, pre-k and kindergarten
- ☐ **Community Partnerships**  
School is a community hub, leveraging community assets
- ☐ **English Language Learners**  
A variety of approaches to meet needs of students
- ☐ **Students with Special Needs/At-Risk**  
Special ed., other special needs, pregnant and parenting teens, homeless students, etc.
- ☐ **Parent and Community Engagement**  
Adult & parent education, community events, planning
- ☐ **School Climate**  
Welcoming, respectful and safe
- ☐ **Feeder Campuses**  
Good communication, joint planning, transitions
- ☐ **Resource Plan**  
Personnel, programs, facilities, leveraging partners
- ☐ **Use of Data**  
Academic, attendance, behavior, student/family supports
- ☐ **Shared Leadership**  
Parent, teacher/staff, student, community planning

## Forming the School Community Partnership Team

Your School Community Partnership Team should be formed early. Members can include:

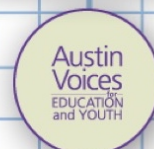
- Your current site-based decision-making team
- Parent, students, teachers and alumni
- Community, faith-based, nonprofit and other supporters
- Business, health, local govt. agencies and higher ed partners

The majority of your members should be parents, students and teachers/staff. Outside partners can also be part of action teams. The team lead can be the principal, school staff member, a parent or a community partner. For more information on School Community Partnership Teams, see our resource page at [savetxschools.org](http://savetxschools.org).

## Community School Resources

- **Coalition for Community Schools**  
[www.communityschools.org](http://www.communityschools.org)
- **Save Texas Schools**  
[www.savetxschools.org](http://www.savetxschools.org)
- **Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets** (1993). Kretzmann and McKnight
- **Partnerships, Not Pushouts** (2014). National School Board Assn. et al.
- **Action Research, 4th ed.** (2013). Ernest Stringer

\* Community School documents at [savetxschools.org](http://savetxschools.org).  
Questions?  
Contact [info@savetxschools.org](mailto:info@savetxschools.org)



## BLUEPRINT FOR BUILDING A COMMUNITY SCHOOL



# PLANNING YOUR COMMUNITY SCHOOL

Spring 2015

Austin Voices for Education and Youth / Save Texas Schools

## How do you make a Community School Plan?

Every school and every community is unique, and your Community School Plan will reflect the assets and challenges of your particular situation. From starting to collect information to presenting the plan to your school board can take 6-9 months. The key for a successful plan is to involve a wide variety of stakeholders in the process, including parents, teachers/staff, students, alumni and community partners.

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



## Collecting Data

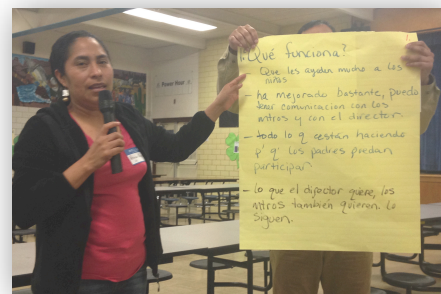
A Community School plan is built on strengthening existing programs and systems, as well as filling in gaps, meeting needs and adding new opportunities for your school. It is also about understanding the strengths and needs of your community, and connecting community assets with your campus.



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

## Key Strategy: Community Planning Dinners

Community planning dinners are a way to bring a large number of stakeholders together to gather data on three key areas: strengths, challenges and resources. Food (which can be provided



by a community partner) helps build a positive atmosphere. Most of the time should be spent in small groups (also called house meetings), which allow for maximum participation. “How to conduct a small group/house meeting” is available at [savetxschools.org](http://savetxschools.org),

or use the QR code. Community planning dinners can also be used when revising your plan or reporting on progress.

## Family Surveys

A Family Survey can be used to find out key information, such as basic needs, desired programs, technology use, access to health services and where children attend school (other than your own). See an example at [savetxschools.org](http://savetxschools.org) or use the QR code.

## Focus Groups

Focus Groups are a way to dig deeper into themes, as well as to make sure all viewpoints are represented. Examples of focus groups might be student leaders, after school providers, local faith-leaders or ELL parents. This is an important way to make sure that **student voice** is well-represented in your plan.

## Academic & Community Data

- Standardized tests, classroom measures, graduation rate
- College readiness, AP course/dual-credit classes
- Attendance, discipline referrals, student mobility
- Campus demographics, ELL, special education, teacher experience/years at campus
- Neighborhood census data (employment, housing, education), access to services/healthcare, safety
- Community assets (businesses, services, institutions/organizations, higher education), local leaders and volunteers

## Reviewing the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP)

The Campus Improvement Plan (CIP) contains information about your school’s academic program, approach to special education, special needs and ELL students. It also deals with parent engagement and possibly other areas, including professional development for teachers. It will serve as a starting point for planning in key areas.

## Teacher/Staff Interviews

Principals, teachers and staff see how things work on a daily basis, from systems to programs to various supports. Some may feel nervous about participating in community meetings, but will be part of a focus group or one-on-one interviews. Surveys are also a way to collect their ideas.

Make sure to include non-classroom staff, such as librarians, coaches, music and art teachers and classified staff.

## Writing the 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, to fill gaps and strengthen existing programs, and to 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.



### Develop Themes

Look for ideas that are repeated by stakeholders. These might be strengths, school/community assets, challenges in the school or community, or gaps in programming and supports. These repeated ideas become themes for your plan.



### Create Action Teams

For each of the themes in your plan, create an action team of three or more people to gather data, research best practices and develop possible action plans.



### Write Draft Plan

Your draft plan needs to include the required elements of the Campus Improvement Plan (CIP), along with other elements. See list on back.



### Create Plan Presentation

Create a multi-lingual summary presentation of your plan to share with stakeholders.

## Recruiting Partners

As you gather input, make sure that current partners, including on-campus partners and those in the community, are included in planning. Where there are particular gaps to be addressed, you may need to bring new partners to the table. Community partners should also be included on action teams.

During the planning process, also consider who could serve as a lead partner. This group will assist the Community School Coordinator as you implement your plan. “The Role of a Lead Partner” is available at [savetxschools.org](http://savetxschools.org), along with other materials on partnerships.

## The Community School Coordinator

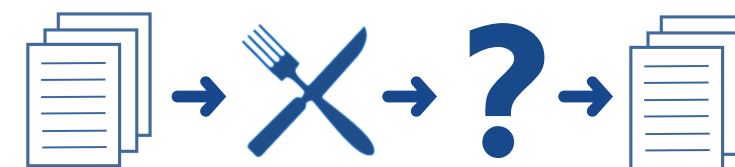
As part of your plan, include a job description for a Community School Coordinator, as well as how you intend to support the position.

Options include repurposing a current position, funding a new position, or having a community partner provide the position. For a sample job description, as well as samples of Community School Plans, go to [savetxschools.org](http://savetxschools.org), or use the QR code.



## Revising the Plan

Once your draft Community School Plan is ready, hold a community event. Have the members of the planning teams present the plan, focusing on the themes. Use small groups to raise questions and refine ideas. All of the comments will your revised plan, which will be voted on by parents, teachers and your school board.



## The Vote

Your Community School Plan needs to be approved by 75% of teachers and 75% of parents, as well as your school board. Prepare a one-page summary of the plan (in multiple languages as needed). Use various means to have parents vote, including community events, door-to-door and mailings/ take home forms. Schedule your school board presentation well in advance.



## Community School Planning Timeline

### GETTING STARTED

- Investigate other Community Schools
- Form School Community Partnership Team

### COLLECTING DATA

- Community Planning Dinners
- Family Surveys
- Academic and Community Data
- Campus Improvement Plan Review
- Teacher and School Staff Interviews
- Focus Groups (Students, Parents, Support Services and Community Partners)

### WRITING THE PLAN

- Develop Themes
- Find a Lead Partner
- Write Draft Plan
- Create Action Teams
- Create Plan Presentation

### REVISING THE PLAN

- Review Plan at Community Dinner
- Write Final Version of Plan