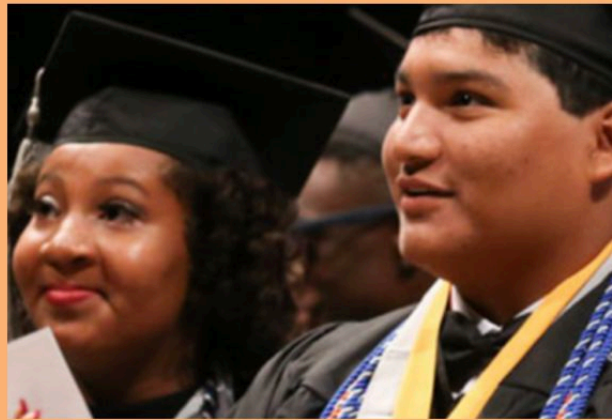


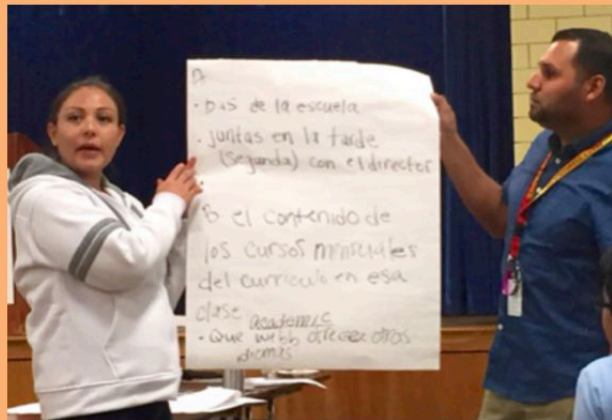
# CAMPAIGN FOR THE FUTURE

STRATEGIC PLAN

2022-2030



**Austin  
Voices** for Education  
and Youth



**EQUITY • OPPORTUNITY • INCLUSION**



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WANT  
COMMUNITY  
in our SCHOOLS

# INTRODUCTION

In 1963, Dr. Martin Luther King wrote the following words as he sat jailed in Birmingham, Alabama:

“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere. We are caught in an inescapable network of mutuality, tied in a single garment of destiny. Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly.”<sup>1</sup>

Almost 50 years later, we need to embrace these words again. Racial injustice remains an open wound, refusing to be ignored. No one in our nation remains untouched by the current pandemic, but Americans of color suffer and die at higher rates than other Americans, often due to poverty. As much as we don't like to see our shortcomings as a society, we are in a moment that will either force us apart or bring us together to make “a more perfect union.”

We can choose to accept that the current state of inequity and injustice is the best we can do, much like a previous generation accepted, defended, and normalized “separate but equal.” Or we can do better.

In a city gifted with world-class universities and colleges (including an HBCU), global tech companies, a thriving economy and a large nonprofit community, why is it that Austin still faces these economic and educational challenges?

- A legacy of racial and economic inequity that has created a divided city, with income and wealth inequality growing by the day.<sup>2</sup>
- An education system that is not able to keep up with both workforce opportunities and the increasing challenges of poverty.
- An identity problem, with the public persona of a progressive, creative and inclusive city clashing with realities felt by many residents.

The current pandemic is accentuating our economic and educational inequities, as unemployment rises and access to technology deepens the educational divide. President John F. Kennedy pointed out, however, that, “When written in Chinese, the word crisis is composed of two characters -- one represents danger, and the other represents opportunity.”<sup>3</sup> In this current crisis, what is our danger and what is our opportunity?

The danger comes from depending solely on the same strategies to address economics, race and education that we have been using for decades, strategies that have often left significant numbers of our youth and families behind. COVID-19 could turn a river of inequity into a flood.

The opportunity before us is the chance to do big things, to ask old questions in new ways, to reframe tired conversations and break through with innovative solutions.

With a strong dose of humility, knowing that many people have worked tirelessly on these issues for decades, we believe that there is a bold strategy that can help us make significant progress towards reducing economic, educational and racial inequities.

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<sup>1</sup> King, M. L. (1994). *Letter from the Birmingham jail*. San Francisco: Harper San Francisco. Originally written April 16, 1963.

<sup>2</sup> Florida, R. and Mellander, C. (February, 2015) *Segregated City: The Geography of Economic Segregation in America's Metros*. Martin Prosperity Institute.; 2018 *State of Texas Children Report*. Center for Public Policy Priorities. These reports show that Austin has remained one of America's most economically segregated cities, and Texas continues to lead the U.S. in both family and child poverty.

<sup>3</sup> Remarks at the Convocation of the United Negro College Fund, Indianapolis, Indiana (April 12, 1959). Archives of the John F. Kennedy Presidential Library and Museum. Retrieved from <https://www.jfklibrary.org/archives/other-resources/john-f-kennedy-speeches/indianapolis-in-19590412>



- It is a strategy that recognizes that the needs of one child, of one family, of one school, and of one community are not the same as another.
- It is a strategy that recognizes and celebrates the uniqueness of each community's history, skills, and culture.
- It is a strategy that opens doors and sets a big table for everyone to speak up and make decisions together as a team.
- It is a strategy that helps ALL children, no matter their circumstances, to graduate ready for college and career.

The strategy is called **“community schools.”** an evidence-based school improvement approach that has shown promise both locally and nationally as a way to reduce educational inequities and transform struggling communities. Community schools combine strong academics with wraparound supports, extended learning time and community partnerships to provide students and families with the educational, health and social services they need to succeed. Community schools change how we work together, moving from competition to collaboration, from risk-averse to solution-focused thinking, from separate programs to connected systems. Organizations like Austin Voices for Education and Youth work as catalysts for community schools, helping schools, partners and communities to develop powerful teams.

This strategic plan will explain the “how” of community schools, but it is important that we emphasize the “why,” **which is that our current system of education is failing too many kids, even as teachers and support staff work to the point of exhaustion.** The testing and accountability culture that grew out of the Reagan-era *A Nation at Risk* report has become a political tool that punishes and blames communities of color, instead of providing schools with the resources they need to succeed.<sup>4</sup> **It is time for a change that will put thousands of Austin’s children and families on pathways to prosperity, as well as full participation in our democracy.** That is our “why.”

**OUR PLAN**

This strategic plan envisions a multi-year “Campaign for the Future” that will expand our existing community schools project (currently with a footprint of 12 schools throughout Austin’s “crescent of poverty”) to create a **“crescent of opportunity,”** which will include 64 schools in Austin’s lower-income neighborhoods from north to south, ensuring more people, from young children to adults, are able to connect with pathways to prosperity. We know that more and better education leads to increased income and generational wealth creation.<sup>5</sup> Therefore, our aim is to ensure that throughout the crescent, all children have access to high-quality, well-funded neighborhood schools AND all families are connected to strategies that reduce barriers to success, including affordable housing, access to healthcare and adequate employment. We believe that these are the keys to changing Austin’s inequitable present into a prosperous and equitable future.

<sup>4</sup>Berliner, David C. (2009). *Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success*. The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice.

<sup>5</sup> Scott Wolla, Ph.D. *Page One Economics: Education, Income and Wealth*. Federal Reserve Bank of St. Louis. January, 2017



## OUR VISION

We envision communities where **ALL YOUNG PEOPLE** have the opportunities and resources necessary to succeed in school from early childhood through post-secondary education and beyond, with rising incomes that create generational wealth.

We envision communities where public schools serve as **COLLABORATIVE HUBS** that bring neighborhoods, families, students, educators, businesses, and community-based organizations together to achieve positive change, defined as community vitality, educational and workforce progress, and educational, social, and economic equity.

## OUR VALUES

### We believe in . . .<sup>6</sup>

- **Shared vision and accountability for results.** The whole community is responsible for creating opportunity and quality public schools for ALL young people. A clear, mutually agreed-upon vision focused on results drives the work of community schools.
- **Strong partnerships.** Partners share resources and expertise and collaborate to design community schools and make them work. Community schools embrace and support a broad range of partners, including government, education, higher ed, business, healthcare, nonprofits, early childhood, community-based, advocacy, labor, youth service, out-of-school time, faith-based, and local volunteers.
- **High expectations for all.** Community schools are organized to support student-centered learning, reducing barriers, improving conditions and increasing opportunities. They are also multi-generational, with high expectations and equitable resources supporting the success of all children and families.
- **Community strengths.** Community schools are strengths-focused, marshaling the assets of the entire community, including the people who live and work there, local organizations, and the campus itself.
- **Respect for diversity.** Community schools know their communities. They develop respect and a strong, positive identity for people of diverse backgrounds and are committed to the welfare of the whole community.
- **Local decision making.** Local stakeholders -including community partners, teachers/staff, parents and youth- make decisions about their own community school strategies, responding to the unique circumstances at their campuses. Youth voice is especially important to changing schools and communities for the better, developing future community leaders.



<sup>6</sup> Modified from the Community School Core Principles developed by the Coalition for Community Schools, a national community schools advocacy organization. [http://www.communityschools.org//resources/part\\_one\\_rationale\\_for\\_a\\_scaled\\_up\\_system\\_of\\_css.aspx](http://www.communityschools.org//resources/part_one_rationale_for_a_scaled_up_system_of_css.aspx)

## THE CHALLENGE

In 1983, the National Commission on Excellence in Education produced a landmark report entitled *A Nation at Risk*, which asserted that American schools were lagging behind other nations, based on falling average SAT scores and supposed gaps on international standardized tests. The commission placed the blame on unmotivated students and unaccountable teachers, and recommended the creation of a testing and accountability system that would force improvements in our education system. The result has been marginal improvements over almost four decades, despite a huge investment in time and resources.



Critics of *A Nation at Risk*, have pointed to questionable data and almost no input by teachers or experts on education in the writing of the report. Of note is that ANAR makes almost no mention of poverty, inequality, and racial discrimination as factors affecting academic achievement. Both common sense and research supports the notion that poverty and race, along with inadequate investments in the education of low-income communities, are significant factors in how children learn and how schools perform.<sup>7</sup> Research shows that U.S. students spend about 1,150 waking hours a year in school versus about 4,700 more waking hours per year in their families and neighborhoods.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, the environment around children is as (or more) influential on their success in school as the school itself.

Dr. David Berliner, professor emeritus at Arizona State University and past president of the *American Educational Research Association*, says:

Inputs to schools matter. As wonderful as some teachers and schools are, most cannot eliminate inequalities that have their roots outside their doors and that influence events within them. The accountability system associated with No Child Left Behind is fatally flawed because it makes schools accountable for achievement without regard for factors over which schools have little control. In part, for this reason, NCLB is failing to show reductions in the achievement gaps on which it is focused. A broader, bolder approach to school improvement is indeed required. It would begin by a reasonable level of societal accountability for children's physical and mental health and safety. At that point, maybe we can sensibly and productively demand that schools be accountable for comparable levels of academic achievement for all America's children.<sup>9</sup>

Before we consider the "broader, bolder approach" that Berliner recommends, it is important to understand the different challenges that schools and communities in the "crescent of opportunity" face compared to other parts of Austin as they work to prepare children for college and career.

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<sup>7</sup> Berliner, David C. (2009). *Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success*. The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice.

<sup>8</sup> National Academy of Education (2009). *Time for Learning: Extended Learning opportunities for students*. White Paper Initiative. Washington, DC.

<sup>9</sup> Berliner, David C. (2009). Dr. Berliner goes on to cite economists who suggest that the "black-white achievement gap can be reduced by 25% just by reducing residential mobility and improving the availability of healthcare for black children and mental health services for caregivers." Our own experience at reducing student mobility in AISD community schools through the use of wraparound supports for families and coordinated partnerships has resulted in gains in academics, enrollment and attendance.



## Challenge #1: Crescent schools deal with complex needs

The chart below compares eight schools in the “crescent of opportunity” to eight non-crescent AISD campuses.

Campus	Economically Disadvantaged	English Language Learners	Special Education	Graduation Rate	Accountability Rating
<b>Crescent Schools (2019)</b>					
Navarro HS	80.4%	52.6%	15.8%	95.9%	B
Northeast HS	91.2%	39.4%	14.2%	99.6%	B
Travis HS	80.9%	36.4%	17.0%	96.3%	B
Dobie MS	97.1%	60.9%	15.5%	-	F
Martin MS	92.6%	33.1%	22.6%	-	F
Webb MS	96.4%	68.1%	16.2%	-	F
Barrington ES	97.3%	77.5%	14.5%	-	F
Widen ES	97.3%	48.9%	22.9%	-	B
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>91.7%</b>	<b>52%</b>	<b>17.3%</b>	<b>97.3%</b>	<b>D+</b>
<b>Non-Crescent Schools (2019)</b>					
Austin HS	21%	5.9%	9.5%	97.3%	A
Anderson HS	21.3%	5.8%	8.6%	98.5%	A
Bowie HS	9.7%	2.2%	9.9%	98.9%	A
Lamar MS	19.4%	6.4%	10.0%	-	B
Murchison MS	19.9%	9.8%	11.0%	-	B
Barton Hills ES	6.0%	3.1%	9.6%	-	B
Casis ES	5.3%	2.7%	8.0%	-	A
Zilker ES	17.7%	3.4%	12.1%	-	A
<b>AVERAGE</b>	<b>15%</b>	<b>4.9%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	<b>98.2%</b>	<b>A-</b>

It is clear from these comparison schools that non-crescent schools have a much lower percentage of economically disadvantaged students (15% vs. 91.7%), English Language Learners (4.9% vs. 52%), and Special Education students (9.8% vs. 17.3%). 4-year graduation rates are similar<sup>10</sup>, but state accountability ratings show significant challenges among crescent campuses compared to non-crescent schools on state tests.

Why do these data points matter? Here are a few points to consider:

- Schools with a higher percentage of economically disadvantaged students will have to provide significantly more supports to students, just to make sure that students are in school every day, ready to learn. These often include wraparound supports for families, as well as expanded tutoring and mentoring services for students.
- Schools with a higher percentage of ELLs will have to offer expanded curriculum and instruction to meet the needs of different levels of ELLs. They will also need more bilingual faculty, as well as administrative and support staff.

<sup>10</sup> Since 2010, when the federal government began requiring states to track dropout rates, there have been significant increases nationwide in graduation rates. While a number of positive factors may in play, there has also been an explosion of credit recovery programs (including in AISD) that have helped students who otherwise would not have graduated. Northeast (formerly Reagan) HS moved from a 48% graduation rate in 2008 to virtually 100% of students graduating in four years. The jury is still out on the quality and use of credit recovery programs, most of which use online learning. Increases in graduation rates at crescent high schools can also be credited to the use of community school wraparound supports that have helped many students stay in school, while juggling real-world financial demands.

- Schools with a higher percentage of special education students will also need more support staff, as well as a lower student to teacher ratio. They will also need to provide assessment and evaluation services, and will have to dedicate administrators to managing the documentation and communication with parents mandated by law.
- All of these needs mean that low-income schools have more supports and services to manage, more staff and partner organizations to coordinate with, and more students entering and exiting the campus each year that need to be tracked.

Unfortunately, resources are not unlimited to support the needs of crescent campuses. These schools also face other challenges, including faculty and administrator turnover, lack of technology in the home, increased need for out-of-school time programs, and more. One particular factor that can vastly increase the complexity at a crescent campus is student mobility.

**Student Mobility as an Equity Issue**

One of the key differences between low-income communities and more affluent communities is mobility. Typically, low-income communities are more fluid and dynamic, with a higher percentage of renters, while affluent communities are more static, with students moving with their peers along the educational pipeline. Mobility as a factor in academic performance can be seen in data from low-income school districts in south Texas, where mobility (and teacher turnover) is low, perhaps due to strong cultural and family ties. These districts score higher on state tests than comparison low-income districts across the state. This makes sense when you think about the challenges at a high-mobility school. Students enter (and re-enter) mid-year, needing extra supports and assessment. If you have a mobility rate of 25% and a school population of 600, this means that 150 students will be entering your school mid-year. If 50% of those are English language learners (75 students) and 16% are need special education services (26 students), the school will need systems in place to quickly integrate newcomers into the school. Designing these additional student and family support systems can be complex and demand extra resources. The investment in reducing mobility is vital to improving academic and social outcomes for students, as is demonstrated by the work at Webb MS and Reagan HS, where mobility has been reduced by more than 1/3, resulting in dramatic increases in enrollment, attendance, graduation rate, and academic performance on standardized tests.



Mobility in Crescent Schools	
Navarro High School	27%
Northeast High School	24%
Travis High School	25%
Dobie Middle School	29%
Martin Middle School	30%
Webb Middle School	24%
Barrington Elem. School	28%
Widen Elementary School	19%

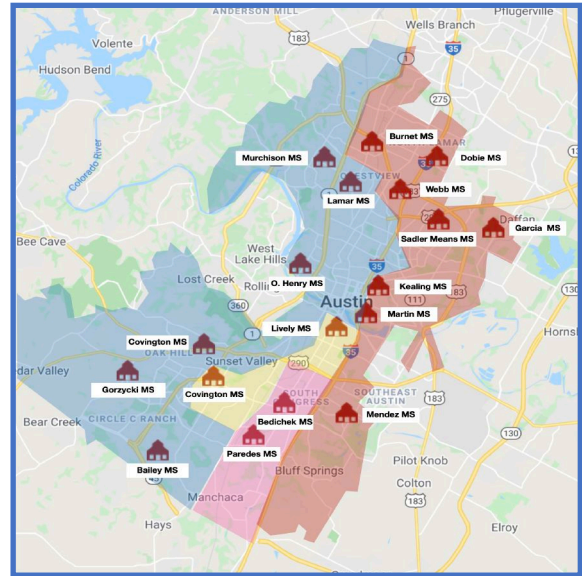
Mobility in Non-Crescent Schools	
Austin High School	11%
Anderson High School	8%
Bowie High School	6%
Murchison Middle School	9%
Lamar Middle School	7%
Barton Hills Elem. School	5%
Casis Elementary School	2%
Zilker Elementary School	4%



## Challenge #2: Crescent schools and communities face income, housing, health and other barriers to upward economic mobility

**Income:** The map on the right illustrates the stark economic divide in Austin, following along the “crescent of opportunity,” beginning in north central Austin, moving through east Austin, and continuing into southeast Austin.

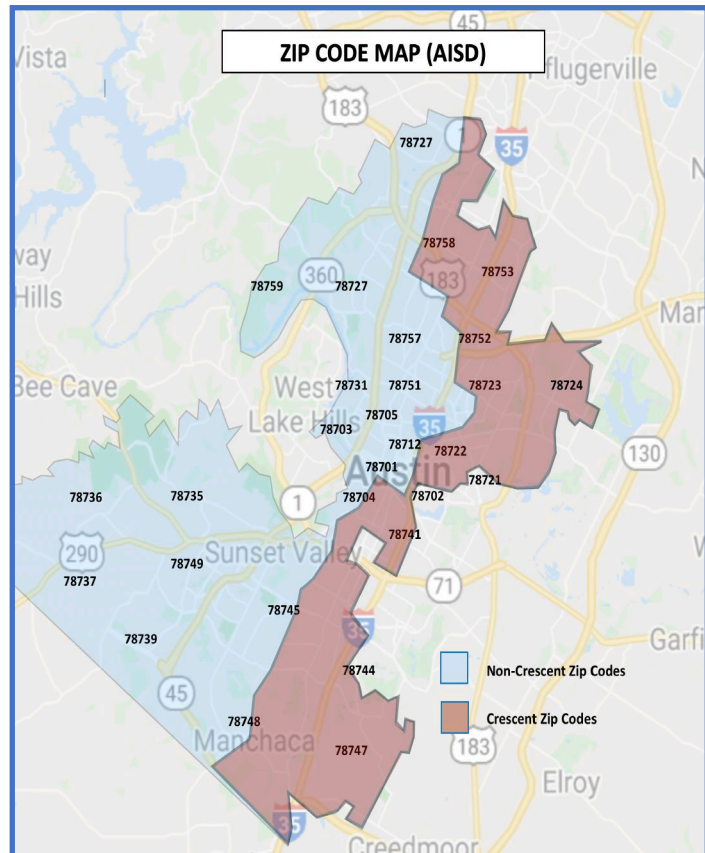
- 90% and above economically disadvantaged**
- 70% and above economically disadvantaged**
- 60% and above economically disadvantaged**
- 30% and below economically disadvantaged**



A comparison of crescent and non-crescent average family income shows the stark difference between east and west, with average family income in east Austin significantly below the 200% of FPL standard for a family of four (\$52,400).

CRESCENT	
ZIP	AVG. FAMILY INCOME
78702	\$54,390
78721	\$35,550
78722	\$63,760
78723	\$53,240
78724	\$33,031
78741	\$35,620
78744	\$35,820
78745	\$49,940
78747	\$56,730
78748	\$60,980
78752	\$39,450
78753	\$37,210
78754	\$50,160
78758	\$44,970
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$46,489</b>

NON-CRESCENT	
ZIP	AVG. FAMILY INCOME
78701	\$299,480
78703	\$300,680
78704	\$89,980
78705	\$58,590
78727	\$72,740
78731	\$196,300
78735	\$179,560
78736	\$85,140
78737	\$135,080
78739	\$152,930
78749	\$84,220
78751	\$62,650
78757	\$83,710
78759	\$96,640
<b>Average</b>	<b>\$135,550</b>



**Housing:** A key factor in wealth development is home ownership. The contrasting percentages of home owners vs. renters in crescent/non-crescent zip codes show how difficult it is for families to pass wealth on to the next generation.<sup>11</sup> This is exacerbated by homeowners being rewarded with the appreciation of their home values (balanced by increasing property taxes), while renters are penalized by property value appreciation with increasing rents. The overall homeownership rate in Austin is 44.8%, which is significantly lower than the national average of 63.9%. In Austin, 65% of white families, 43% of black families, and 27% of hispanic families own their homes. The biggest drivers of the gap between white and non-white home ownership are lack of funds for a down payment, an inadequate debt-to-income ratio and credit scores, with level of education a key factor in determining a family's income level. Analysis of housing data at crescent campuses show high percentages of renters (80%+), with a significant amount of families using 50% or more of their income on housing-related expenses.<sup>12</sup>

CRESCENT				NON-CRESCENT			
ZIP	HOMEOWNER	RENTER	Rent 30%+/HH Income	ZIP	HOMEOWNER	RENTER	Rent 30%+/HH Income
78702	46.8%	53.2%	40.2%	78701	35.1%	64.9%	35.5%
78721	57.8%	42.2%	51.9%	78703	51.9%	48.1%	40.4%
78722	45.6%	54.4%	45.1%	78704	34.3%	65.7%	45.3%
78723	42.8%	57.2%	55.9%	78705	10.6%	89.4%	65.7%
78724	60.5%	39.5%	62.4%	78727	47.8%	52.2%	37.3%
78741	15%	85%	53.7%	78731	56%	44%	43.9%
78744	45.4%	54.6%	49.6%	78735	53.3%	46.7%	38.5%
78745	46.1%	53.9%	46.3%	78736	81.8%	18.2%	32.8%
78747	72.8%	27.2%	34%	78737	92.3%	7.7%	31.1%
78748	60.6%	39.4%	49.4%	78739	94.9%	5.1%	54.8%
78752	27.3%	72.7%	53.7%	78749	61.9%	38.1%	31.1%
78753	35.7%	64.3%	51.9%	78751	29.9%	70.1%	48.5%
78754	49.8%	50.2%	42.7%	78757	55.9%	44.1%	51%
78758	28.6%	71.4%	49.4%	78759	46.2%	53.8%	37.4%
<b>AVG.</b>	<b>45.3%</b>	<b>54.7%</b>	<b>49%</b>	<b>AVG.</b>	<b>53.7%</b>	<b>46.3%</b>	<b>42.4%</b>

Reducing the relative amount families spend on housing and helping more families become homeowners are keys to closing the economic equity gap in Austin. Expanding incomes, whether through an increase in minimum wage, offering more workforce development, or increasing the number of low-income youth who finish high school and at least two years of college or a career training program are all important to moving more families into a position of building generational wealth.

<sup>11</sup> American Community Survey 2017 profiles for zip codes. Retrieved from City of Austin Demographic Data on 7/27/20. <https://www.austintexas.gov/page/demographic-data>

<sup>12</sup> Austin Voices for Education and Youth unpublished analysis of housing data, 2019. Available upon request.

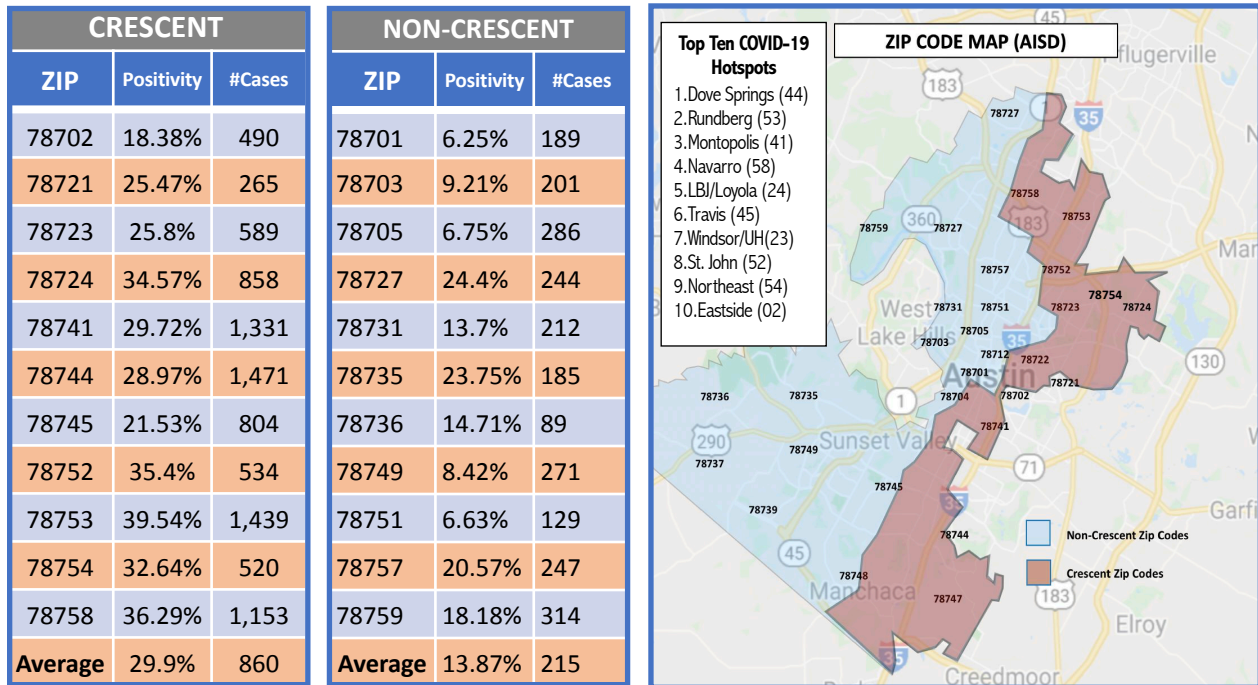


Other data points reinforce that Austin’s crescent and non-crescent schools and communities face two different realities:

- Richard Florida, in “The Rise of the Creative Class” (2004), ranked Austin #1 on his “creativity index.” At the same time, he ranked Austin the most economically segregated major city in the country, based on education, income and occupational segregation. By 2015, Austin was still in the top 20 (#16) in creativity and had maintained its top ranking as the most economically segregated major city in the U.S.<sup>13</sup>
- According to CAN (Community Advancement Network), almost one in three Hispanic and African-American children in Travis County live in poverty (29% for both/2013-17) compared to 5% of white children and 7% of Asian children.<sup>14</sup>
- Income mobility for Travis County’s low-income children (the ability of children to improve their economic status over their parents, often tied to educational opportunity) was among the worst 13% of all U.S. counties.<sup>15</sup>
- Austin is creating 60,000 new middle skills jobs between 2016 and 2021 in IT, healthcare and trades, with 74,142 working poor (employed below the poverty level) lacking the training needed for those jobs.<sup>16</sup>

**Healthcare:** Despite heroic efforts by public and private healthcare and insurance providers, low-income families have to deal with a patchwork of services, with many barriers to access. The emergency room remains the default primary care provider for many families, and children in the crescent often go without regular check-ups or adequate care for chronic conditions, including asthma and diabetes. Basic needs, including eyeglasses and dental care, are dependent on support from nonprofits and community organizations. While progress has been made in lowering the uninsured rate in Travis County, family mobility and a complex system of care can leave many families temporarily disconnected from health systems.

During the current COVID-19 pandemic, these gaps in our healthcare system are especially apparent, as higher rates of infection are occurring among African-American and Hispanic populations, especially in the crescent neighborhoods. The chart below shows the COVID-19 positivity rates and case numbers in crescent vs. non-crescent neighborhoods (7/24/20):



<sup>13</sup> Florida, R. and Mellander, C.

<sup>14</sup> Community Action Network (CAN) Dashboard 2018. Retrieved from <http://canatx.org/dashboard/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CANCommunityDashboard2018.pdf>

<sup>15</sup> Zehr, D. (Sept. 24, 2016) *Study: Travis County among nation’s worst for economic mobility*. Austin American-Statesman.

<sup>16</sup> *Austin Metro Area Master Community Workforce Plan* (June 2017). Workforce Solutions Capital Area.

There are several possible reasons for more COVID-19 infections in the crescent area. Many African-American and Hispanic adults have been deemed “essential workers” and lack the ability to work from home and isolate. Low-income families living in apartments or duplexes have more people in a smaller space, increasing contact. Underlying health issues, including diabetes and heart disease, are also more prevalent among these populations, and access to immediate health care other than the emergency room (the use of which can increase the risk for infection) are all possible contributors.

It is clear that the pandemic will have long-term economic, educational and social/emotional negative effects on crescent communities, further increasing underlying economic and racial inequities.

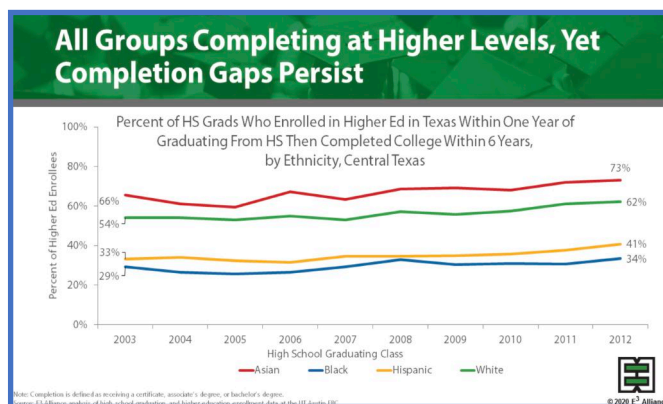
### Challenge #3: Low-income African-American and Hispanic students complete college at lower rates than other students

Over the past decade, crescent schools have done heroic work, reducing dropout and increasing graduation rates, as well as increasing higher-ed opportunities through dual credit and early college high school programs. The first crescent school to offer the early college high school program, Reagan (now Northeast), has seen its enrollment double and has had hundreds of students receive one or more years of college credit through Austin Community College. Programs have also begun at Navarro, Eastside Memorial, LBJ, Akins, Crockett and Travis. These programs go a long way towards not only helping students reduce the ultimate cost of higher education, but also preparing students for the rigors of college culture.

Dropout prevention and college persistence programs such as AVID, Breakthrough and Communities In Schools are also helping many crescent students with mentoring, with some mentors working with students through their college careers. The Austin Chamber of Commerce has focused on increasing financial aid opportunities for students with their “FAFSA Saturdays,” helping families with the paperwork necessary to apply for financial aid.

While hard-won gains are to be lauded, data provided by E3 Alliance about Central Texas schools show how much ground there is still to cover if educational equity gaps are to be closed.<sup>17</sup>

The chart to the right illustrates completion of a degree (certificate, associate’s degree or bachelor’s degree) within six years from high school graduation. White and Asian students complete their programs at approximately twice the rate of Hispanic and African-American students. Note: this data includes all students, not just low-income students.



Data from E3 shows that, when income is taken into account, the completion rate for higher education drops precipitously, with only 12% of low-income students in central Texas who start higher-ed programs completing their degree. Reasons for the difference in completion rates may be financial, academic, or cultural, but it is clear that, despite some gains over the past two decades, fewer African-American and Hispanic youth are gaining the credentials necessary to increase generational wealth. In fact, with the burden of student loans carried by many low-income youth (reflected in much higher loan default rates for minority students compared to white students), the system may be structured to actually move

<sup>17</sup> Data retrieved from E3 Alliance on 7/27/20. <https://data.e3alliance.org/complete/>

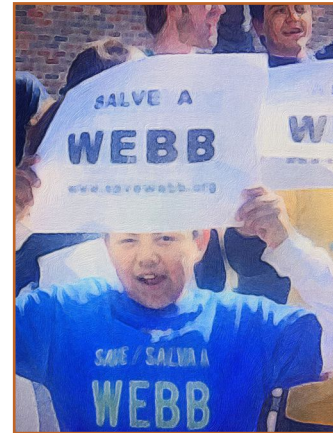
some low-income young people backwards economically. The overall data shows, however, that on average, college graduates earn \$1 million more than non-college graduates in their lifetime, and average \$17,500 more in earnings annually.<sup>18</sup>

#### **Challenge #4: Stakeholders in crescent schools have to fight for the right to have high-quality neighborhood schools**

Austin ISD is unique in Texas in that it has been able to hold together large areas of affluent neighborhoods and low-income neighborhoods in a single district. Looking at other urban districts in Texas, many have split into smaller districts, or have had higher-income communities break off to form their own districts. While Austin's situation offers the potential for a diverse district that reflects and unites the whole city, it has also brought with it the challenge of serving communities with vastly different needs and constituencies.

An additional pressure felt in Austin has been the threat of school closure, a key lever in the current testing and accountability system. While *No Child Left Behind* had a closure mechanism that was rarely used, in 2006 Texas enacted a more punitive school closure law (backed by charter schools looking for takeover opportunities). Schools that missed on just one of many data points tested annually would be branded as failing. Schools failing one or more data points for four consecutive years could be closed. Schools missing in five consecutive years would face mandatory closure (and possible charter takeover).

Since the law was enacted, urban districts have closed dozens of schools in low-income communities. AISD closed Pearce Middle School (which missed by one student on an 8th grade science exam). Reagan High School, Eastside Memorial (formerly Johnston) and Webb Middle School have had near death experiences. Many other campuses have experienced the “blame and shame” culture, driving a narrative of deficiency and failure.



This same pressure does not exist for non-crescent schools, which are able to more easily navigate a testing system built to meet their needs. As Dr. David Berliner said, “The accountability system associated with *No Child Left Behind* is fatally flawed because it makes schools accountable for achievement without regard for factors over which schools have little control.”<sup>19</sup>

Recent district budget issues, which stem from an antiquated school finance system in Texas, have also put closure pressures on low-income communities in Austin. All of this begs the question: Why do schools in the crescent have to fight for the right to have a quality neighborhood school? Why, in schools that are already overburdened with meeting a high level of student need, are staff, parents, students and community stakeholders submitted to the constant threat of closure and loss of jobs?

It is obvious that the answer to “why” is more societal and political than educational. We have always given better treatment to the powerful over the powerless. Low-income schools are expected to solve all of the problems of poverty, and then are punished when they don't.

Fortunately, the powerless are actually powerful when their voices come together to change a school or a community. Unjust laws can be changed. Unjust systems can be fixed.

<sup>18</sup> *The College Payoff* (2011). Georgetown University Center on Education and the Workforce. Retrieved from <https://cew.georgetown.edu/cew-reports/the-college-payoff/>; *The Rising Cost of Not Going to College*. Pew Research Center (Feb. 11, 2014). Retrieved from <https://www.pewsocialtrends.org/2014/02/11/the-rising-cost-of-not-going-to-college/>

<sup>19</sup> Berliner, David C. (2009). *Poverty and Potential: Out-of-School Factors and School Success*. The Great Lakes Center for Education Research & Practice





# A WAY FORWARD

- COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: AN EQUITY FRAMEWORK
- CASE STUDIES
- TIMELINE, SUSTAINABILITY & BUDGET



## A WAY FORWARD

It is clear that Austin's economic and educational divide is extreme and that the current system maintains and reinforces severe racial inequities. The question we have to ask ourselves is this: are we okay with continuing to tweak a system that maintains the status quo, produces only marginal improvements, and measures success strictly in terms of test scores? Or are we open to new thinking, new voices and new solutions that can radically change the trajectories of thousands of young people in Austin's "crescent of opportunity" for the good?

In 2007, the St. John community, including members of Austin Voices, decided that the status quo was not only "not okay," but was destructive and racist. Without consultation with parents or the community, the school district decided to close Webb Middle School due to three years of missed standards on state tests, using a new state school closure law as justification. What the school district didn't know was that St. John had been organizing around community improvements, including its schools, for several years, and had recently been recognized by "America's Promise Alliance" in Washington, D.C. as one of the country's top 100 communities for youth. Realizing that once a school is lost, it is lost forever, parents, students, teachers and community partners moved into action immediately with multiple strategies, including mobilizing the whole community behind Webb, reasoning with trustees about the injustice of the school closure law, and most importantly, coming up with a plan that would turn Webb into a high-functioning campus.



The plan was developed through interviews with teachers, parents, students and over 30 community partners. Common themes emerged, including the negative effects of high student mobility on the campus, insufficient staffing to support the 150 newcomers at Webb just learning English, a lack of technology resources, and the oppressive environment that the obsession with testing had created. Interviews also revealed the dedication of community partners and their untapped potential.

The quality of the resulting plan and the voices of the community were enough to reverse the AISD Board of Trustees intention to close Webb. Community partners, including Austin Voices leadership, worked closely with the superintendent and principal to implement strategies, including a new community-funded Family Resource Center, aimed at stabilizing families, additional bilingual staff to support newcomers, new technology and training, and incentives to retain experienced teachers. Students, who were turned off by "blame and shame" culture, became motivated and more than met standards on state tests. By the following October, U.S. Department of Education Secretary Margaret Spellings, along with the Texas Commissioner of Education, chose to visit Webb to celebrate its achievements. In particular, Secretary Spellings called Webb ". . . the kind of school any parent would want to send their child to."

Over the next several years, student mobility dropped by 1/3 (35% to 25%), attendance increased and enrollment doubled. English Language Learners thrived in the newcomer program. A stable faculty under talented leadership were able to make Webb the top-performing Title 1 middle school in AISD.<sup>20</sup> Fine arts and enrichment offerings grew, along with the partnerships supporting mentoring, tutoring, health, mental health and out-of-school time. The Family Resource Center served 350 families annually with wraparound supports. Monthly parent and community events, including community school planning dinners and partner luncheons, supported involvement and decision-making in Webb's continued improvement. By 2016, Webb was

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<sup>20</sup> Since 2018, Webb, along with all of the other Title 1 middle schools in AISD, have seen a drop in standardized test scores as staffing cuts due to budget constraints have begun to affect academic performance. Webb's most recent community school planning process, completed in September 2019, includes restoring the staffing level that supported academic success prior to the cuts.

included (along with Reagan High School) as a national example of school turnaround using community school strategies, in a study published by the Center for Popular Democracy.<sup>21</sup>

*The Webb turnaround was successful for several reasons:*

1. Rather than using top-down solutions that might have worked in another context, the community started with **listening** to those who were closest to the problems: teachers/staff, administrators, parents, students, and campus partners.
2. Listening led to an understanding of the **root causes** of problems, which informed solutions.
3. A large number of stakeholders were engaged in developing **common-sense strategies**, which increased ownership of the results.
4. The approach was **comprehensive**, looking at all of the factors that would help students succeed and the school thrive.
5. The plan **leveraged community resources and partners**, knowing that this would make changes more sustainable.
6. Community leaders **stayed involved for the long-term**, seeing improvement as an ongoing project.

One thing community leaders didn't know was that the common-sense strategies they used, including looking for root causes and problem-solving around them, leveraging community partnerships, addressing the effects of poverty, engaging parents, teachers, youth and community members in shared leadership, increasing enrichment and out-of-school learning opportunities, and making sure the academic, social, emotional and physical needs of every child are addressed (in contrast to a more narrow testing and accountability focus) had a name. It is called "community schools." Representatives from Austin Voices, the United Way, and Austin Public Health attended a national community schools gathering in 2008 and realized that there were hundreds of other communities around the country that had discovered this common-sense alternative to top-down school improvement, with roots going back a century to John Dewey.

*"Austin Voices for Education and Youth is the most successful model for building community schools that I've seen in my three-decades career in public education."*

**DR. PAUL CRUZ** Former Austin ISD Supt.

Since beginning at Webb in 2007, Austin Voices has helped other communities and campuses learn about, adopt, and sustain community school practices. The results speak for themselves.

- Austin Voices is working with 16 AISD campuses (along with campuses in Dallas ISD, El Paso ISD and Houston ISD), who are at some stage of **community school development**, from developing to established. Note: Education Austin, a partner in the development of community schools in AISD, is working with three other campuses desiring to become community schools.
- **Enrollment** at all AISD community schools has been stable or growing (pre-pandemic). Both Webb and Reagan/Northeast doubled their enrollment, and Martin Middle School stopped its gradual decline and added more than 100 students in 2019-20.
- **Attendance** at AISD community schools has improved over the years, especially for high-risk populations. Webb's attendance grew from 91% in 2010 to 96% in 2015. Reagan's attendance improved from 88% in 2010 to 95% in 2015.
- **Student mobility**, a measure of the percentage of students moving in and out of a school annually, was as high as 42% at Reagan and 35% at Webb. Researchers call this "hypermobility" and say that it is almost impossible for a campus to function at this level. Through the efforts of the current eight Family Resource Centers focused on increasing family stability, mobility has been reduced by one-third or more. While still high, these levels of mobility are manageable.

<sup>21</sup> <https://populardemocracy.org/news/publications/community-schools-transforming-struggling-schools-thriving-schools>



- The **graduation rate** at community schools has risen dramatically. Reagan/Northeast had a 48% graduation rate in 2008-09 and currently has a 99% graduation rate. In particular, pregnant and parenting teens (who were 25% of the girls at Reagan in 2008) went from an 11% graduation rate to 100% in 2015.
- **College-focused programs** have spread throughout AISD community schools. Reagan/Northeast became Austin's first Early College High School as a result of community school planning and advocacy in 2010, in partnership with Austin Community College. Hundreds of students are earning college credit each year, with some finishing high school and an associate's degree at the same time. AVID, Breakthrough and other college-focused mentoring programs support students at community schools.



- **Community School planning** is an ongoing practice at many of the community schools, with parents, teachers/staff, students and community partners working to continually improve their campuses. Community dinners, faculty surveys, partner meetings, and a community school planning team work to refine and implement plans. New programs have emerged from this inclusive process, including Martin Middle School's successful Innovation Academy, Reagan's Early College High School, and the Allan Early Childhood Center.

• **Advocacy for after school programs, fine arts and enrichment** has ensured that all students in community schools have these programs available to them. In particular, Hart Elementary worked with Austin Voices to advocate at the city level for \$950,000 to fill gaps in after school funding at AISD Title 1 campuses. The Reagan/Northeast band went from a few dozen participants in 2008 to a nationally-recognized marching band, playing at South by Southwest and on the TV show "Friday Night Lights."

- **Community and parent engagement** has greatly increased through the addition of community school events, including multi-campus resource fairs (HopeFest, Harvest Fest, STEAM Fest, Holiday Fairs, Futbol Rapido, Unity Walk) that attract hundreds of exhibitors and over 12,000 participants annually. An "Adult Academy" coordinated between schools offers a full range of classes for parents, including ESL, GED, computers, and parenting.
- **Wraparound supports** are available to families throughout the network of community schools, including housing, employment, healthcare access, utility assistance, food, clothing, legal assistance, transportation, and adult education. Teams meet regularly on each campus to assess need and refer students and families to various support providers (including Communities In Schools on most campuses) and the Family Resource Centers, coordinated by Austin Voices.
- **Community partnerships** have grown exponentially at community schools. Austin Voices and clusters of campuses sponsor four monthly "community school alliance" meetings that bring together dozens of community partners, including city, county, nonprofit, business, higher ed, faith-based and community organizations to strategize and collaborate around campus and community needs.
- **Feeder pattern (vertical team) connections** have been strengthened through community schools. Normally, low-income communities find it difficult for elementary, middle and high schools to find time to coordinate efforts. The Reagan/Northeast and the Eastside Memorial vertical teams, in particular, have both worked hard to coordinate community school supports. Northeast has created the NACER initiative, with AISD, Austin Voices, EcoRise, AVID, CIS and United Way, working together to coordinate literacy, college-mentoring and wraparound supports throughout the vertical team of community schools.
- **Legislation has been passed at the state level** to support community schools (through Austin Voices' Save Texas Schools initiative), including a bill that reduced academic barriers for pregnant and parenting teens.

## All of these achievements are impressive, but what does testing data show about the effects of community schools on academic performance?

In many cases, community schools outperform their peers on state reading and math assessments, but what is more clear is that a higher percentage of students are in school, every day, ready to learn, and that many more students are graduating, connected to college and career opportunities. It is also likely that without community schools, at least four AISD campuses in the “crescent of opportunity” would be closed, and that the remaining schools would be struggling with high student mobility, decreased attendance and enrollment, and fewer programs and supports.

It is worth noting that national data on community schools confirms the success this approach has had in Austin. Community Schools is recognized as an evidence-based intervention for use in federal grants supporting high-poverty schools, including ESSA grants and the federal Full-Service Community Schools grant (of which Austin Voices has been a recipient). Cost-benefit analyses of community school interventions has also estimated that, for every \$1 invested in community schools, the community receives a \$3 to \$15 savings in funding going to other services, including crime prevention, health costs, and other social services.<sup>22</sup>

So, if community schools, as a 15-year pilot project in Austin has already had a strong, positive effect on the trajectories of thousands of low-income students in the “crescent of opportunity,” we are left with two questions:

1. For the sake of equity, how do we spread this approach across all crescent schools and communities?
2. How do we make community schools not just a framework for school transformation, but an engine of community transformation?

### Who Gets Credit?

Harry Truman said, “It is amazing what you can accomplish if you do not care who gets the credit.” But in low-income schools, where teachers hear more blame than praise, credit is important. Funders also want to know what interventions (done by whom) had the most impact in making positive change. Community partners, including nonprofits, also want to know how effective their work is.

This is the conundrum of “**collective impact**,” of which community schools is an example. First described by Kania and Kramer in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (2011), collective impact is defined as a collaboration that solves difficult and complex social problems (such as closing achievement gaps in education) using broad cross-sector partnerships.<sup>23</sup> Kania and Kramer identified five conditions for a successful collective impact project: a common agenda, shared measurement systems, mutually reinforcing activities, continuous communication and backbone support organizations. In Central Texas, we have several examples of collective impact efforts, including E3 Alliance (education) and the Community Advancement Network (social services). The Greater Austin Community School Coalition (GACSC) is a nascent collective impact effort, established in 2017, to support the expansion of community schools. Austin Voices, along with AISD, CAN, United Way, CIS, Education Austin (AFT/NEA), and Learn all the Time are on the GACSC leadership team.

We believe that credit for school improvement should go first to the teachers, staff, and administrators. After that, everything is a team effort, with parents, community partners, school district, city and county agencies, nonprofits, businesses, higher ed and volunteers all working together towards agreed upon goals and giving one another credit for efforts and accomplishments. This is a new way of doing things, and competition (which is encouraged by the testing and accountability culture) gives way to collaboration in a thriving and sustainable community school effort.

<sup>22</sup> Maier, A., Daniel, J., Oakes, J., & Lam, L. (2017). *Community schools as an effective school improvement strategy: A review of the evidence*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-effective-school-improvement-report>.

<sup>23</sup> Kania, John & Mark Kramer. (Winter 2011) *Collective impact*. *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Retrieved from [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective\\_impact#](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact#) The Wallace Foundation has done extensive research as to the formation and success of collective impact efforts. Their conclusion is that, while there are some signs of success, these efforts are difficult, complex and often fall short of their vision. <https://www.wallacefoundation.org/knowledge-center/Documents/Putting-Collective-Impact-Into-Context.pdf>

# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: AN EQUITY FRAMEWORK FOR CAMPUSES

## Transforming Schools Across the Crescent

We believe the “broader, bolder approach to school improvement” (called for by Dr. David Berliner in his rejoinder to the testing and accountability culture created through *No Child Left Behind*) is **community schools**. Instead of simplifying school improvement to one or two factors (changing leadership, finding better teachers, adopting a different curriculum), community schools use a comprehensive, problem-solving approach, taking into account both what happens within the school and what happens outside the school in the community as equally important to the ultimate success of children. While understanding and addressing these factors may seem daunting, community schools take an incremental approach, looking through three equity lenses to find opportunities for continual improvement:

1. Are there **barriers to learning** that can be reduced?
2. Are there **conditions for learning** that can be improved?
3. Are there **opportunities for learning** that can be expanded?

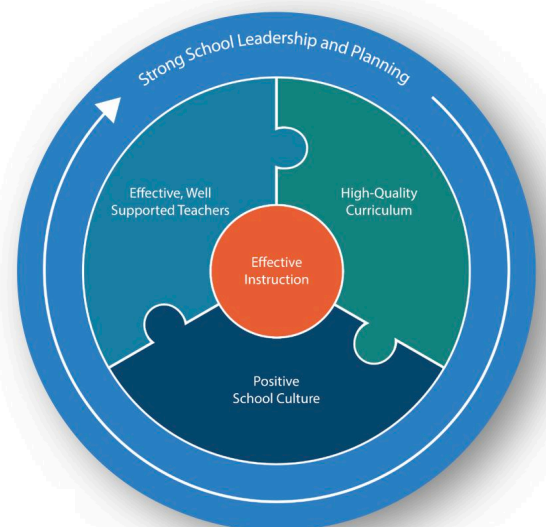
By asking these three questions, challenges become clear, and opportunities present themselves both within the school and in the community for changing the trajectory of a child’s education. Barriers might be related to poverty, such as homelessness or lack of access to healthcare. Conditions might be an unsafe school or community environment, high teacher turnover, or curriculum that is unengaging. Opportunities might include a lack of after school, fine arts, or college and career preparation programs. Whatever emerges, the 5,000+ Community Schools across the country are committed to one thing: doing whatever it takes to help students be successful in school, life and beyond.



## The Elements of School Improvement Using Community Schools

School improvement is littered with failed efforts to transform and turnaround struggling, mainly low-income schools. In almost every case, the failure was tied to trying to reduce challenges down to one or two factors, instead of thinking systemically. The strategy might be changing principals, reorganizing the campus around a particular program, providing more professional development or creating a positive school climate. All of these strategies, and many more, can create incremental improvements, but none will produce lasting and systemic change.

A scan of national school improvement and turnaround efforts, even if they are more systems-focused, will limit efforts to “what can be controlled,” namely what happens within the walls of the school. Schools can control teaching, curriculum, leadership, school culture and climate, policies and procedures. The Effective Schools Framework from the Texas Education Agency ill these elements.<sup>24</sup>



<sup>24</sup> <https://texasesf.org/>



The five “levers” illustrated in the TEA model make sense. If a school has a strong leader, the school should function reasonably well. Of course, a strong leader is one who can problem-solve and come up with innovative solutions. Some schools are lucky enough to have a “hero” principal who can do it all. However, principal turnover in low-income schools is high, normally every 2-4 years. The likelihood of having consistently strong leaders is limited.

It also makes sense that effective, well-supported teachers are a key factor for student success. The sad truth is that low-income schools often have a higher percentage of first-year and inexperienced teachers, have trouble filling teaching positions in core subjects, and struggle to pay teachers a living wage.

Effective instruction and high-quality curriculum are also important, but aligning those components to a highly diverse student body, including English Language Learners, special education, refugee, and highly mobile students, is very challenging.

Finally, “positive school culture” is where the TEA model places behavior, student supports, and parent and community engagement. While most low-income schools offer some student supports, and might have staff dedicated to parent communication, few have the systems in place nor the partnerships necessary to match the significant need on their campuses in an effective and equitable manner.

But what if you could make the TEA model work in even the most challenging environment? What if you had a leadership pipeline trained to meet the challenges of low-income campuses? What if you had strategies in place to make sure

teachers were supported and were involved in creating innovative solutions for their campus? What if you had a school that could actually meet the diverse academic needs of all of your students? What if you had a welcoming and positive school culture that supported both students and families, and embraced the opportunity to be a hub for community engagement?



The diagram above shows how a community school framework can (and should) be combined with a traditional school improvement model. With the student and family supports offered in a community school, with all stakeholders involved in analyzing need and problem-solving solutions, with teaching and learning designed to match the diverse needs of students, and with a system of community partners bringing the advocacy and resources necessary for schools to be successful in their mission, the traditional model can actually work.

*“Students can’t focus inside the classroom if their basic needs aren’t met outside the classroom. That’s the premise of community schools.”*

Lily Eskelsen García  
President, National Education Association

### 3 Case Studies of Community School Transformation

These AISD campuses combined Community School strategies with comprehensive school improvement to achieve significant academic turnaround

#### Webb Middle School

Webb Middle School was on the verge of closure in 2007, based on three years of low-academic performance. TEA on-campus monitors were working full-time with staff on school improvement strategies, but progress was minimal. Austin Voices and community members worked with Webb staff to uncover root causes of low-performance which were not being addressed, including very high student mobility, due to unstable families, and inadequate staffing for large numbers of newcomer ELLs. A comprehensive plan was created by the community and Webb staff to address these and other needs. The plan, submitted to the Board of Trustees, included a new Family Resource Center, funded by community partners, to help stabilize families, additional staff to support newcomers, and incentive pay and supports to stabilize teacher turnover. Within two years, student mobility had dropped by 1/3, teacher turnover was stabilized and academic indicators made significant gains. Strong leadership, experienced faculty, and coordinated student and family supports kept Webb towards the top of AISD Title 1 campuses for the next decade. Webb has become a national example of school turnaround, and continues to problem-solve around school improvement with parents, staff and community working together in an annual community school planning process.

#### Reagan/Northeast Early College High School

Once one of Austin’s finest high schools, with a national football championship in its storied past, Reagan High School was facing closure in 2008, due to low-academic performance and shrinking enrollment. With eight principals in ten years, a widely-publicized campus assault, and multiple failed school improvement strategies, Reagan seemed on its last legs. A new principal, Anabel Garza, along with the PTA president and several parent leaders, committed to work with Austin Voices and the Webb community on a community school turnaround strategy at Reagan. Over 150 teachers, parents, alumni, community members and students, worked for two years on various committees, looking at root causes, creating strategies, and building advocacy for Reagan. Principal Garza stabilized faculty and worked with the community on immediate issues, including increasing the graduation rate (then 48%), attendance (85%) and enrollment, which hovered around 600. Numerous strategies, including a Family Resource Center to reduce student mobility (42%), supporting pregnant and parenting teens (25% of girls/11% graduation rate), building a cohesive strategy for ELLs, creating a mentoring program with 300 volunteers, and bringing on an Assistant Principal as “Community School Director,” all helped to shift Reagan’s trajectory. Parents also asked for more than a “test-prep factory,” resulting in the community brokering Austin’s first Early College High School program with Austin Community College. Today, Reagan (now Northeast) boasts an enrollment of 1,200, a graduation rate of 99% and a robust college and career preparation curriculum, while still drawing from Austin’s lowest income communities.

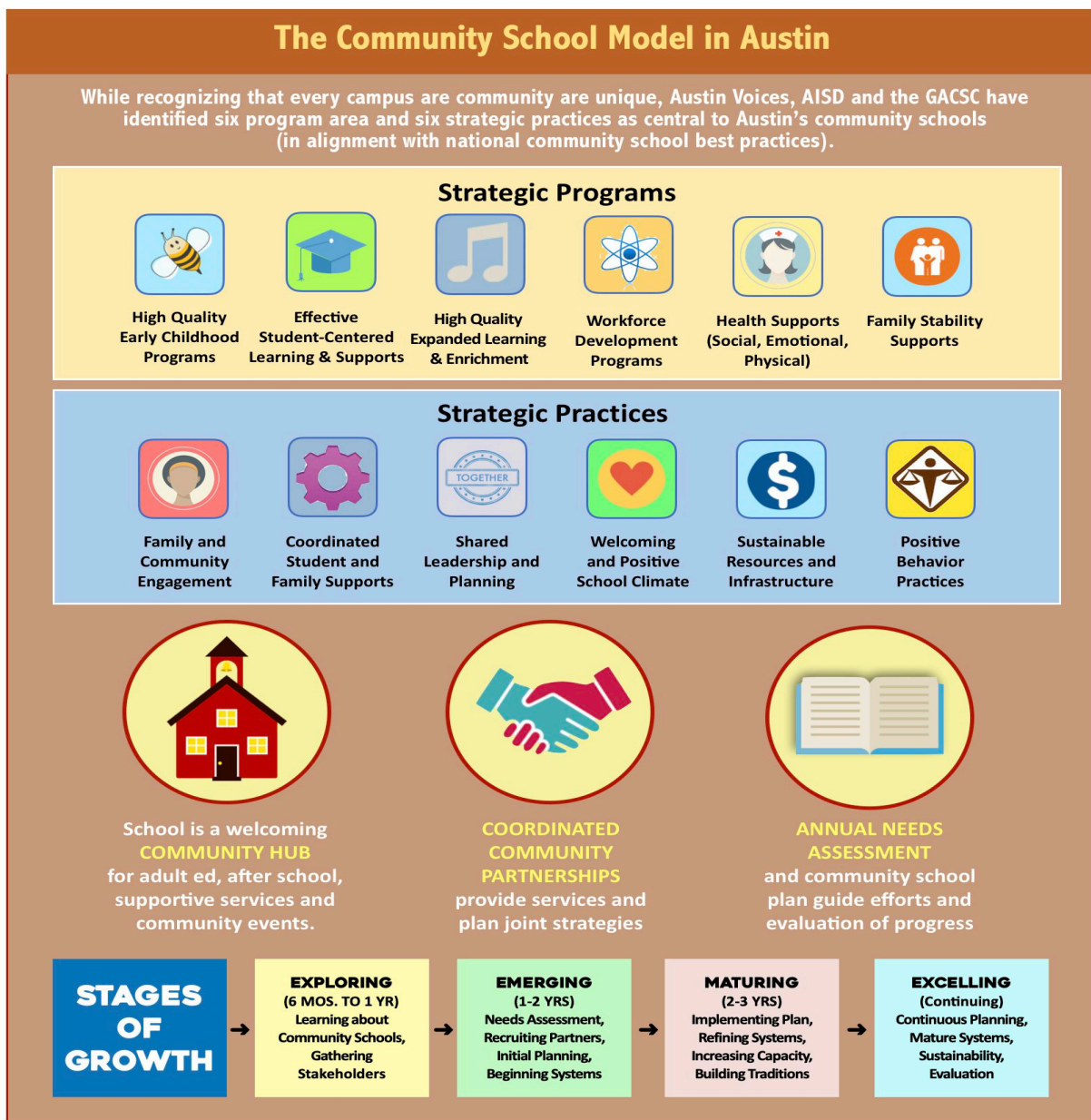
#### Martin Middle School

Martin Middle School, part of the Eastside Memorial Vertical Team, had been a solidly-performing Title 1 middle school, with a committed faculty and a stable community. Principal turnover, challenges at Eastside Memorial and a wave of gentrification, however, put Martin into a gradual slide downward, with academic performance and enrollment declining. Martin had adopted some community school strategies, including a Family Resource Center, but more was needed if the school was to remain viable. In 2013, Austin Voices brought all nine campuses in the vertical team together to do strategic planning through a community school lens. Results included a new early childhood center in the Allan facility, community asset mapping, vertical team-wide resource events, and a new program at Martin, The Innovation Academy. In looking at the community, it was clear that the “creative class” was moving into the attendance area, and that there was an opportunity to bring in new families, while expanding opportunities for existing students. The new Innovation Academy, focused on creativity and project-based learning and developed by teachers in partnership with local businesses and higher ed, has helped the school double enrollment, while preparing students, many of them low-income, to be on track for jobs in Austin’s hottest companies. The program has now been expanded to Eastside Memorial High School.



Perhaps the greatest failing of simply using a traditional school improvement model in a low-income school is that the traditional model tends to ignore external, community factors and may downplay the complexity of teaching students with diverse needs and backgrounds. The theory of change is often based on addressing gaps in learning using individual student data. But if kids aren't ready to learn, if they are not in school, and if the resources, supports, and experienced teachers are not in place to support kids, the gains will be limited. But combining strategies that address both internal and external factors means that more children are in school, ready to learn. Experienced and well-supported teachers are now ready to teach, and with effective plans that are developed by teachers, parents, students and community, schools are now ready to act.

Community School practitioners nationwide, including the Coalition for Community Schools, agree on certain commonalities across community schools, both in programs and practices. Austin Voices, AISD and the Greater Austin Community School Coalition have developed a logic model that captures the elements used in Austin's community schools.<sup>25</sup>



<sup>25</sup> The complete GACSC Logic Model is contained in the Appendix.



It is often tempting in school improvement to simplify and to say that schools can only focus on one or two things at a time. The flaw in this thinking is that schools are complex organizations, just as corporations, communities and even families are complex in their functions and their intended outcomes. Community schools face this complexity honestly, and use a growth mindset to help campuses improve year by year.

At the heart of this improvement process is **annual campus planning**, starting with a needs assessment that uses both quantitative and qualitative data. A broad range of stakeholders are part of this process, including parents, students, teachers, administrators, volunteers, support partners, and community members. Austin Voices also pioneered a “Family Needs Survey” that is completed by 50-75% of parents at community school campuses annually, providing a wide range of data, including health, technology, health insurance, basic needs, housing, employment, adult education, volunteering, and requests for student services such as mentoring. This survey has been adapted by many other community schools nationwide as a simple and effective tool. In addition to the family needs survey, data is gathered through community dinners with facilitated small groups, faculty surveys, monthly partner meetings, focus groups, and campus academic, climate and parent surveys. Information gathering focuses on three questions: What is working (strengths)? What could be improved (challenges)? What is missing (opportunities)?<sup>26</sup>



A community school planning team, consisting of teachers, staff, administrators, parents and community representatives, looks at the data that has been gathered through the needs assessment, as well as student academic data and other school and community data. This process results in an agreed upon list of strengths, challenges and opportunities, from which strategies and action plans are developed. The resulting plan is presented to stakeholders for revision, approval and involvement in implementation.

Depending on the feedback gathered during the needs assessment, the planning team can consider the following questions:

1. Looking at the list of **strategic programs**, how is our campus doing? What are our strengths, challenges and opportunities?
2. Looking at the list of **strategic practices**, how is our campus doing? What are our strengths, challenges and opportunities?
3. Are there **equity challenges or opportunities**? For example, are there barriers for certain populations on our campus? Are their conditions, such as staffing, that are not equitable? Are there opportunities unavailable to our students that students on another campus have?
4. Are there **“root cause” issues** that are behind certain challenges? How could we problem-solve around these issues?

The chart that follows contains strategies, as well as ways of measuring progress, that could be found in a typical community school improvement plan.

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<sup>26</sup> Detailed information about the annual needs assessment is found in the appendices to this plan.

	Strategies	Measurable Results
Reducing Barriers to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce barriers to learning by providing wraparound supports that stabilize families, reduce student mobility, improve attendance and improve student focus on learning, leveraging partnerships with community agencies and volunteers.</li> <li>• Reduce faculty turnover and staff core subjects with experienced teachers. Highly mobile schools need teachers who are skilled in working with diverse needs in the classroom.</li> <li>• Use a tiered approach to student and family supports, and improve systems of coordination with weekly meetings with service providers and school staff</li> <li>• Focus on developing a warm and inclusive campus culture where all parents and students are welcome, no matter their culture, language, or educational background.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved attendance</li> <li>• Reduced mobility</li> <li>• Increased parent involvement</li> <li>• Improved academic performance</li> <li>• Increased enrollment</li> </ul>
Improving Conditions for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop campus-wide ELL and special education strategies that work for mobile and late-entry students.</li> <li>• Focus on developing a warm and inclusive campus culture where all parents and students are welcome, no matter their culture, language, or educational background.</li> <li>• Train staff in school-wide positive approaches to behavior, as well as restorative practices, that limit disruption to learning time.</li> <li>• Use a shared leadership approach, with annual community school planning processes bringing teachers, staff, parents, students and community together to assess strengths, challenges and opportunities, and to develop and implement school improvement strategies.</li> <li>• Develop an equitable approach to technology, using strategies that lower barriers of access for low-income and mobile students.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved academic performance for ELLs and special ed</li> <li>• Reduced behavior referrals</li> <li>• Increased community engagement</li> <li>• Greater equity</li> </ul>
Increasing Opportunities for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop common data systems to capture current efforts to support youth and families in the community, and to provide information for strategic planning.</li> <li>• Work together to advocate for resources and policies that will grow after school, enrichment, and fine arts programs.</li> <li>• Partner with other schools in your feeder pattern to coordinate adult education, events and summer programs.</li> <li>• Partner with businesses and higher ed institutions to provide free field trips for students and parents, and create real-world career training partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased community safety</li> <li>• Increase student engagement</li> <li>• Higher college completion rates</li> <li>• Greater equity</li> </ul>

## Shared Leadership

“People support what they helped to create.”<sup>27</sup> One reason that community school planning is so powerful is that it takes the time to develop consensus among a broad set of stakeholders. When the times comes to implement strategies, there is broad agreement and energy behind the ideas.

The existing AISD community schools have developed a shared leadership structure over the past 13 years that includes campus planning teams, vertical team planning (in the Northeast and Eastside Memorial teams), community school alliance teams that bring partners together monthly, district staff (include a lead staff member for community schools), a regional community school team (GACSC), and a backbone organization, Austin Voices, providing organization and expertise. While this is a great foundation to build on, the reality is far from what is needed for an expansion of community schools throughout the “crescent of opportunity.” Planning teams function inconsistently across our current schools. We have a strong

<sup>27</sup> Many people have repeated this phrase, but it is attributed to motivational writer Dale Carnegie.

Northeast Vertical planning team, but still have not developed one in the Navarro Vertical Team. The GACSC is still trying to find its footing in stabilizing and expanding community schools in Central Texas.

Most importantly, we need to continue expanding the number of teachers, staff, parents and students who are engaged in growing and improving their community schools. As a first step in expanding community schools, we envision a planning period that would bring together current and new district and community stakeholders for reflection on past and current successes and challenges, agreement on goals and timeline for the expansion of community schools, and a sustainability plan for resourcing the expansion. All of this will be done in the context of the current COVID-19 crisis, knowing that some strategies and actions may be delayed while others are advanced more quickly.

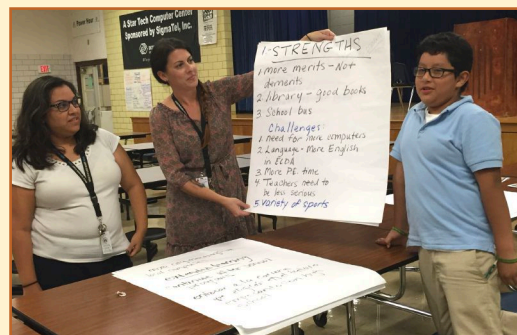


## The Power of Voice

Community schools believe that the whole community is responsible for creating opportunity and high-quality, neighborhood-based public schools. They also value local decision-making, with community stakeholders, teachers/staff, parents and youth deciding what is best in their unique circumstance

In order to ensure that the voices of everyone are heard, Austin Voices has learned that there must be regular opportunities for a wide variety of stakeholders to participate in the creation of the school. Each year, we help schools host community planning dinners, with parents, teachers and students joining in small groups to strategize around the needs of their campus. These events are well-publicized, with specific outreach to families that are often overlooked, such as refugees and homeless.

There are also times when the community and campus need to advocate more forcefully for their school at the school board, city and county, and even state level. AISD community schools have been successful on a number of occasions in bringing about meaningful change. Here are some examples:







- Over 100 parents and students from Hart Elementary advocated for after school funding when their grant-funded program was about to end in 2016. AVEY organized a meeting with city council and AISD trustees. Eventually, the City provided over \$900,000 for not just Hart but 10 other AISD campuses needing after school funding.
- AVEY worked with Reagan High School staff and parenting teens to pass a bill in the state legislature that prohibited unexcused absences being given to teen parents for children's health needs and checkups. The speech by a Reagan parent helped push the bill across the finish line with the Senate Education Committee.
- In 2011, legislative leaders announced \$10 billion in cuts to public education. AVEY, through its Save Texas Schools program, organized 13,000 advocates to stand up for full school funding. Action continued through the legislative session, resulting in cuts being reduced to \$5 billion. Continued action in 2013 saw full funding restored.
- Webb Middle School has been threatened with closure on three separate occasions. Each time, parents, teachers and students have been able to successfully convince trustees to not only keep the school open, but also to improve programming and resources.
- In 2009, AVEY worked with Reagan High School to change the state's school closure law, giving more time for struggling schools to improve. The resulting change in the law helped dozens of similar campuses throughout the state.
- AVEY has organized teachers, parents and students to support community school legislation, in partnership with teacher unions and other advocates. The legislation has passed the House twice.

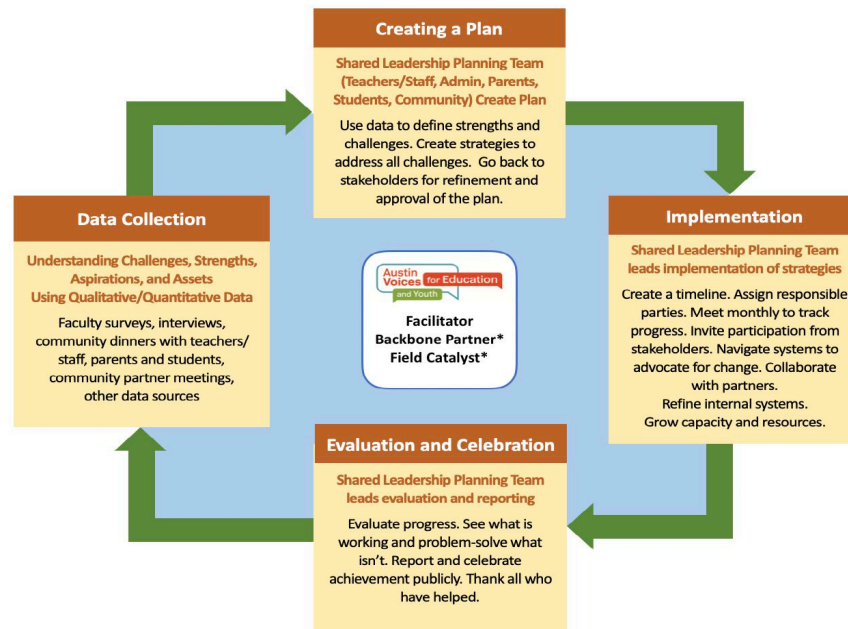
## Implementing the Plan

Some of the strategies in a campus community school plan will be implemented by existing structures, such as academic teams or social service referral teams (called Child Study Teams in AISD), all under the leadership of the principal. Other strategies may be implemented or supported by community partners, may need additional resources or staff capacity, or may be implemented by parents, students, or teachers. Some may involve advocacy by the campus community at the school district, city/county or even state level. Some may involve district-level staff, including the lead administrator for community schools, departmental or senior administration.

Our experience is that the following elements are vital for successful implementation:

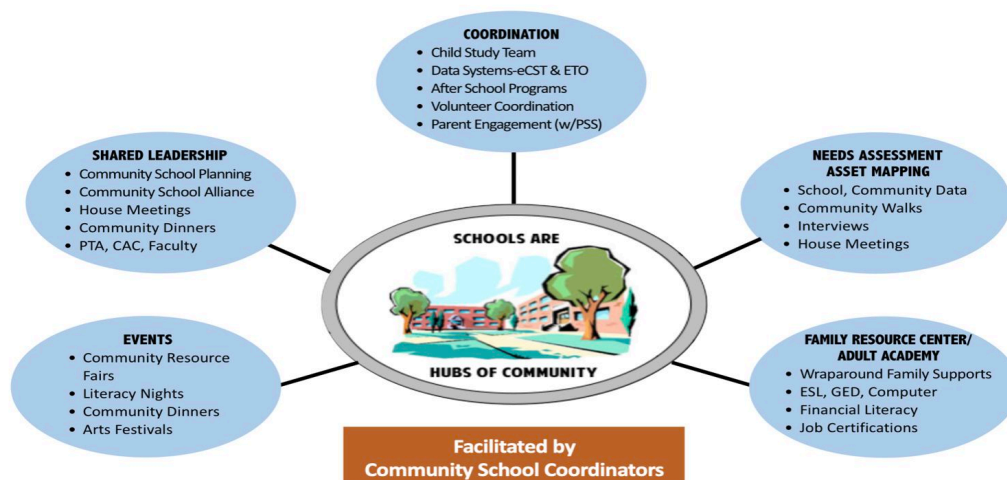
1. **A community school planning team** that meets regularly (at least monthly) to monitor implementation, under the leadership of an engaged and supportive campus principal. The team should include teachers/staff, community partners, parents, and students (if appropriate).
2. **A plan with detailed strategies and action steps**, and which assigns responsibilities, sets deadlines and provides resources.
3. **Regular communication** with campus staff, parents and community about progress, including successes and challenges, as well as opportunities for participation or advocacy.

*The illustration that follows describes the planning and implementation cycle:*



In addition, since many of the elements of a community school plan involve student and family supports involving both campus and community partners, campuses (or clusters of campuses) need to have the following:

1. A well-functioning **Child Study Team** that brings together campus and social service partners together weekly or bi-weekly to coordinate academic, attendance, and/or student and family support referrals.
2. A monthly **community partner meeting** (community school alliance) that is open to all community partners, campus support agencies, parents and volunteers. This meeting is a key coordination point between campus and community transformation.
3. A **Family Resource Center**, serving a cluster of campuses. The FRC provides wraparound supports for hundreds of families at each campus, as well as adult and parenting education and volunteer opportunities.
4. A **Parent Support Specialist** (in AISD) or similar role functioning as a liaison to parents. The PSS provides engagement and training opportunities for parents.
5. A **Community School Coordinator** who helps all of the different elements and activities of a community school work smoothly. They also recruit and support campus partners and volunteers. In a smaller school, the Community School Coordinator may overlap with another position, such as the PSS or Family Resource Center Director.



Knowing that community schools can have significant positive effects on the economic, educational and racial inequities in Austin, what can we accomplish in the next six years? Below are proposed school-centric objectives that will be refined during the initial six-month project planning stage.

**VISION STATEMENT #1: SUPPORTING GREAT SCHOOLS**

We envision communities where **ALL YOUNG PEOPLE** have the opportunities and resources to succeed in school from early childhood through post-secondary education and beyond, with increasing incomes that create generational wealth.

**Campus Objective #1:** By 2030, at least 75% of schools (48 of 64) in the Crescent of Opportunity will be intentional and high-quality community schools, outperforming their peers on academic, attendance, enrollment and graduation benchmarks.

	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<p><b>What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Community School planning process involving teachers/staff, parents, student and community</li> <li>• Improved HR systems and adequate resourcing supporting experienced and stable faculty and leadership</li> <li>• Time for coordination with feeder pattern campuses</li> <li>• Support by district for extended learning, enrichment, tutoring and student supports</li> <li>• Support by district for early childhood, ELLs, special education, college/career preparation and specialized programs</li> <li>• A welcoming, supportive and safe school environment</li> <li>• A system of student and family supports that increase family stability and student readiness to learn</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Results on STAAR, TELPAS and other standardized measures</li> </ul>	90% of students on grade level or above
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of children from birth to kindergarten entry, participating in early learning settings or programs</li> </ul>	Campus & Community determined standard
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Faculty turnover and experience, budget comparisons, class size, equity analysis and programming</li> </ul>	Faculty turnover ≤ 15%. Other measures determined through equity analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Student mobility</li> </ul>	Secondary Schools ≤ 25% Elementary Schools ≤ 15%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community School planning qualitative results</li> </ul>	80% annual completion of community schools goals
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Parent and teacher satisfaction surveys</li> </ul>	90% or above
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reports by support providers on outputs and outcomes of student and family support programs</li> </ul>	Families reporting 30% growth in stability. Mentoring/tutoring available to all students.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Graduation rate, dropout rate, college persistence</li> </ul>	4-year graduation rate ≥ 95% Dropout rate ≤ 2% College persistence ≥ 50%
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Attendance, enrollment, behavior referrals</li> </ul>	Comparable to non-Title 1 peer campuses



**Campus Objective #2:** By 2030, all community schools in the Crescent of Opportunity will have strategies in place to reduce barriers to learning, including wraparound supports for students and families, high-quality programs for English Language Learners and special education students, and systems to address student mobility and school transitions.

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increased capacity for Family Resource Centers providing wraparound family supports and adult education</li> <li>Increased capacity for equitable student supports across all community schools, including CIS and counselors</li> <li>Coordinated vertical team planning for newcomers, refugee, other ELLs and special ed supports</li> <li>Improved vertical team systems, including data tracking, to support mobile students and to support transitions between elementary, middle and high school</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monthly and annual FRC reports, Family Development Matrix, stability measures</li> </ul>	50%+ of families receiving services. Case-managed families reporting 30% growth in stability.
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Child Study Team data, service provider reports (i.e. CIS)</li> </ul>	100% of students referred to CST receive supports
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Results on STAAR, TELPAS and other standardized measures</li> </ul>	90% of students on grade level or above
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Student mobility, transition tracking, vertical team dashboard</li> </ul>	Secondary Schools ≤ 25% mobility Elementary Schools ≤ 15% mobility All students properly transitioned 5th to 6th, 8th to 9th Other goals set by vertical team
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher/staff survey</li> </ul>	100% of teacher/staff issues addressed annually

**Campus Objective #3:** By 2030, all community schools in the Crescent of Opportunity will have strategies in place to improve conditions for learning, including experienced and stable teachers and staff, well-resourced programs, shared leadership, a welcoming and caring school culture and strong parent and community engagement.

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Community School planning process involving teachers/staff, parents, student and community</li> <li>Improved HR systems and adequate resourcing supporting experienced and stable faculty and leadership</li> <li>Community School leadership training developed with district and external partners to operationalize shared leadership practices</li> <li>Community School Coordinator and leadership team use a tiered approach to reduce barriers, improve communication, and increase engagement with community partners and parents.</li> <li>Systems in place for mentoring, tutoring and volunteer coordination</li> <li>Time for coordination with feeder pattern campuses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual Community School planning process involving teachers/staff, parents, student and community</li> </ul>	75% of parents, teachers and students involved in creation/revision of plan; 80% of strategies achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty turnover and experience, budget comparisons, class size, equity analysis and programming</li> </ul>	Faculty turnover ≤ 15%. Other measures determined through equity analysis
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership training in place by January, 2021, with participation by current community schools and district staff</li> </ul>	100% of community school staff receive shared leadership training annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community school staff and leadership participate in annual training summit, as well as monthly training on tiered supported, communication and partner engagement</li> </ul>	100% of community school staff and leadership receive community school training annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cohorts of community schools have developed shared mentoring, tutoring and volunteer coordination systems</li> </ul>	All community schools have access and training on mentoring, tutoring and volunteer coordination systems
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Teacher/Staff survey</li> </ul>	Greater than 90% of teachers/staff report improved conditions for learning annually.

**Campus Objective #4:** By 2030, all community schools in the Crescent of Opportunity will have strategies in place to increase opportunities for learning, including enrichment and extended learning programs, connections to college and business, up-to-date technology, connections to service and civic engagement, and programs that match the diverse passions and needs of students.

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<p style="text-align: center;"><b>CONDITIONS FOR SUCCESS</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Community School planning process involving teachers/staff, parents, student and community</li> <li>• Sustainable funding for after school and summer programs across all crescent schools</li> <li>• Equitable fine arts, athletics and other enrichment opportunities across all crescent schools</li> <li>• District-wide system for campuses to connect with businesses, including practicums, internships and workforce training</li> <li>• Adequate funding for technology training (including parent training) and integration into the curriculum</li> <li>• Time and coordination for students to engage in service learning and civic engagement</li> <li>• Greater focus on student-centered learning, including training and support for teachers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual Community School planning process involving teachers/staff, parents, student and community</li> </ul>	75% of parents, teachers and students involved in creation/revision of plan; 80% of strategies achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual survey of after school, summer, enrichment, fine arts and athletic programs</li> </ul>	100% of crescent campuses will participate in annual survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System connecting businesses and workforce opportunities to campuses developed</li> </ul>	100% of campuses have access and support for workforce system
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual technology survey for teachers, students and parents at elementary, middle and high schools</li> </ul>	100% of campuses participate in annual technology survey
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual campus survey/report on service learning and civic engagement</li> </ul>	90% of campuses report greater than 50% participation by students in service learning/ civic engagement activities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Teacher, parent and student surveys</li> </ul>	90% of students and parents report satisfaction with academic program; 90% of teachers feel supported in student-centered environment

# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: AN EQUITY FRAMEWORK FOR COMMUNITIES

## Transforming Communities Across the Crescent

We believe that improving schools using community school strategies can go a long way to reducing the economic, educational and racial inequities in Austin. Already, we have seen . . .

- Significantly higher graduation rates, which means that thousands of additional students have finished high school, and with expanded college and career programs such as Early College High School, many more are connecting to higher education.
- Reduced student mobility due to wraparound supports has resulted in increased attendance and enrollment in community schools, resulting in higher academic achievement.
- Growth in the number and effectiveness of community partners, expanding learning opportunities and increasing equity.
- Hundreds of parents, students, teachers, staff and community members engaged at community schools, taking responsibility and ownership for the educational outcomes in their communities.

Over a long period of time, these results will help strengthen communities, or at least help them from slipping backwards. However, with the stark inequities outlined in the first part of this strategic plan, we must also think of transformative community-based strategies that will move the needle for students and families. For example, while we can address student mobility from the school direction through providing wraparound supports, we can also reduce mobility by creating housing strategies that address the root cause issues of mobility, including affordability. This is what, for instance, Foundation Communities has done by creating a network of affordable, quality housing for thousands of Austin’s low-income families.

This plan projects the bringing together of community leaders and grassroots community organizations to develop strategies that reduce inequities. We have already developed preliminary strategies through meetings with partners working in six sectors: Healthcare, Workforce, Early Childhood, Out-of-School/ Extended Learning, Family Stability/Housing, and Student-Centered Learning. What follows are community-based objectives that can be refined during the planning period to guide the project, along with ways we can monitor and measure our success.<sup>28</sup>

### READY FOR COLLEGE, CAREER AND LIFE



<sup>28</sup> Preliminary strategies were developed during quarterly meetings at the United Way, sponsored by the Greater Austin Community School Coalition. Workgroups had broad representation from partners doing work across the six focus areas. A complete list of strategies, along with the groups that participated in the planning, are contained in the appendix.



## VISION STATEMENT #2: SUPPORTING THRIVING COMMUNITIES

We envision communities where public schools and other community facilities serve as **COLLABORATIVE HUBS** that bring neighborhoods, families, students, educators, businesses, and community-based organizations together to achieve positive change, defined as community vitality, educational and workforce progress, and educational, social, and economic equity.

**Community Objective #1: By 2030, community schools and other community facilities (recreation centers, libraries, neighborhood centers, nonprofit facilities, and faith-based facilities) in the Crescent of Opportunity will be collaborative hubs for community services, classes, and events, including adult education and social services.**

Traditionally, schools and other community youth and family services have worked in separate silos. Reasons for this separation include governance, culture, funding streams, safety, legal requirements, differing priorities, and a lack of time and space for collaboration. Schools are often set up to limit the presence of outside adults for security reasons. The result is that schools have gyms while a city recreation center sits down the street. Schools pay for nurses while communities run health clinics. Schools offer career and technical education classes disconnected from nearby businesses and community colleges. This separation between schools and community makes little sense when one considers that they exist in the same space, serve the same youth and families, and the success or failure of one affects the other.

Community schools imagine a neighborhood where multi-generational youth and family programs and services blend together, reducing duplication of services, leveraging funding efficiently, and improving academic and social outcomes. With campus and community service providers meeting regularly to coordinate efforts, programs can be located at multiple sites that are convenient to the community. Schools can stay open at night, on weekends and in the summer to house adult education classes provided by the local community college. Housing, employment and other family supports can be accessed at school (through Family Resource Centers) in collaboration with local agencies, and campuses can refer to nearby social service agencies or city/county offices. After school, weekend, holiday and summer youth programs can be coordinated between schools, rec centers, faith-based locations and other youth service providers. Both campus and community will publicize and promote each other's programs and events through community calendars and social media, reducing competition and increasing collaboration.

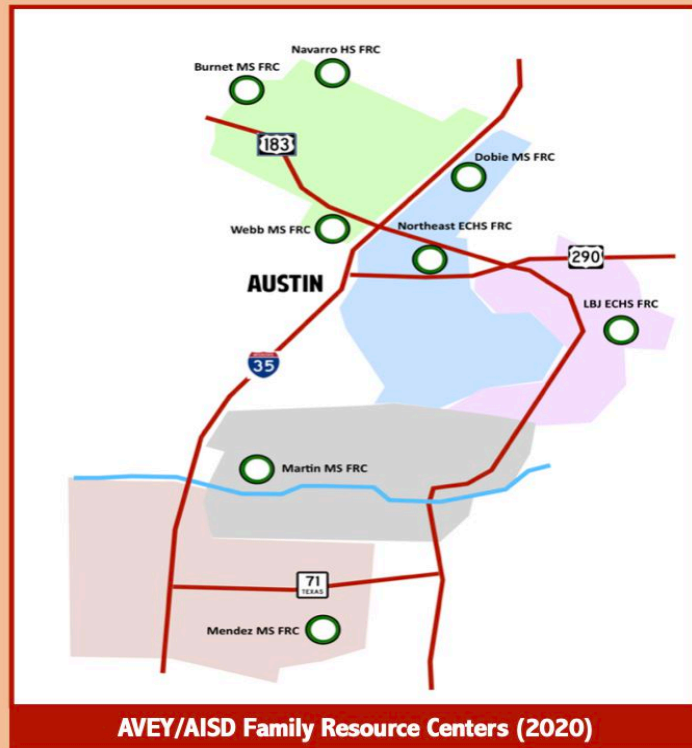
Currently, Austin Voices and AISD operate eight Family Resource Centers that serve as hubs of services and adult education for 19 AISD campuses. We envision that serving the communities in the “crescent of opportunity” will necessitate at least two more FRCs. There are also neighborhood centers, operated by Austin Public Health, recreation centers, YMCAs and a number of other community locations that can be part of a coordinated network of family supports, youth services and adult education.



## Networks of Family Resource Centers Form a Safety Net for Families

When we started the first FRC at Webb Middle School in 2007, our dream was to have a safety net of FRCs across north Austin, where highly mobile and homeless families could access equitable and continuous support, no matter where they lived. Today, eight AVEY/AISD Family Resource Centers do just that, with six FRCs in North Austin, and two in Central East/Dove Springs.

- Highly mobile families, including those who are homeless, no longer lose services just because they had to move.
- Each FRC offers the same supports (case-management, short-term assistance, adult education) with licensed bilingual social workers and bilingual staff.
- All FRC directors and social workers collaborate together and take part in monthly trainings
- The FRC family database (Efforts to Outcomes) tracks services at the network of schools and campuses, meaning that families don't have to start over when they move from school to school.
- FRCs share a common set of partners, meaning that all FRCs have the same level of service across the network.
- FRCs offer adult education classes in a joint "Adult Academy" format, so that parents can take advantage of classes throughout the network.
- FRCs are funded jointly, with joint reporting and evaluation.
- FRCs have the same referral process and Family Needs Surveys across the elementary, middle and high schools served.



### Developing Family and Student Support Data Systems

Develop a robust system of community school student and family supports can quickly become confusing. How do you know who is being served by whom? How can you measure results, and ultimately connect them to the academic success of a student? These questions become significantly more difficult when you are dealing with a highly mobile population, with families changing communities and schools multiple times within a school year.

In 2011, AISD, AVEY, The Austin Project and Communities In Schools worked to develop a best practice student support tracking system called **eCST** (Electronic Child Study Team) that is now used on every AISD campus. AVEY also uses a robust family support data system, **Efforts to Outcomes (ETO)**, with support from AISD, City of Austin, Travis County, and the Michael and Susan Dell Foundation. A "data bridge" connects the two systems, giving AVEY and AISD the ability to track support services given to families and students. ETO is used across all 8 FRCs, making it easy to work with families as they migrate among different campuses in the "crescent of opportunity." ETO also gives AVEY the ability to unduplicate services to over 4,000 families annually, a requirement for most large grants and contracts.

AVEY also uses other data tools, including an annual **Family Needs Survey** that is completed by 50% to 75% of families at AISD community schools. Campuses use an electronic referral form to connect families to FRCs, allowing for prompt response and confidentiality. Finally, AVEY uses the **Family Development Matrix**, a nationally-recognized tool, to measure growth in family stability across 19 different domains, including housing, employment, access to healthcare, and financial stability. The Matrix is used as a pre- and post-test tool for all case-managed families.

**Family Resource Center Results (2018-19)**

The main goal of the AVEY/AISD Family Resource Centers is to make sure **every child is in school, every day, ready to learn**. The strategy is increasing **family stability**. Here are a few of the results from 2018-19. Note: Services from 2019-20 were significantly higher because of COVID-19 services.

Student & Family Services	Partnerships & Adult Education	Student & Family Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 3,758 total families served with social services (12,192 family members) with 13,222 services</li> <li>• 67% speak Spanish or are bilingual;</li> <li>• 5,757 AISD students served from 113 campuses</li> <li>• 431 families case-managed by social workers</li> <li>• 2,740 Family Needs Surveys collected</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Over 200 community partners participating in events, referrals and monthly partner meetings</li> <li>• 18,238 individuals served through food pantries (partnership with Central Texas Food Bank)</li> <li>• 12,000+ attendees at AVEY resource fairs &amp; community events</li> <li>• 1,775 adults and youth (unduplicated) in classes and workshops; 21,184 class hours</li> <li>• \$195,824 in utility assistance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Outcomes for 431 case-managed families completing the Family Development Matrix:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- 34% increase in financial stability</li> <li>- 51% increase in food supply</li> <li>- 31% increase in housing</li> <li>- 80% increase in utilities</li> <li>- 36% increase in healthcare access</li> <li>- 39% increase in parent/child relationship</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Student mobility 1/3 lower than pre-FRC rate</li> </ul>

<p><b>What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campuses overcome logistical barriers to opening their campus to community services and adult education</li> <li>• Adequate resourcing is available for services through partnerships, grants and contracts</li> <li>• Services are part of a community-wide collaboration involving community partners and vertical team campuses that leverage existing services and avoids duplication</li> <li>• Vertical teams have improved systems, including data tracking, to track and report services</li> </ul>	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Campus and vertical team partner reporting</li> </ul>	All campuses have equitable level of supports and enrichment programs agreed upon during planning period
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual community equity reports (health, housing, employment, workforce development, early childhood)</li> </ul>	All communities show growth in equity by measures set during planning period
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community School Alliances and other collaboration annual reporting</li> </ul>	Local partner collaborations show growth on agreed upon measures
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use of community hubs, including schools, community centers and recreation centers</li> </ul>	Participation in adult education, recreation programs, community events, and volunteering

**Community Objective #2: By 2030, 90% of students from high schools in the Crescent of Opportunity will graduate with college credit and/or a job certification (i.e. technology, trades, healthcare, business) in a high-demand field of employment.**

More and better education is the #1 strategy for breaking the cycle of poverty, reducing inequities and laying a foundation for generational wealth. A decade ago, less than half of students were graduating on-time at the crescent schools. Through hard work (and due in part to the work of community schools), graduation rates have risen to between 90% and 99%. In addition, community schools have brought Early College High School programs to Austin, beginning with Reagan/Northeast High School in 2010. With high schools throughout the crescent adopting this approach, we have hundreds of students graduating with Associate's Degrees, and many more completing high school with transferable college credit. Not only are these students on track for college graduation, but they are also saving tens of thousands of dollars in potential college debt. All of the crescent high schools have also developed partnerships with local industry and trades, and offer CTE programs in areas such as health sciences, criminal justice, STEM, automotive repair, and building trades.



**Here are some of the facts we know about the importance of having post-secondary credentials, including job certification:**

- Young adults without a postsecondary credential within six years of leaving high school have just a 12% chance of earning a living wage, a key marker of reduced inequity.<sup>29</sup>
- A postsecondary degree is the biggest predictor of economic mobility, which means access to better resources and ability to maintain a better quality of life.<sup>30</sup>
- College graduates with a bachelor’s degree typically earn 66% more than those with only a high school diploma are far less likely to face unemployment.<sup>31</sup>
- 2/3 of jobs by 2020 will require some postsecondary credential, whether a workforce certificate, two- or four-year degree. These include 22,400 high-demand jobs in the Central Texas region paying, on average, more than \$33/hour.<sup>32</sup>
- Those with post-secondary credentials contribute to society by reducing dependence on social support programs, and funding hundreds of thousands of dollars more toward government services and social insurance programs.<sup>33</sup>

As stated in the “challenges” section of this document, low-income students have a much lower (12% vs. 34%) completion rate for two- and four-year college degrees than higher-income students. It is key, then, that we increase the number of students who are already making progress towards college degrees and workforce certificates while they are in high school. In addition, the quality of workforce partnerships needs to grow, including internships and programs that provide pathways to employment after graduation.

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-functioning Early College and dual-credit programs at all crescent high schools</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Early College, dual-credit, workforce certification programs at all crescent high schools</li> </ul>	All campuses have equitable levels of programs agreed upon during planning period
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strengthened partnerships with local colleges and universities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in highly-qualified teachers on crescent campuses with experience in high-demand workforce jobs</li> </ul>	% increase set after baseline assessment of crescent campuses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Certification programs at all crescent high schools matched to high-demand occupations</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of teachers from business, tech, health and other high-demand areas to strengthen middle school and high school training programs</li> </ul>	# increase of students on crescent campuses with college credit and/or career certifications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recruitment of teachers from business, tech, health and other high-demand areas to strengthen middle school and high school training programs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased business partnerships with local schools providing high-quality mentoring and internships</li> </ul>	Annual campus surveys, including partner satisfaction survey
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved partner supports at school district level, including a business/CTE council</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Growth in high-quality business partnerships with crescent campuses</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Up-to-date data provided by E3 Alliance, the Chamber of Commerce and other local sources</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• College persistence and other measures of college and career readiness</li> </ul>	Data from E3 Alliance, Chamber of Commerce, ACC, AISD

<sup>29</sup> E3 Alliance. Retrieved from <https://e3alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/02/E3-3D-HB5-at-the-Capitol-02252020.pdf>

<sup>30</sup> E3 Alliance. Retrieved from <https://e3alliance.org/2019/12/11/top-5-reasons-to-get-a-postsecondary-credential/>

<sup>31</sup> U.S. Department of Education. July 27, 2015, <https://www.ed.gov/news/press-releases/fact-sheet-focusing-higher-education-student-success>.

<sup>32</sup> <https://e3alliance.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/2019-Community-Conversation-Report.pdf>

<sup>33</sup> E3 Alliance. Retrieved from <https://e3alliance.org/2019/12/11/top-5-reasons-to-get-a-postsecondary-credential/>

**Community Objective #3: By 2030, schools and community partners in each cluster of communities will work together at both local and city/county levels to reduce inequities by improving housing stability, workforce development, early childhood education, access to healthcare, out-of-school time learning, adult education, recreation, transportation and safety.**

In January, 2017, the Greater Austin Community School Coalition began hosting a series of quarterly meetings with partners across various sectors, including healthcare, workforce, early childhood, out-of-school/extended learning, family stability/housing, and student-centered learning, to assess citywide needs and formulate strategies that could be used to transform schools and communities. Three things became clear as teams produced reports:

1. Austin has an abundance of hard-working institutions, organizations, and coalitions working to improve particular needs of our city.
2. While there are “bright spots” of success, growing needs continue to overwhelm widespread progress towards reducing economic and educational inequities in Austin.
3. Cross-sector connections and systems are not in place to support the long-term transformation of our schools and our communities.

We have already established a model, beginning in 2006, of monthly cross-sector partner meetings, called “**Community School Alliances,**” that serve four communities and their surrounding schools (Navarro/Burnet/North Central Austin; Dobie/Hart/Walnut Creek/Rundberg Area; Northeast/Webb/Pickle/Brown/St. John; Eastside Memorial/Martin/Central East Austin). These alliances have been successful in growing cross-sector planning and event coordination, creating connections between partners and campuses, performing needs and asset assessments, providing access for grassroots community organizations and individual volunteers, and building advocacy for areas of community and campus concern. This model can be easily grown to other communities in the Crescent of Opportunity.



The GACSC quarterly partner meetings held in 2017 and 2018 resulted in a logic model (attached in the appendices on page 77) with goals and strategies for each of the sectors. These recommendations, while broad, can form a foundation for educational and economic transformation in the Crescent of Opportunity, and can lead us to the question, “What would it take for these goals to become reality?”

- **Early Childhood:** All families have access to parenting resources and high-quality early childhood learning environments, with increased participation by 3-4 year olds.
- **Student-Centered Learning:** All students received individualized learning that meets their needs and interests, with experienced teachers and high-quality programs; Schools meet or exceed standards.
- **Expanded Learning/Enrichment:** All children and families can access high-quality after school, summer, recreation, athletic, fine arts and enrichment programs, with partners collaborating to create sustainable funding.



- **Workforce Development:** All students are prepared for college and career; student and adults have access to workforce training, employment that provides a living wage, and adequate transportation to access jobs.
- **Health:** Partnerships provide access to health/mental health services, health insurance, immunizations, food security, and safe neighborhoods. All schools adopt the whole-child/whole-school health framework called CATCH (Coordinated Approach To Children’s Health).
- **Family Stability/Housing:** All families have access to stabilizing resources (i.e. health, housing, employment) and adult education. Families are able to find affordable housing, and are supports are in place to increase home ownership.

Moving from hope to actual implementation involves structured opportunities for cross-sector conversation, both at the community and the city/county levels. Austin Voices will continue to facilitate partner conversations at the community level, with the GACSC acting as the facilitator for broader cross-sector collaboration. To be successful, we will also need to move from program thinking to systems thinking.<sup>34</sup> More discussion about the role of systems in community and campus transformation, as well as detailed recommendations by the six GACSC planning teams, is contained in the appendices.

The following organizations participated in the quarterly Greater Austin Community School Coalition planning process:

EARLY CHILDHOOD	HEALTH	FAMILY STABILITY
United Way for Greater Austin Any Baby Can Austin ISD Early Childhood ASPIRE AVANCE Child Inc. (Headstart) CommunitySync Easter Seals Head Start Healthy Families SAFE Alliance Success by 6 Thinkery YMCA ELR	Ascension Seton Austin ISD Health Services Austin Public Health Austin Travis County Integral Care Central Health Child and Youth Mental Health Partnership CommUnity Care Dell Children’s Health Express Dell Medical School It’s Time Texas Marathon Kids Michael & Susan Dell Foundation People’s Community Clinic Project Access Samaritan Center St. David’s Foundation Travis County Medical Society UT Community Collaborative	Asian American Resource Center Austin Energy Austin Voices for Education and Youth Family Resource Centers Austin Tenants Council BASTA City of Austin/Austin Public Health ECHO (Ending Community Homeless Coalition) Foundation Communities Housing Authority City of Austin Housing Works Travis County Health and Human Services
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING	EXTENDED LEARNING
American Youthworks Austin Community College Austin Urban League Capital IDEA Community Advancement Network Goodwill of Central Texas SkillPoint Alliance University of Texas Entrepreneurship and Innovation Workforce Solutions	Austin ISD Austin Voices for Education and Youth Breakthrough Communities in Schools Del Valle ISD Education Austin Manor ISD Ready by 21	Andy Roddick Foundation Austin ISD 21st Century and PrimeTime Programs City of Austin Parks and Recreation Boys and Girls Club of Central Texas Campfire Creative Action 4-H Learn All The Time

<sup>34</sup> Of interest to this project would be the work of Donella Meadows, a scientist and systems expert, who described 12 leverage points useful in changing public policy. Meadows, Donella H. (2008). *Thinking in systems: A primer*. Chelsea Green Publishing, Vermont.



What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>All community partners are engaged in setting and achieving BIG GOALS that make substantial progress in equity across education, housing, health, transportation, early childhood, workforce development, family stability, extended learning time for youth, and adult education</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Every community school engaging in annual community school planning process involving teachers/staff, parents, student and community</li> </ul>	75% of parents, teachers and students involved in creation/revision of plan; 80% of strategies achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Each cluster of campuses and communities holds monthly “community school alliance” meetings to co-plan and bring in new partners and community members</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual collective impact plan from GACSC with specific goals across each sector, aligned to other city/county plans (i.e. E3 Blueprint, Workforce strategic plan, Imagine Austin, AISD strategic plan)</li> </ul>	80% of annual goals achieved
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Greater Austin Community School Coalition (GACSC) hosts quarterly city-wide planning across sectors</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Participation in community activities, including monthly alliance meetings</li> </ul>	# and % of campus and community stakeholders participating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>School district personnel are committed to working across silos to connect school district programs with city, county and community efforts</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Partner surveys and program reports</li> </ul>	% satisfaction; student, parent and community outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Equity audits of campus and community resources occur annually to address pockets of need and inequity</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Annual campus/community equity audits</li> </ul>	% of goals met
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>City, county, health, education, workforce, education, census data</li> </ul>	Data used to inform planning annually

## Community Schools as Social Innovation

The growth of community schools has paralleled interest in another concept, that of social innovation. Stanford Innovation Review defines it as “. . . a novel solution to a social problem that is more effective, efficient, sustainable, or just than existing solutions, and for which the value created accrues primarily to society as a whole rather than private individuals.” Social innovation is as old as Benjamin Franklin founding America’s first public lending library in 1731 or the invention of the weekend by the labor movement in the 1920’s and ‘30s. More recent examples include micro-lending to support business creation among the rural poor (mainly women), various local and global initiatives to address climate change, the fair trade movement, and even the World Wide Web, which went from being a restricted government communications network to a no-cost global platform for exchanging information.

Social innovations are usually hybrids of existing elements, not something entirely new. They cut across sectors and organizational boundaries, and they are relationship-focused. Successful social innovation focuses as much on process as on product, which makes it sustainable and democratic. It is about both solving problems and how we solve problems. Social innovations often take a long time to take hold, experiencing pockets of success and learning from real-world implementation. But once they reach a tipping point, they are quickly imitated and accepted. Finally, social innovations often take on “wicked” or complex problems, such as climate change or poverty.



As social innovation, community schools take on the interconnection of education and poverty, combining what we know about what works in education with effective supports and strategies that mitigate the effects of poverty on children. It is both a now solution (addressing immediate needs and opportunities) and a long-term solution (increasing the percentage of students finishing high school, as well as college or a trade program). Community schools are also built on shared problem-solving, developing unique strategies for each situation, and they leverage resources across organizational boundaries and sectors. Given time, we believe that community schools in Austin will become engines of innovation, moving us towards transformation in our schools and communities.

**Community Objective #4: By 2030, schools and community partners in each cluster of communities will have intentional and sustainable community engagement strategies in place that break down cultural and racial barriers and builds an inclusive and positive environment for residents.**

Community Schools take seriously the values of local decision-making, shared vision and accountability, and seeing diversity as a strength. Every community is unique in its history, its culture, its strengths and its challenges. Some see “community engagement” as giving people information, but community schools truly looks to the community for direction, solutions and energy.

While current community schools in Austin are at various stages of development, several of them have developed robust annual community-based planning processes. All of them have developed events and traditions that have expanded participation and engagement with their local communities, such as the annual St. John Unity Walk, HopeFest, Harvest Fest, Fútbol Rápido, and the Eastside STEAM Fest.



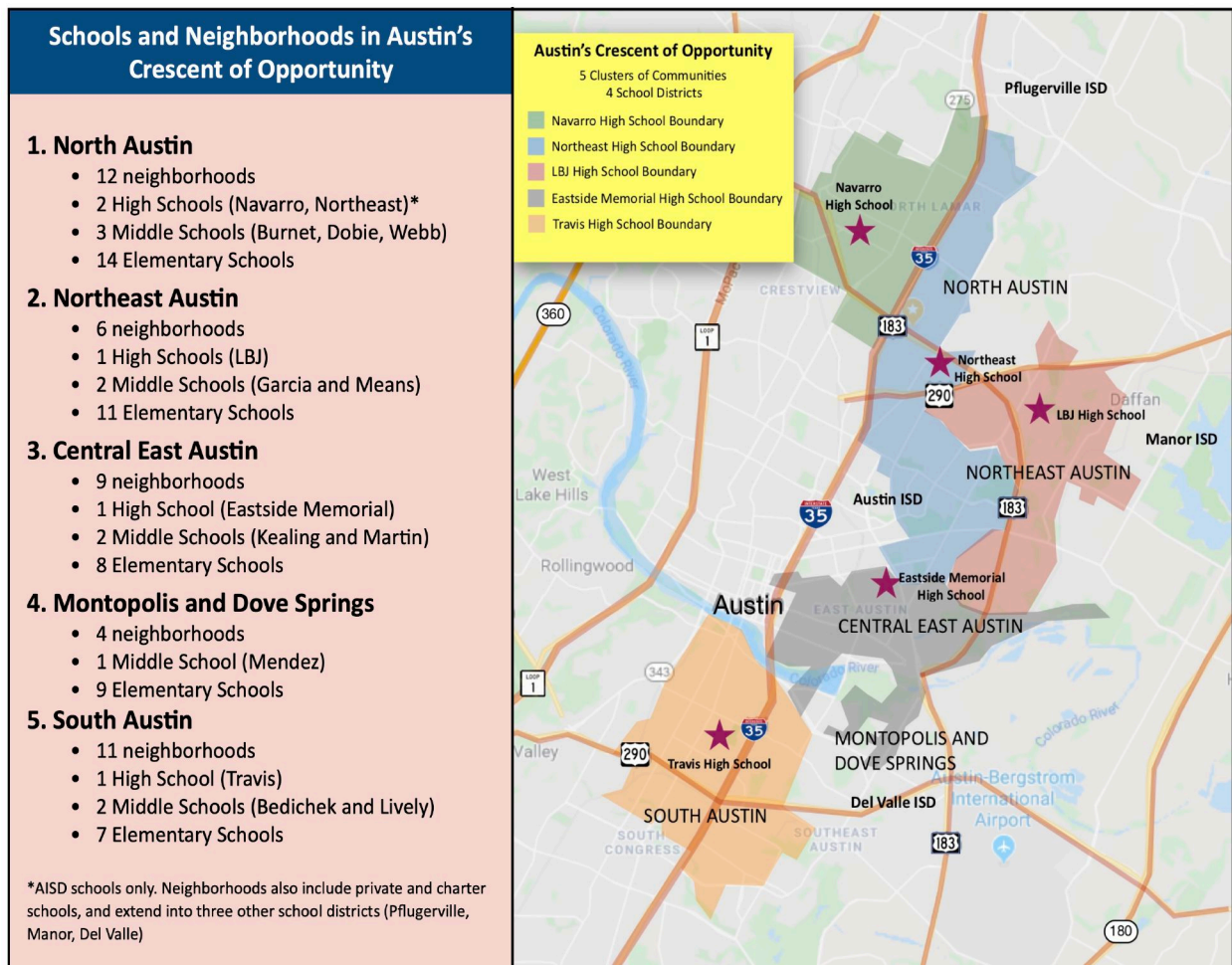
As we work towards community transformation, it will be important to replicate successful practices that are inclusive and welcoming for all residents, and that develop parent and youth leadership across cultural and racial lines.

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Planning groups, including Campus Advisory Councils, community school planning teams, community school alliance committees, neighborhood associations, and other planning committees will be representative of the community, and will be intentional about including youth in decision-making.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agreed upon equity goals for leadership and stakeholder participation in campus and community planning groups to increase diversity, including inclusion of youth</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of annual goals met; # of participants; % participation in leadership development</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each cluster of campuses and communities holds monthly “community school alliance” meetings to co-plan and bring in new partners and community members.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Participation in community activities, including monthly alliance meetings</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # and % of campus and community stakeholders participating</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Each cluster of campuses and communities will leverage existing, or create new events and traditions that celebrate community and provide connections to resources and schools.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual campus and community equity audits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # and % of campus and community stakeholders participating</li> </ul>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual campus and community equity audits</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• % of goals met</li> </ul>

# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: TIMELINE AND SUSTAINABILITY

## Working Across Five Clusters of Communities

Austin is a mosaic of neighborhoods, with higher income areas mainly in the west and low-income (with some middle-income) neighborhoods concentrated in the east. Based on census data, one can draw a crescent-shaped pattern of low-income neighborhoods, starting in north central Austin, moving across northeast and central east Austin, continuing into the Montopolis and Dove Springs communities and finishing in south central Austin.



Using neighborhoods defined by the city of Austin, we can divide the crescent into five clusters of communities, based on common geography, history, and connectivity. Four out of the five clusters have at least one high school, and all of them have middle schools that can function as community hubs. Most of the existing community school development has been in the North Austin cluster, though there are Family Resource Centers in Dove Springs, Central East and Northeast Austin as well. The timeline of development for this project will move in three phases, beginning with strengthening the existing community schools and their communities, while also doing the work necessary to prepare for expansion into new communities. The goal will be to have five networks of community schools established by 2030.



# Timeline (2020-2030)

## PLANNING PHASE (SEPTEMBER 2020-AUGUST 2022)

This project is building on more than a decade of work, including extensive needs assessments and planning that has already been completed. Recognizing that schools and communities are focused on the effects of COVID-19 during the 2020-21 school year, we will use this time to do the following:

- Refine our strategies with stakeholders, including AISD, local campuses, coalition partners, and community members.
- Build the project leadership team.
- Expand our team of both project and funding partners.
- Raise funding for additional project staff, who will help with community school expansion in Phase 1, as well as add capacity for data collection and evaluation.
- At the city and county level, the GACSC can continue convening partners to strategize around project objectives in the six program areas.
- At the national level, we will work with our community school planning partners at the National Education Association, American Federation of Teachers and the Coalition for Community Schools, sharing ideas and best practices that have been used in similar projects.

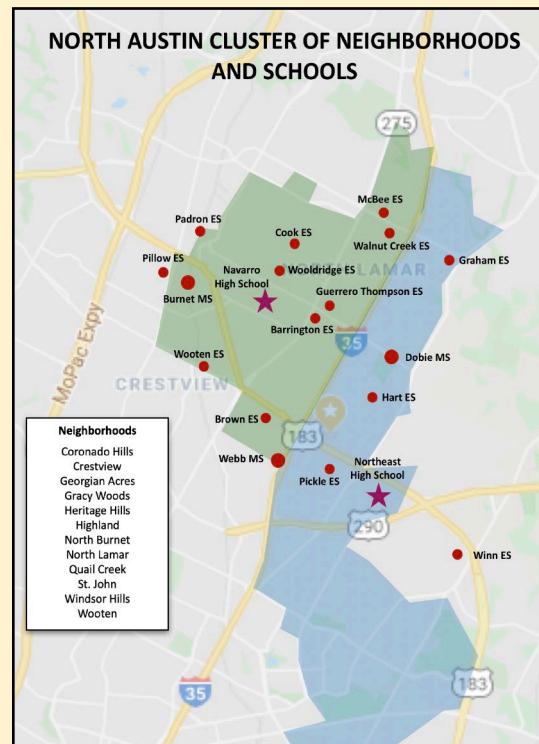
## PHASE 1 (2022-24): NORTHEAST AND NAVARRO VERTICAL TEAMS

**Phase 1 (2022-24):** Solidify work in North Austin (Northeast and Navarro Vertical Teams), including adding additional Navarro VT campuses. Lay groundwork for Phase 2 through campus/partner communication.

- 12 Neighborhoods
- 2 High Schools (Navarro, Northeast)
- 3 Middle Schools (Burnet, Dobie, Webb)
- 14 Elementary Schools

Both vertical teams have existing community schools. Community school alliance meetings exist at Webb, Dobie and Burnet/Navarro. Northeast Vertical Team has two years of network development, including a community needs assessment. Navarro Vertical Team network development will be expanded to four additional elementary schools, and a community needs assessment will be performed. North Austin has the largest concentration of Family Resource Centers (4).

The Phase 2 campuses (Eastside Memorial VT/LBJ) have had some community school development since 2012, including community school planning at Eastside Memorial and Martin MS. Martin MS and LBJ ECHS have FRCs, and Martin has a monthly community school alliance meeting. During Phase 1, conversations with community and campus stakeholders will build buy-in for community school development.



**PHASE 2 (2024–26): EASTSIDE MEMORIAL VERTICAL TEAM/LBJ VERTICAL TEAM**

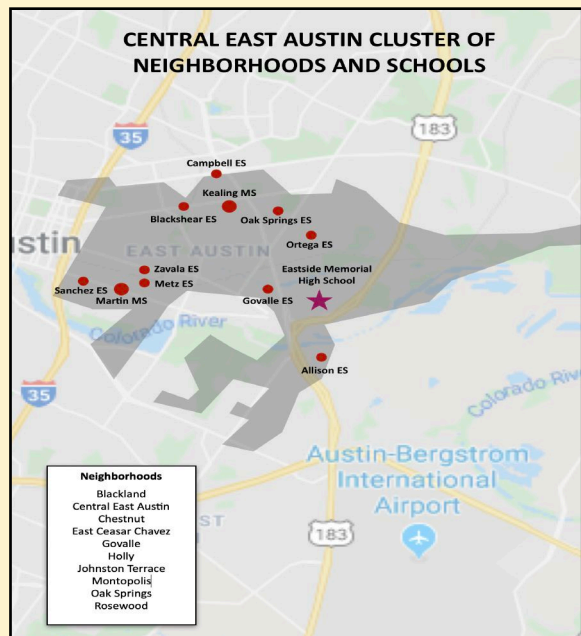
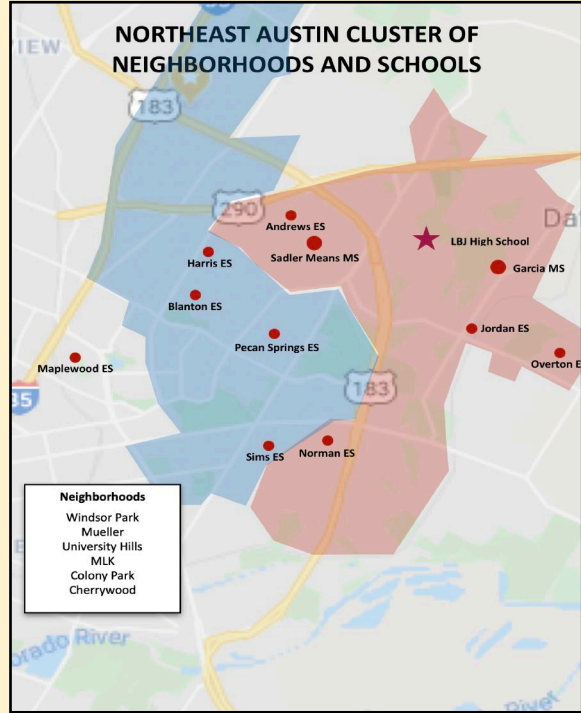
**Phase 2 (2024-26):** Develop Community School Networks in Central East and Montopolis (Eastside Memorial Vertical Team) and Northeast (LBJ Vertical Team) communities, while laying groundwork for Phase 3 through campus/partner communication.

- 16 Neighborhoods
- 2 High Schools (Eastside Memorial, LBJ)
- 4 Middle Schools (Garcia, Kealing, Martin, Sadler-Means)
- 18 Elementary Schools

Austin Voices has worked extensively with the Eastside Memorial feeder pattern since 2011, and elements of community schools already exist, including a Family Resource Center at Martin Middle School, Innovation Academies at Martin and Eastside, developed through community school planning, and large resource fairs. There has also been extensive feeder pattern planning led by Austin Voices, that has laid a foundation of shared leadership and collaboration. In Phase 2, community schools will be formalized in Central East Austin, with several new elementary schools and Kealing Middle School incorporated in the work. Also, while Allison Elementary School has been involved in community school planning, we will add a community-wide process in the Montopolis neighborhood.

While Northeast/Reagan ECHS is a community school serving some of the elementary schools in the Northeast cluster of neighborhoods, there are no formal community schools in this area. There has been organizing work with communities in this area over the past 15 years, and Austin Voices coordinates a Family Resource Center providing services at LBJ ECHS. The City of Austin has done extensive work in the Colony Park area, and there are other existing partnerships to leverage.

During this phase, groundwork will continue in the Dove Springs/South Austin areas to prepare for Phase 3.

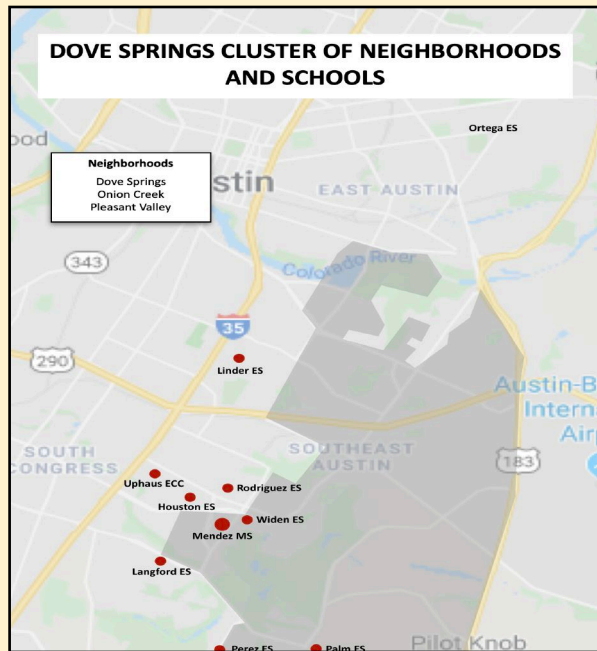
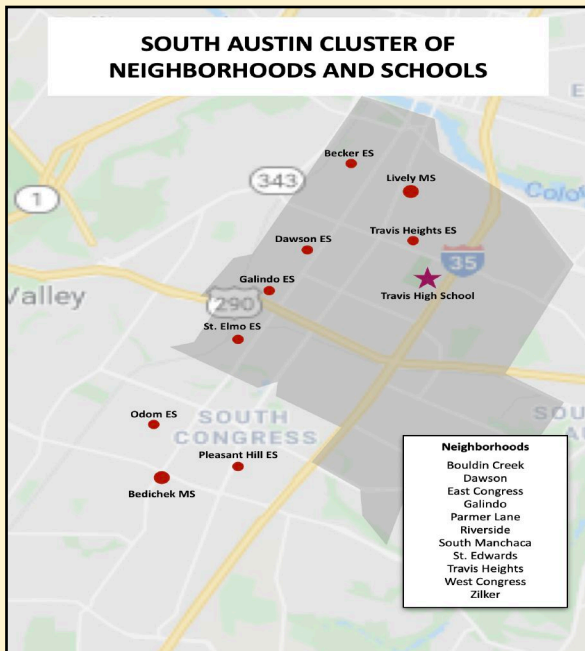


### PHASE 3 (2027-30): TRAVIS VERTICAL TEAM

**Phase 3 (2027-2030):** Develop Community School Networks in South Austin/Dove Springs (Travis Vertical Team).

- 14 Neighborhoods
- 1 High School (Travis)
- 4 Middle Schools (Bedichek, Lively, Mendez, Paredes)
- 15 Elementary Schools

Austin Voices has one Family Resource Center (Mendez) in the Phase 3 area, and has done extensive community engagement in the Dove Springs community. Education Austin has done community school organizing at Travis Early College High School and Paredes Middle School. It is likely that another Family Resource Center will need to be added in the Travis Vertical Team.





# Sustainability

The community school work that has been done over the past 15 years in AISD has yielded significant results, and has received national attention as a best practice. One of the lessons learned, however, is that moving from the pilot stage to sustainability is difficult, especially when you are involved in social innovation. The work up until this point has tended towards the heroic, including the work of principals, nonprofit agencies, community partners, and Austin Voices.

While heroic is praise-worthy, it is not sustainable. If addressing educational and economic inequity always comes down to some individual or group, school principal or teacher, working incredibly hard and ultimately burning out, then deep change will not come. Heroic work is a stage, but for sustainability, it must lead to changed systems, habits and cultures.

Our goal is nothing short of ensuring that throughout the crescent of opportunity, every child will have access to a high-quality, well-funded neighborhood schools that meets their needs, and that all families will be connected to strategies that reduce barriers to success, including affordable housing, access to healthcare and adequate employment. We believe that these are the keys to moving families onto pathways to prosperity.

To create a network of equitable, sustainable community schools across the “crescent of opportunity,” we believe the following elements are necessary:

1. **A leadership team** representative of the communities we serve to refine and implement this project.
2. **Leadership training** that will strengthen shared leadership practices between school staff, parents, partners and community members.
3. **The development of the Greater Austin Community School Coalition** (GACSC) as a collective impact organization that will drive cross-sector collaboration, leverage resources, and build public will in support of community schools.
4. **The alignment of programs, systems and resources in AISD** to support the success of community schools in the “crescent of opportunity.” This includes a commitment to equitable funding for crescent schools, including staffing, supports, and enrichment.
5. **The support of Austin Voices as a backbone/field catalyst organization<sup>35</sup>** to facilitate and advocate for this project.
6. **Expanded resources for community and nonprofit partners**, including grassroots organizations, that provide support for community schools.

## What does a backbone/field catalyst organization do?

Terms such as backbone, intermediary, and more recently, field catalyst, are used to describe organizations that help move large collective impact projects towards success. Definitions are fluid, and real-world practice shows significant variation. In most situations, one organization takes responsibility for helping the collaboration stay on track. The *Stanford Social Innovation Review* lists six common activities of a backbone organization: guide vision and strategy, support aligned activities, establish shared measurement practices, build public will, advance policy, mobilize funding. All of these are activities that Austin Voices has done to advance community schools over the past decade. In addition, the idea of “field catalyst” is used for an organization that moves thinking in a way that creates population-level change. An example would be groups that opposed smoking that were able to, over time, make smoking in public places unacceptable. The population-level change we want to see in Austin is a drastic change (much more than improving test scores) that makes educational, economic and racial equity a reality for neighborhoods across the crescent.

<sup>35</sup> Hussein, T., Plummer, M. & Breen, B. How Field Catalysts Galvanize Social Change. *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (Winter 2018). Retrieved from [https://ssir.org/articles/entry/field\\_catalysts](https://ssir.org/articles/entry/field_catalysts); Turner, S., Merchant, K., Kania, J. & Martin, E. Understanding the Value of Backbone Organizations in Collective Impact: Part 2. *Stanford Social Innovation Review* (July 18, 2012).

**VISION STATEMENT #3: PROJECT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SUSTAINABILITY**

We envision multi-tiered leadership that supports community school growth, creates systems, promotes advocacy and provides resources to sustain community schools for many years to come.

**Sustainability Objective #1: Using current leadership and partners as a foundation, we will create a leadership team in the first year of the Campaign for the Future that will refine strategic planning, develop short-term and long-term resources, advocate for community school priorities, and guide implementation and growth over the next seven years.**

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recruitment and training of a leadership team that is representative of public education stakeholders at both the community and city/county/district levels.</li> <li>Ability of leadership team to build support and expand resources to support community school priorities</li> <li>Support by school district, including senior administrators, trustees, mid-level staff, and campus staff for community school growth</li> <li>Capacity of Austin Voices, as backbone/field catalyst, to support leadership team planning process</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting of criteria for equity, diversity, and other standards for leadership team as set by current planning team</li> </ul>	100% of all criteria met annually
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting of milestones for advocacy, funding developing and resourcing of community school priorities</li> </ul>	% of milestones met
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of support for Austin Voices as backbone/field catalyst</li> </ul>	Annual budget goal met

**Sustainability Objective #2: We will work with community and education partners to create a leadership program that can train campus and district leadership, nonprofit partners, community leaders, and key parent volunteers in shared leadership practices.**

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community School leadership training developed with district and external partners to operationalize shared leadership practices</li> <li>Agreement by leadership team and school district on the principles of shared leadership, with support for implementation across all community schools</li> <li>Time and resources to support training district and campus staff, as well as other stakeholders</li> <li>Annual Community School planning process involving teachers/staff, parents, student and community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Leadership training in place by January, 2021, with participation by current community schools and district staff</li> </ul>	# of campuses participating; # of district personnel participating
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Written principles of shared leadership agreed on by December, 2021 by district and campaign leadership team</li> </ul>	Completion of written principles
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Funding support adequate for leadership training and development</li> </ul>	Funding goal met for 20-21 for backbone support
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Plans created or revised annually by campuses</li> </ul>	75% of parents, teachers and students involved in creation/revision of plan; 80% of strategies achieved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Faculty, parent and partner surveys</li> </ul>	% satisfaction with shared leadership implementation

**Sustainability Objective #3: We will help the Greater Austin Community School Coalition (GACSC) develop as a collective impact organization that can drive cross-sector collaboration and advocacy for regional community school growth.**

	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<p><b>What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GACSC’s role and responsibilities are mutually agreed upon by partners and the campaign leadership team</li> <li>GACSC has administrative support from CAN and Austin Voices</li> <li>GACSC hold quarterly city-wide community partner meetings to grow cross-sector collaboration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Revision of GACSC roles and responsibilities in the Campaign for the Future complete by January, 2021</li> </ul>	Completion of GACSC document
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Expansion of support for GACSC as collective impact facilitator and Austin Voices as backbone/field catalyst</li> </ul>	Annual budget goal met
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>GACSC holds quarterly collective impact meetings, with published results</li> </ul>	Annual GACSC collective impact plans revised and published

**Sustainability Objective #4: We will work with AISD to build infrastructure, administrative support, resources and systems to support community schools as a major initiative within the district.**

	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<p><b>What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Growth of Community Schools is embedded in AISD’s strategic plan and is a priority for superintendent and Board of Trustees</li> <li>Time given by district for community school planning and systems improvement</li> <li>District budget supports community school priorities, including early childhood, after school, student and family supports, as well as core academic needs, including special education and English language learners</li> <li>District honors individual campus community school plans, and supports locally-identified priorities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community schools embedded in AISD strategic plan, including superintendent goals</li> </ul>	Community school board priority document completed and approved
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Systems review and planning to reduce silos and improve collaboration in place</li> </ul>	Systems review completed with goals for improved collaboration
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>District budget supports community schools and equity priorities</li> </ul>	% budget increase dedicated to community school/equity priorities
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Campus community school planning, as well as community partner planning is integrated into district academic goals and processes</li> </ul>	Alignment process completed annually



**Sustainability Objective #5: We will increase support for Austin Voices as backbone/field catalyst organization, in order to grow capacity and needed staffing, and will look for opportunities to add other backbone organizations to grow community schools throughout central Texas.**

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Clear definition and agreement by leadership team as to Austin Voices’ role and responsibilities as backbone/field catalyst organization</li> <li>• Adequate resourcing for Austin Voices to be able to provide backbone support, including data tracking, social service coordination, event planning, meeting support, and evaluation</li> <li>• Clear process for growing additional backbone organizations to other areas of central Texas</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• MOU between Austin Voices, AISD, and Campaign Leadership Partners</li> </ul>	MOU complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Fundraising matches budget goals and timeline for expansion of Austin Voices’ capacity</li> </ul>	Fundraising goals met
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Process developed for growing additional backbone organizations</li> </ul>	Process development complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual evaluation of campaign</li> </ul>	Evaluation complete and published

**Sustainability Objective #6: We will help expand resources for community and nonprofit partners, including grassroots organizations, that provide support for community schools.**

What Will It Take To Reach This Objective?	MEASUREMENTS OF SUCCESS	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Assessment of current services by nonprofits and community organizations that work to community schools</li> <li>• Understanding of equity needs in schools and communities</li> <li>• Development of annual advocacy and funding goals</li> <li>• Development of community grant process to support grassroots partners and community projects</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nonprofit and volunteer support assessment at current community schools</li> </ul>	Annual assessment complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Equity assessment at Phase 1 schools (with Phase 2 and 3 completed in future years)</li> </ul>	Annual equity assessment complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Annual review of community partner support needs</li> </ul>	Annual review complete
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Development of community grant process</li> </ul>	Process complete and implemented

# COMMUNITY SCHOOLS: FUNDING

How much will it cost to expand community schools throughout the “crescent of opportunity?” How much will it cost to achieve community transformation, marked by educational, economic and racial equity? Obviously, breaking down the cost of a project like this that involves leveraging existing resources, as well as filling gaps and creating new investments, is complex.

## **We have identified four categories of funding for this project:**

1. Basic cost of a typical community school
2. Additional supports by AISD needed to provide equitable staffing, supports and programs at community schools
3. “Campaign for the Future” project costs, including project backbone and administration, training, and innovation grants for community-based organizations and teachers
4. Additional support at the city and county level to address root cause issues associated with poverty, including affordable housing, access to healthcare, early childhood/childcare, family stability and workforce development

## **While these investments may seem significant, they are more than balanced out by the following:**

- Cost-benefit analyses of community school interventions has estimated that, for every \$1 invested in community schools, the community receives a \$3 to \$15 savings in funding going to other services, including crime prevention, health costs, and other social services.<sup>36</sup>
- Community schools work by leveraging existing resources and bring needed coordination and infrastructure to campuses. Austin Voices, as well as other community school partners, bring grants, services and volunteer hours to campuses annually, saving the school district significant budget dollars.
- Community schools increase enrollment and attendance, resulting in millions of dollars in additional state funding to campuses annually. Simply doubling the enrollment at Webb Middle School from 350 to 700 students results in over \$2.5 million annually in additional state funding. While some of this funding is spent on the additional staff needed for those students, it also expands the amount of funding that can be spread across fixed expenses, such as facilities, administration, utilities and security.
- The social and economic benefits to the community brought by increasing high school and college completion rates is substantial, as more graduates become homeowners and net contributors to Austin’s tax base.

### **1. Basic Cost of a Community School**

Depending on the context and the needs, the cost of creating a community school will vary widely. Typical costs include a community school coordinator, a robust after school program with a program coordinator, and costs associated with parent engagement and adult education. Various wraparound supports for students and families, mentoring, tutoring, and other services may be provided by the school or by partners.

The two charts below illustrate the different costs associated with a community school. Note that community schools are able to leverage partner services because of the capacity for coordination offered by the campus coordinator, as well as the backbone (or intermediary) organization, which can recruit and organize partner services across multiple campuses. In fact, the funding model below shows that the majority of costs for community schools can be provided by partners (including city, county, nonprofits, and other funders). Total estimated cost for a community school that is part of a network of schools would be **\$230,000 per year**, not including funding for academic, administrative and support staff or extra programming costs.

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<sup>36</sup> Maier, A., Daniel, J., Oakes, J., & Lam, L. (2017). *Community schools as an effective school improvement strategy: A review of the evidence*. Palo Alto, CA: Learning Policy Institute. Retrieved from <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/community-schools-effective-school-improvement-report>.

## A FUNDING MODEL FOR COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

A well-functioning Community School, *in addition to adequately funding academic programs* that meet the needs of its students, also improves students outcomes by reducing barriers to learning, improving conditions for learning and increasing opportunities for learning. In order to achieve **equity** across a school system, resources may be distributed differently to support student success.

**Who Pays for Community Schools?**

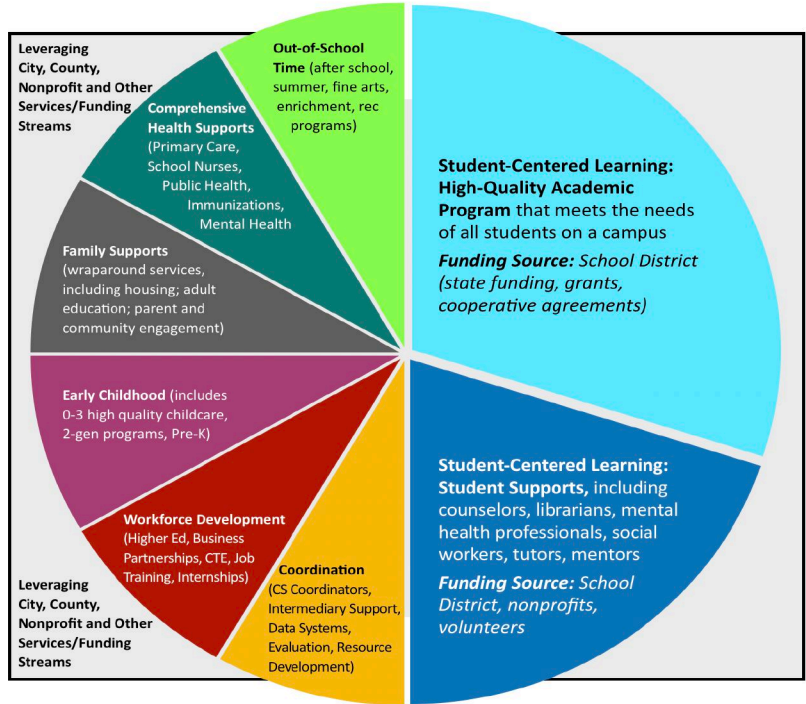
Community schools are funded through a combination of direct spending by the school district, investment by the local community, and leveraged supports and services. Typically, in addition to the academic program, school districts provide 25% of the cost of community school supports, local government provides another 25% and community, state and federal partners provide 50% of the cost.\*

**The Role of the Intermediary**

The majority of Community Schools nationally use an **intermediary organization**, focused on Community School development. These organizations provide training, advocacy, systems improvement, evaluation and resource development.

**The Role of the Coordinator**

A cornerstone of the Community School model is the campus **Community School Coordinator**. Their job is to manage partnerships, increase volunteer, parent and community involvement, coordinate student and family supports, and facilitate campus planning.

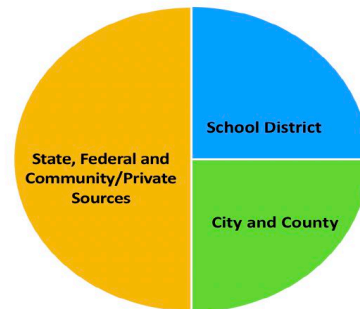


## CALCULATING THE COST OF A TYPICAL COMMUNITY SCHOOL

**What does it cost to provide all of the programs and services that a community school needs to achieve its mission?**

The size of the school is one factor. A school with 1,200 students will require more counselors, after school program staff, family supports, social workers and so on compared to a school of 300 students. Also, schools that are part of a system of community schools can share costs of some programs, supports and engagement activities. If a school currently has adequate funding for academic and student supports (counseling, school nurse, other support staff), the following example shows the additional funding that will be needed to meet the basic requirements of being a community school.

Community School Coordinator	\$62,000 (including benefits)
After School Program Coordinator	\$20,000
After School Program Costs	\$30,000
Parent Engagement and Planning Costs*	\$10,000
Adult and Parent Education	\$8,000
Shared Cost of Family Resource Center (.5)**	\$75,000
Miscellaneous Costs (Printing, Events, IT)	\$15,000
Communities in Schools (Shared Costs)***	(Costs Vary By Campus)
Shared Intermediary Costs	\$10,000
<b>Total:</b>	<b>\$230,000</b>



A Sustainable Mix of Funding

Examples of Opportunities for Leveraged Resources and Funding					
Family Stability	Health Supports	Out-of-School Time	Workforce Development	Early Childhood	Student-Centered Learning
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Austin Energy Plus 1</li> <li>•Travis County Rent Assistance</li> <li>•Joint City/County/AISD Family Resource Center Support</li> <li>•Foundation Communities</li> <li>•Austin Voices</li> <li>•ECHO Coalition</li> <li>•HACA</li> <li>•Mobility Blueprint</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Austin Public Health</li> <li>•Central Health</li> <li>•CommUnity Care</li> <li>•School-based Mental Health Centers</li> <li>•School Resource Fairs</li> <li>•Dell Children's Health Express Mobile Clinic</li> <li>•Seton Healthcare Family</li> <li>•St. David's Theo Project</li> <li>•People's Community Clinic</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•ACE After School Federal Grant</li> <li>•Andy Roddick Foundation Funding</li> <li>•Parks and Rec Programs</li> <li>•Prime Time City Funding</li> <li>•Boys and Girls Club</li> <li>•JKL Foundation</li> <li>•Creative Learning Initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Austin Community College Job Training/Adult Education</li> <li>•Travis County Workforce Development Strategic Plan</li> <li>•AVEY Adult Academies</li> <li>•Literacy Coalition</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•United Way 2-Gen Strategic Plan/Grants</li> <li>•Child Inc. Head Start</li> <li>•AVANCE</li> <li>•AISD Pre-K</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Early College High School Partnerships</li> <li>•Austin Child Guidance Ctr</li> <li>•Lifeworks</li> <li>•CARY</li> <li>•AVEY Community School Planning</li> <li>•Various Mentoring Programs</li> </ul>

\*Assumes that district is providing Parent Support Specialists and other school district support personnel (counselors, graduation coaches, social workers, etc.). \*\*Basic cost of AVEY Family Resource Center \$150,000, including full-time bilingual social worker and FRC Director. One FRC can serve two campuses. \*\*\*CIS programs already exist on many campuses. Costs vary based on campus needs, and are cost-shared with each campus.



Many campuses in the “crescent of opportunity” already have after school programs and Communities in Schools, as well as a Parent Support Specialist who can focus on parent engagement, further reducing the cost of creating a new community school. Costs may be less for a smaller elementary school, more for a large middle or high school, but the key is that a well-functioning community school is affordable, and will leverage many times the money invested in additional resources and benefits.

## 2. Additional supports by AISD needed to provide equitable staffing, supports and programs at community schools

For community schools to be truly transformative in the “crescent of opportunity,” several systemic equity challenges need to be addressed with additional resources from the school district:

- High teacher turnover, which can be addressed through incentive pay and mentoring programs.
- Improved services for special education and English Language Learners (ELLs)
- Universal high-quality after school programs in the “crescent of opportunity”
- Universal Pre-K and expanded 2-gen early childhood programs
- Expanded college and career programs, including real-world workplace internships and certifications
- Expanded family stability supports, including Family Resource Centers

We estimate that, on average, community schools in the “crescent of opportunity” would need an additional \$1.5 million annually to pay for teacher incentive pay, training, additional student and family supports, additional supports for special education and ELLs, college and career preparation, early childhood programs, after school programs, enrichment/fine arts programs, and facility upgrades. A significant portion of this additional funding could be paid for out of enrollment growth and accessing state-level funding.

## 3. “Campaign for the Future” project costs, including project backbone and administration, training, and innovation grants for community-based organizations and teachers

**\$3.2 million annual investment** is our goal by year 3 of the project.<sup>37</sup> The planning year (2020-22) will require \$250,000 for expanding backbone funding (Austin Voices) and \$100,000 support for collective impact development (GACSC/CAN) for a total of \$350,000. These two groups will focus on funding development to support the rest of the project, as well as preparing for Phase I in 2022. Total projected cost of the 8-year project is \$19.55 million.

Category	Description	Cost	%
<b>Backbone/ Field Catalyst</b>	Funding for expanded capacity of project backbone (Austin Voices) for staffing, training, meeting facilitation, administration, data, evaluation, community events.	\$500,000 annually	15.6%
<b>Cross-Sector Planning</b>	Funding for collective impact organization (Greater Austin Community School Coalition-GACSC) to facilitate citywide cross-sector planning that supports campus and community transformation.	\$200,000 annually	6.25%
<b>Student &amp; Family Supports</b>	Key campus and community partners (nonprofits and community-based organizations) are supported to expand their service capacity across the “crescent of opportunity.”	\$1.5 million annually	47%
<b>Community Grants</b>	Innovation funding (i.e. the Austin Ed Fund) is in place to support grassroots participation, including youth, in community-level change.	\$500,000 annually	15.6%
<b>Teacher Innovation Grants</b>	Teacher Innovation Grants to support leadership in teaching excellence and innovation throughout the “crescent of opportunity.”	\$500,000 annually	15.6%

<sup>37</sup> (not including various city and county investments in affordable housing, early childhood, workforce development, access to healthcare and family stability) This also does not include AISD’s \$1.5 million per school investment in community school equity.

**4. Additional support at the city and county level to address root cause issues associated with poverty, including affordable housing, access to healthcare, early childhood/childcare, family stability and workforce development**

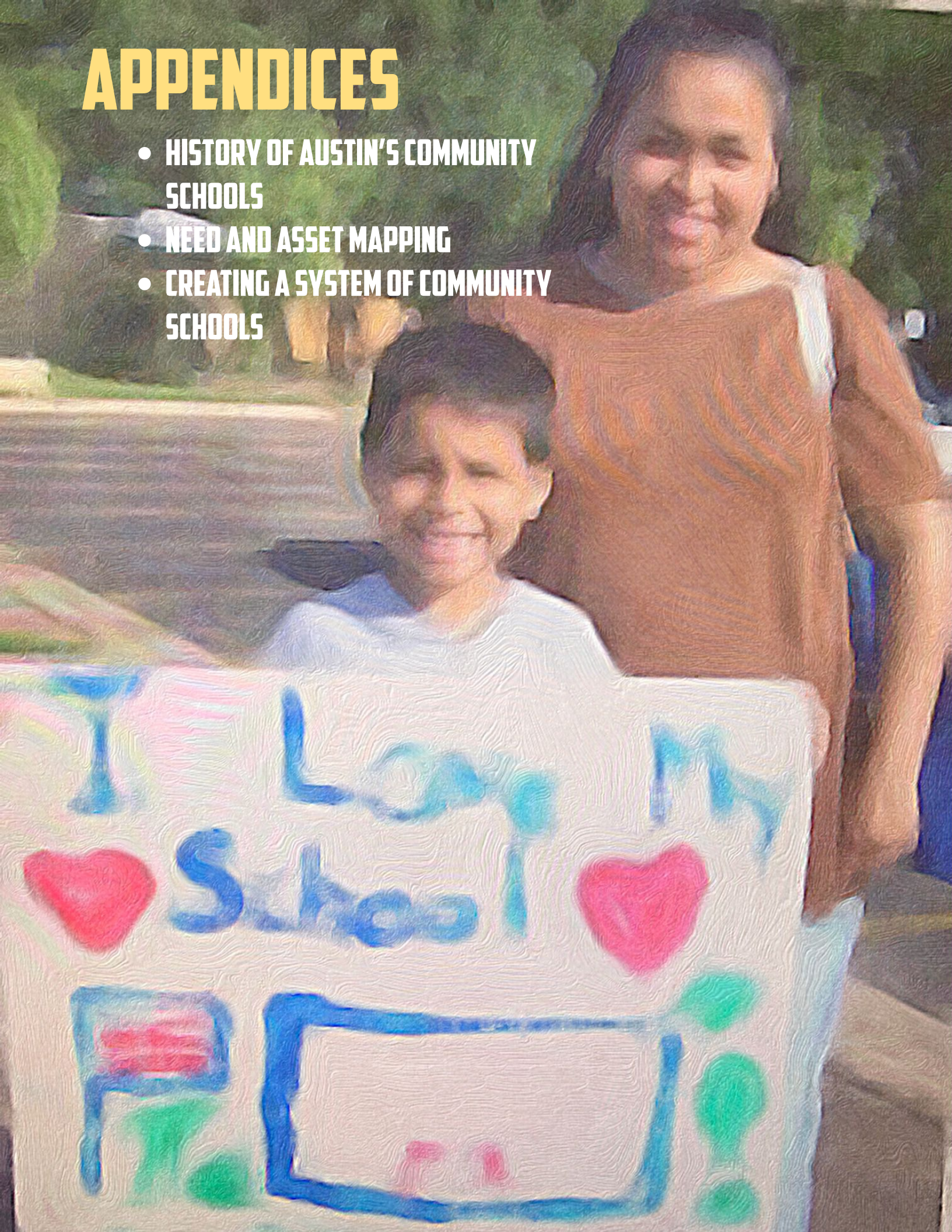
Estimating the cost of making significant progress on factors affecting economic equity is complex, but is important if we are serious about making transformation change. It will involve a combination of using public and private funding, as well as leveraging the efforts of nonprofits, businesses and various coalitions who have made progress on these issues. Strategies for change will demand extensive research, advocacy, fundraising, administrative support, and creativity, with a diverse set of voices at the table. In the long run, the return on investment, both in human and economic terms, will make the effort worthwhile.

Category	Description	Cost	Possible Funding Source
<b>Affordable Housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Rent Assistance in “crescent of opportunity” for all families below 200%FPL, with a ceiling of \$850 per month rent.</li> <li>• Home buying assistance for low-income families to increase home ownership in crescent.</li> <li>• Continued and expanded utility assistance through Austin Energy Plus 1 program.</li> <li>• Home weatherization program</li> </ul>	\$30-\$50M annually	Property Tax Rebates
<b>Access to Healthcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on universal and accessible high-needs services for children and families (immunizations, asthma, diabetes, prenatal).</li> <li>• Invest in high-functioning CATCH programs at all crescent campuses.</li> <li>• Invest in nutrition and food security in “food deserts.”</li> <li>• Advocate on Medicaid expansion and other strategies to fill gaps for the uninsured.</li> </ul>	\$5-\$10M annually	State/Federal Grants
<b>Early Childhood/Childcare</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded daycare and early childhood programs for low-income families, in partnership with high-quality providers, allowing more parents to work and reducing family expenses.</li> <li>• Universal Pre-K offered to all low-income families, included programs for children with developmental delays or other special needs.</li> </ul>	\$5M annually	Public, Private, Federal Grants
<b>Family Stability</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expanded use of Family Resource Centers, APH Neighborhood Centers and other case-management services for families.</li> <li>• Improved coordination and capacity for providers supporting basic needs, homelessness, mental health, housing, food security and other family stability factors.</li> </ul>	\$10M annually	Public, Private, Federal Grants
<b>Workforce Development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Expand business and higher education partnerships (including HBCU's) with all crescent high schools and middle schools.</li> <li>• Expand workplace internships for students and scholarships to cover job certifications.</li> <li>• Expand support for middle school CTE and college transition programs</li> </ul>	\$20M annually	Business, Private, State Grants, Tax Rebates



# APPENDICES

- HISTORY OF AUSTIN'S COMMUNITY SCHOOLS
- NEED AND ASSET MAPPING
- CREATING A SYSTEM OF COMMUNITY SCHOOLS





# Section 1: History of Austin’s Community Schools

## A Timeline of Community School Development in Austin

**Campaign for the Future supports expansion of community schools throughout Austin’s “crescent of opportunity.”**

<b>2021-29</b>	
<b>2010-20</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationally, community schools spread rapidly as a response to privatization and school closures targeting low-income schools. Teacher unions and state education associations advocate for community schools across the country</li> <li>Locally, community schools spread to 12 AISD campuses, with 8 Family Resource Centers providing wraparound supports to 4,000 families annually. Austin Voices partners with Education Austin, the AFT and NEA to fund expansion. AISD hires first dedicated staff member to support community schools.</li> <li>Austin Voices receives federal Full-Service Community Schools grant to fund expansion to school in the Lanier feeder pattern, and partners with AISD to obtain funding from the Texas Education Agency for further expansion.</li> <li>Positive results in Austin are recognized by national organizations, including the Center for Popular Democracy, which point to the decreased mobility, increased graduation rate and coordinated partnerships as evidence of success</li> <li>Austin Voices partners with the Texas AFT and Texas State Teachers Association to pass community school legislation, start a statewide community school summit, and spread community schools in cities across Texas.</li> <li>Austin Voices, The Austin Project, Education Austin and numerous nonprofits partner with the City of Austin and Travis County to establish a city-wide support group for community schools (Greater Austin Community Schools Coalition)</li> </ul>
<b>2000-10</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Coalition for Community Schools begins national conferences, advocates for increased federal support for community schools, and develops research base</li> <li>Ready by 21, Success by Six, E3 Alliance and other collective impact education initiatives begin in Austin</li> <li>Community members and Austin Voices begin first intentional community school effort in St. John community, leading transformations at Webb Middle School and Reagan High School. Efforts include passing state legislation to limit school closure and support school community partnerships, as well as starting Family Resource Centers</li> </ul>
<b>1980-‘00</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal Full-Service Community Schools grant program created to support pilot projects nationwide</li> <li>Coalition for Community Schools created to support networking and adoption of best practices in local community school projects.</li> <li>Texas passes major community school legislation to support adult education</li> <li>Local anti-poverty projects piloted, including The Austin Project</li> <li>Austin ISD and ACC develop robust citywide adult education program (called community education)</li> </ul>
<b>1960-‘80</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Federal government creates “war on poverty,” including expansion of social services for families and the funding of community-based programs</li> <li>First state-level community school grants offered in Florida.</li> <li>New nonprofits, including “Community in Schools (CIS)” create partnerships between schools and low-income campuses</li> </ul>
<b>1940-‘60</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>First “community schools” develop in Flint, Michigan as a partnership between local schools and the parks and recreation department. Thousands of visitors come to see how a school can become a hub of community education, with after school, summer and adult programs.</li> <li>The Mott Foundation spearheads expansion of community schools in communities across the country.</li> </ul>

## Section 2: Need and Asset Mapping

**With a lofty goal of helping schools and communities become transformative engines of social innovation that turn the tide on educational and economic inequity, how do we measure success over time? What can we accomplish in three to six years, and how do changes become sustainable?**

As we address these questions, we also need to keep in mind that we are launching a project in, perhaps, the worst and the best time possible. It is the worst in that the COVID-19 crisis is pushing many of our families deeper into poverty, some to the point of disappearing from Austin completely. It is a time when children who can least afford “learning loss” are separated from teachers, mentors, and for some, their safe harbor, for six months or more. The damage will not be clear for some time to come, but we know, both economically and educationally, we will have to spend months and years regaining lost ground.

But it is also the best time to be launching this project, because we are prepared with experience, tools and partnerships that are already helping families stabilize and students learn. If ever there was a time to scale up the community school model, this is it.

*So how do we measure success? The answer is three-fold:<sup>38</sup>*

- 1. Understand needs and the problems they produce.** For example, we know that a lack of affordable housing (measurable) causes high student mobility (measurable), resulting in poor attendance (measurable) and low-academic performance and graduation rates for mobile students (measurable).
- 2. Understand the differences from school to school, community to community, that may drive success or failure.** This includes understanding both strengths/assets and particular challenges. For example, a particular school may have an experienced principal with many years at that campus who has been able to build a stable and experienced staff. A nearby school may have had three principals in three years. How will this affect improvement efforts at both campuses?
- 3. Create strategies that address particular needs, have measurable results, and advance long-term goals.** “We cannot improve at scale what we cannot measure” (Bryk et al, 2015). Use a networked community of practice to evaluate, adjust and scale strategies across campuses.



### Understanding Needs and Their Impact on Students and Families

For this project, we have access to robust quantitative and qualitative data describing needs and assets that can be used by campus, community and citywide teams to plan. Work over the past decade has produced a strong foundation of data for north, northeast and central east Austin, with less data for south Austin campus and communities.

*Sources of campus and community data include:*

- 1. AVEY FRC Family Needs Survey:** Developed by the Austin Voices Family Resource Centers in 2007, this bilingual survey is given annually at our existing community schools. Between 50 and 70% of families return this survey, and all new families registering at community schools fill out the survey. Data collected includes:

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<sup>38</sup> This section pulls from two sources, as well as our own experience. *Learning to Improve: How America's Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better*, Anthony S. Bryk et al. (2015), Harvard Education Press and *Building Communities from the Inside Out: A Path Toward Finding and Mobilizing a Community's Assets*, John P. Kretzmann and John L. McKnight (1993), Northwestern University.

- Health Insurance (both adult and child)
- Chronic Health conditions (asthma, diabetes, pregnancy)
- Whether the family has moved in the past year
- Access to technology (computer and internet)
- Basic Needs (Housing, finances, access to healthcare, employment, transportation, etc.)
- Interest in adult education (ESL, GED, Computer Literacy, etc.)
- Desire for a mentor for their student
- Desire to volunteer
- Whether they have a library card

We currently have multi-year data covering communities throughout the crescent, except the neighborhoods around Travis High School in south Austin. The survey includes a consent that allows data to be used for research purposes, as well as service delivery.

Date: \_\_\_\_\_  
**Community School Initiative Family Registration Form**  
**Webb Early College Prep Academy (SY 2019-20)**

The Austin ISD Community School Initiative and Family Resource Center (FRC) is a system of resources and partnerships coordinated by Austin Vocator for Education and Youth (AVEY), a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization and Agent of Austin ISD. The Community School Initiative/FRC links students and families with educational, enrichment, health, and social services provided by community partners; it facilitates community engagement and planning for school improvement. By completing this form myself and my family members identified below are registered for this initiative as long as my children are enrolled at an Austin ISD school.

Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Parent/Guardian Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth: \_\_\_\_\_ Relationship to student: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Race:  American Indian/Alaskan Native  Asian  Black/African American  Chinese Hawaiian/Pacific Islander  Other  Two Races  
 Ethnicity:  Hispanic/Latino  Non-Hispanic/Latino Language:  English  Spanish  Arabic  Other \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: \_\_\_\_\_ Apt. R# \_\_\_\_\_ Zip: \_\_\_\_\_ How long at this address? \_\_\_\_\_ Years/ \_\_\_\_\_ Months  
 Cell Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Home Phone: \_\_\_\_\_ Email: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Total number of people in your household: \_\_\_\_\_ Number of children younger than 18 years old: \_\_\_\_\_

Children's First and Last Names	Date of Birth	School	Grade	ASD Student ID #

**Family Needs Survey**

By completing and returning this survey, I am granting permission for this information to be used by school staff, AVEY, FRC staff, and Agents of the FRC to contact me about services that may be available to my family. Information will also be used for planning services and classes. I give permission for this data to be kept on file and electronically. Providing information on this survey is optional.

1. Do you have a computer at home?  Yes  No Internet access?  Yes  No Do you use it?  Yes  No
2. Are you new to this school this year?  No  Yes, if yes, where did your child attend school last year? \_\_\_\_\_
3. What kind of medical insurance do all the children in your household have? **Please check all that apply.**  
 Medicaid  CHIP  MAP  Sliding fee scale (Clinic Card)  Private insurance  Affordable Care Act  None
4. Does/Is anyone in your household:  
 • Have coughing, wheezing or chest tightness (symptoms of asthma)?  No  Yes  
 • Have high blood sugar (symptoms of diabetes)?  No  Yes  
 • Pregnant?  No  Yes Teen Parent?  No  Yes  
 • Adults 18 years of age and older who do NOT have health insurance?  No  Yes
5. Would you like information about any of the following? **Please check all that apply.**  
 Employment  Food  SNAP (Food stamp)  Clothing  Rent/Housing Assistance  Housing  Transportation  
 Medical insurance  Health Care  Dental  Counseling/Mental Health Services  After school programs  
 Tutoring for your child  Mentoring for your child (if yes to mentoring, is a parent in prison?)  No  Yes  
 Applying for college  Legal Assistance  Immigration  Volunteer opportunities at school  
 CDSIS Parent/Child web-based program to allow parents to access parent/ student grades, attendance and email (teacher)  
 English classes  ESL prep  Adult Literacy  In English  In Spanish  
 Computer/Internet/email  Parenting classes/teen issues  Healthy cooking  Exercise  
 Leadership training  Neighborhood Watch Training  Preparing children under 5 years for school  
 CDSIS Parent/Child web-based program to allow parents to access parent/ student grades, attendance and email (teacher)
6. Do you have a library card for free services in the Austin Public Library System?  No  Yes  
 CDSIS Parent/Child web-based program to allow parents to access parent/ student grades, attendance and email (teacher)
7. Do you have a library card for free services in the Austin Public Library System?  No  Yes
8. Would you like the Family Resource Center to contact you about a specific need?  Yes  No  Please see other side

For office use only: Date Entered: \_\_\_\_\_ by whom: \_\_\_\_\_ ID# \_\_\_\_\_

**2. The Texas Education Agency** also collects data on each campus that is central for this project (TAPR/AEIS annual reports). Data points include:

- Student and teacher demographics
- Teacher experience and faculty turnover
- Academic testing data
- Enrollment
- Attendance
- # of students enrolled in special education, gifted and talented, and vocational classes
- Student mobility
- 4-year graduation rate
- Behavior referrals

**3. Austin ISD (and other school districts)** collect additional campus data, including:

- Parent satisfaction surveys
- Student surveys (at the high school level)
- Campus technology use surveys
- Teacher surveys (TELL)
- Coordinated School Health Report
- Additional data on bilingual, special education and other subpopulations

**4. Community School planning data.** Every school year, most AISD community schools hold fall and spring community planning dinners to collect qualitative data on strengths, challenges and new ideas that can be incorporated into campus improvement and community school planning documents. Faculty also complete annual community school planning surveys. This data is used by campus/community planning teams to create community school improvement plan, which undergo major revision every 3-5 years. Community school strategies are also incorporated into annual Campus Improvement Plans (CIP), which are required by the state and revised annually.

**BURNET MIDDLE SCHOOL**  
 COMMUNITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN  
 Summer 2019 | Marivella De La Rosa, Principal

**ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL**

- School & Learning Community Hub
- College, Career and Service Focus
- Community Partnerships
- Coordinated Supports for Families and Students
- Expanded Learning Opportunities (after school/weekend)
- Strong Early Childhood Programs
- Parent, Staff, Student & Community Plan Together

**DEMOGRAPHICS**

Student Enrollment	928
Economically Disadvantaged	82.2%
English Language Learners	18.2%
Special Education	18.1%
Student Mobility	24.1%
Attendance Rate	92.4%
2018 Accountability Rating	Met Standard

**CAMPUS BASICS**

School Mission: *Learn and Thrive*

**STRENGTHS**

- Engaged efforts with parents and community, including community resource linkages and walk-throughs and business are supported through community partners and Family Resource Center
- Professional Learning Community and joint planning by staff
- Variety of programs, including academic, fine arts and activities
- Increased college and career awareness

**CHALLENGES**

- Communication and engagement with all parents
- Need for more parent volunteers on campus
- Family members unable to access parent/ student grades
- Outdated physical building, environmental issues and maintenance
- Language, including signage
- Lack of funding to support dual language learning
- Supports for English Language Learners
- Lack of a full-time language support person
- Campus culture and school spirit
- Culture, community and familiarity with the community
- Student attendance and mobility
- Capacity of Child Study. Need to support all students
- Consistent approach to discipline with a positive school climate
- Partnership to support athletics, events and fundraisers
- Stronger connections to feeder campuses

**KEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL STRATEGIES**

**Parent Involvement and Communication**

1. Invite new parents and community events, including School Bus to School and open house events and community dinners or other parent events monthly.
2. Hold community walk-throughs about campus and school year to meet with families in the community.
3. Create parent volunteer registration and training system.
4. Engage parent cohort registration with all parent and family members and events, including FRC services.
5. Publicize monthly events calendar to include language support.
6. Continue offering wide range of adult and parent classes, including FRC, ESL, and English language.
7. Use broader approach for parent engagement, including home visits, home-based professional development, webinars, and parent walk-through training.

**Community and Feeder Campuses**

1. Create a local coalition committee with parents and community partners.
2. Focus on increasing service and a welcoming environment
3. Increase connections to feeder campuses throughout the school year.

**CHALLENGES**

1. Communication and engagement with all parents
2. Need for more parent volunteers on campus
3. Family members unable to access parent/ student grades
4. Outdated physical building, environmental issues and maintenance
5. Language, including signage
6. Lack of funding to support dual language learning
7. Supports for English Language Learners
8. Lack of a full-time language support person
9. Campus culture and school spirit
10. Culture, community and familiarity with the community
11. Student attendance and mobility
12. Capacity of Child Study. Need to support all students
13. Consistent approach to discipline with a positive school climate
14. Partnership to support athletics, events and fundraisers
15. Stronger connections to feeder campuses

**Support for Academic Programs**

1. Create a sustainability plan for dual-language program with staffing and other resources.
2. Assess EL programs to ensure all students have adequate supports.
3. Align EL standards, CTE and academic classes with early learner standards and all of students teachers.
4. Build stronger traditions from elementary levels to Burnet.
5. Recruit business leaders and seek to subsidize through regional business district and agencies.
6. Develop technology support that reaches teachers, students and parents along with new technology program.
7. Expand after school programs and activities.

**Climate and Culture**

1. Host school, parent and community events, including dinners, resource fairs and pop ups, to celebrate school achievement and bring the family together.
2. Obtain new athletic uniforms and attire for student and staff.
3. Increase school spirit and community awareness.

**KEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL STRATEGIES**

**Parent Involvement and Communication**

1. Invite new parents and community events, including School Bus to School and open house events and community dinners or other parent events monthly.
2. Hold community walk-throughs about campus and school year to meet with families in the community.
3. Create parent volunteer registration and training system.
4. Engage parent cohort registration with all parent and family members and events, including FRC services.
5. Publicize monthly events calendar to include language support.
6. Continue offering wide range of adult and parent classes, including FRC, ESL, and English language.
7. Use broader approach for parent engagement, including home visits, home-based professional development, webinars, and parent walk-through training.

**Community and Feeder Campuses**

1. Create a local coalition committee with parents and community partners.
2. Focus on increasing service and a welcoming environment
3. Increase connections to feeder campuses throughout the school year.



**5. Greater Austin Community School Coalition (GACSC) Data:** Three years ago, the GACSC, a citywide coalition founded as an initiative through the mayor’s office by AVEY, Education Austin, CIS, United Way for Greater Austin, the Community Advancement Network (CAN), AISD, and other partners, convened a series of quarterly meetings, forming into teams around the following sectors:

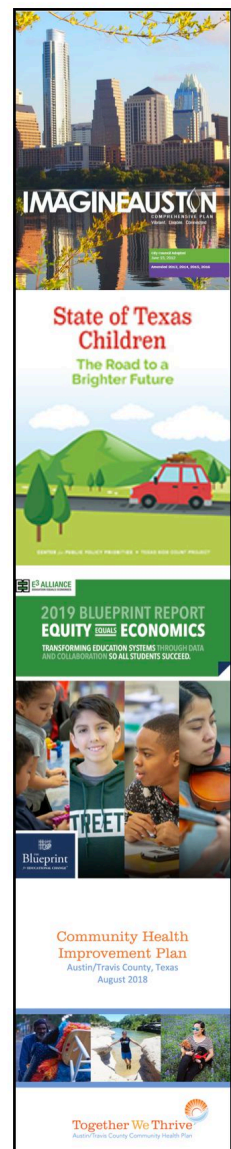
- High Quality Early Childhood Programs
- Effective Student-Centered Learning and Supports
- High Quality Expanded Learning and Enrichment
- Workforce Development Programs
- Health Supports (Social, Emotional, Physical)
- Family Stability Supports

Each team completed a qualitative needs and asset assessment for their sector, and suggested citywide community school strategies, which were then incorporated into a community school logic model. The team findings are summarized on page XX of this document.

**6. Census data** is also helpful at the census tract and zip code level. An example of census data across key areas, based on our target communities, is attached as an appendix.

**7. City, county and nonprofit reports** focused on health, housing/homelessness, workforce development, early childhood development, and other community data are helpful for setting goals in our five community clusters.

- **City/County:** Imagine Austin Comprehensive Plan (2012), Austin Strategic Direction 2023, City of Austin/City Council. City of Austin Community Survey (2019), CAN Strategic Plan 2020-2025, CAN Community Council—Person-Centered Community Report, CAN Child Poverty Report
- **Education:** Blueprint for Educational Change (E3 Alliance), AARO Education Reports, TEA AEIS/TAPR Reports
- **Health:** Central Health Demographic Report (2017), Central Health Community Benefit Report (2017), CommUnity Care Annual Report, Community Health Assessment-Austin/Travis County (2017), AISD Coordinated School Health Report, People’s Community Clinic Annual Report (2017), CPPP Children’s Health Report (2019), VIDA School Mental Health Report (2017)
- **Housing:** Austin Strategic Housing Blueprint (2017), City of Austin Anti-Displacement Task Force Report (2018), 2019 City of Austin Community Survey
- **Workforce Development:** Community Master Workforce Plan (Capital Area Workforce Solutions), Worker’s Defense Projects Reports (2009-2015), Austin ISD Career and Technology Education (CTE)
- **Early Childhood:** City of Austin Early Childhood Council Annual Report (2018), Success by Six Strategic Plan (2019)
- **Equity:** Mayor’s Task Force on Institutional Racism and Systemic Inequities Report (2017), Spirit of East Austin, Restore Rundberg, Hispanic/Black/Asian/LGBTQ Quality of Life Commissions
- **Other Reports:** Kids Count Data (Annie E. Casey Foundation-2019), CPPP State of Texas Children-Race and Equity in Austin (2016)







**9. Austin Voices Campus Resource Guides:** Asset mapping each campus is essential for understanding strengths and gaps in services. Austin Voices has worked with many of our community schools to produce annual “Program and Partner Guides” that capture this information, including programs (academic, enrichment, athletic, after school), services (student and family supports), clubs and organizations, parent and community engagement opportunities, events, and community partners. These guides are useful foundation for teachers, parents, and community partners as the begin to collaborate on school and community improvement strategies.

This collage features several resource guides:

- AFTER-SCHOOL PROGRAM:** Details various activities and support services available during school hours.
- COMMUNITY SCHOOL PARTNERS:** Lists local organizations and businesses that partner with the school to provide resources and support.
- ACADEMIC PROGRAMS:** Describes specific educational offerings, including English Language Development and World Cultures Academy.

This collage features several resource guides:

- ELECTIVES:** Lists optional courses such as Spanish and Korean.
- AWARD-WINNING ART & FINE ARTS:** Highlights various art programs and student achievements.
- STUDENT PROGRAMS & SERVICES:** Details support services for students, including counseling and health services.
- MENTORING:** Describes programs that provide guidance and support to students.

## Creating Annual Needs Assessments

As we work to understand the needs at campuses and communities with existing work, as well as move into new campuses and communities, teams will use the data listed above to create school and community strategies with measurable goals. Some goals will be campus-specific, some neighborhood or neighborhood cluster-specific, and some with be citywide goals. Ideally, strategies should be integrated across all levels of planning.

### Possible Data Points

ACADEMIC	SUPPORT/ENRICHMENT	COMMUNITY
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reading, Writing, Math</li> <li>• Special Education</li> <li>• ELLs (TELPAS)</li> <li>• Early Childhood</li> <li>• Science, Social Studies</li> <li>• Attendance, Enrollment</li> <li>• Student Mobility</li> <li>• Dropout, Graduation Rate</li> <li>• College Readiness</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mentoring and Tutoring</li> <li>• After School Participation</li> <li>• Fine Arts Participation</li> <li>• CIS, Other Nonprofit Reports</li> <li>• Volunteers</li> <li>• Parent Engagement</li> <li>• Family Needs</li> <li>• Adult Education/2-Gen</li> <li>• Technology</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing</li> <li>• Health Insurance</li> <li>• Employment, Income</li> <li>• Health/Mental Health</li> <li>• Recreation</li> <li>• Food Security</li> <li>• Transportation</li> <li>• Safety</li> <li>• Racial and Cultural Equity</li> </ul>

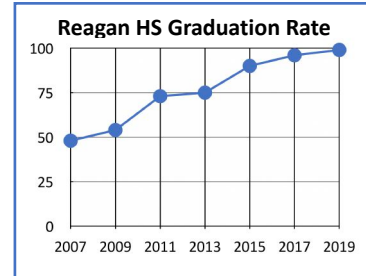
## How do we measure success?

If our long-term goal is to turn the tide on educational and economic inequity in Austin, how do we measure success, both in the short-term and the long-term? Is it rising test scores? Graduation rates? Creating new jobs? Increased access to affordable health care?

Think about a car. It's not running well, and we need it in good shape to take a long cross-country trip. Before we take the trip, we figure out the problems, come up with solutions, and get the car fixed and road-tested. Maybe we repair the upholstery and a cracked windshield. Perhaps a new timing belt gets installed. Throw in a few new tires, and we take it on the road. It might run better, it might not.

This is how school improvement (and community development) often works. Different parts get worked on, but not strategically, and not enough to make a sustainable difference. Just as in a car, various parts and systems must work together for things to run well. Fixing parent engagement, while helpful, won't rescue a struggling schools. Adding new landscaping, while helpful, won't get it done.

Measuring success means keeping the overall goal in mind (educational and economic transformation for a community), while breaking it down into the interrelated parts and systems that need to be addressed. Since we are now more than a decade into the development of community schools in Austin, we already have a dozen schools at some stage of intentional development, and a handful of others studying this model. Systems and processes that provide robust student and family supports have been created. There are bright spots of nationally-recognized school turnaround at Webb Middle School and Reagan High School. Community, business and higher education partnerships have resulted in changed trajectories for thousands of students. What would it look like if we built on these early successes, made them sustainable, and scaled what we have learned across all of our economically-challenged schools and communities?



All of these strategies can lead to academic excellence, improved graduation rates, college preparedness, and transformed communities. For a complete list of suggested strategies, see page 24. The next section will take a deep dive into how community schools put strategies together using a systems approach.



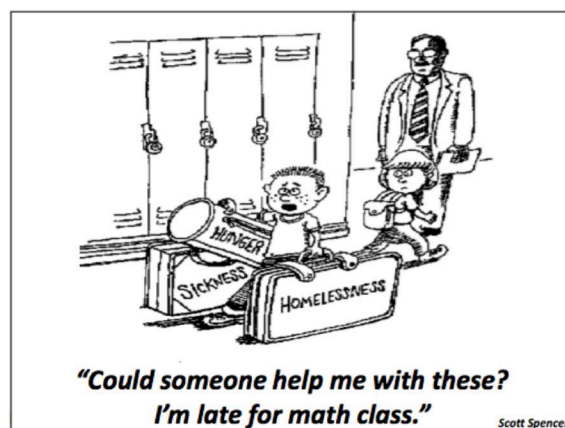
## Section 3: Creating a System of Community Schools

Scaling up from a small group of community schools to a much larger effort focusing on both school and community transformation requires an overarching logic model and a plan for successful implementation.

Three years ago, community and school district partners (as part of the Greater Austin Community School Coalition) developed a forward-looking community school logic model, which is attached in its original form in the appendix.<sup>39</sup> This logic model is based on a theory of change that looks at the whole child as a member of both a family and a community.

**Theory of Change.** We believe that student success is affected by both in-school and out-of-school factors. These factors can be placed in three basic categories:

**1. Barriers to Learning.** We want children in school every day, ready to learn. But barriers that affect attendance and a child's ability to connect with learning can get in the way. The barriers may be internal, such as school climate, inappropriate curriculum, inadequate teaching, social, emotional, and behavioral factors, or language barriers. Barriers may also be external, such as housing and mobility, family income and employment, access to healthcare, other family issues or trauma. Community Schools seek to reduce barriers through strategic problem solving with campus stakeholders, including external partners.



**2. Conditions for Learning.** Student success is also influenced by various conditions, both in school and in the community. For example, if a child feels unsafe at school and at home, he or she will likely not be able to focus on learning nor form good connections with teachers and peers. Curriculum and teaching tailored to a student's specific needs, a positive school climate, appropriate resources and technology, engaged parents and community, low faculty turnover . . . all of these are important to a child's ability to succeed in school.

The following conditions for learning (identified by the Coalition for Community Schools) are integrated into our logic model:

- Early childhood development programs nurture growth and development.
- The school offers a core instructional program delivered by qualified teachers.
- Instruction is organized around a challenging and engaging curriculum with high standards and expectations for students.
- Students are motivated and engaged in learning—in both school and community settings—before, during, and after school and in the summer.
- The basic physical, mental, and emotional health needs of young people and their families are recognized and addressed.
- Parents, families, and school staff demonstrate mutual respect and engage in effective collaboration.
- Community engagement, together with school efforts, promotes a school climate that is safe, supportive, and respectful, and that connects students to a broader learning community.

**3. Opportunities for Learning.** Community schools provide an equity strategy ensuring that, no matter the zip code, students have equitable learning opportunities. Students on one side of town may have families who can provide private

<sup>39</sup> This logic model is a draft based on extensive community and campus input over the past two years. Data gathering is a continuous process, and new data and research will continue to inform the logic model. The COVID-19 crisis, in particular, will result in increased need and may produce revised short-term and long-term outcome statements.

music lessons, summer camps, extra tutoring, field trips and college visits. For low-income families, these opportunities must come through the school or community partners-or not at all.

In sum, community schools seek to reduce barriers to learning, improve conditions for learning and increase opportunities for learning.

## Schools are a system within systems<sup>40</sup>

School improvement is littered with failed efforts to transform and turn around struggling, mainly low-income schools. In almost every case, the failure was tied to trying to reduce challenges down to one or two factors, instead of thinking systemically. The strategy might be changing principals, reorganizing the campus around a particular program, providing more professional development or creating a positive school climate. All of these strategies, and many more, can create incremental improvements, but none will produce lasting and systemic change.

Imagine if your car was running poorly and you went to a carburetor repair shop. Your problem would likely be the carburetor. A muffler shop would say the muffler. A transmission shop would say the transmission needed replacing. While one of these solutions might accidentally fix your car (and therefore become a case study), it would fail to fix most cars. That is because cars, like schools, work as systems. For a solution to work, it must recognize all parts of the system and be appropriate for the system as a whole.<sup>41</sup>

The Coalition for Community Schools defines a system as “. . . a collection of parts that interact and function as a whole. Systems consist of elements and interconnections; they have a purpose, and they exist within a political, social, and cultural context . . . . All parts of a system are interdependent. They are composed of numerous feedback loops that interact at several levels rather than in a strictly linear arrangement. The relationships form a complex, layered web.

Effectively changing a system requires an awareness of how the various parts of the system work together and the leverage points most likely to produce desired change. Integrated action across several functional areas is needed to move and sustain complex organizations.”

“Change agents often focus on the most obvious elements of the system they want to change by, for example, latching on to a ‘silver bullet’ . . . change agents mistakenly assume that any one of these isolated adjustments will produce system-wide change. Many initiatives expect improvement to come from simply working harder, forgetting Einstein’s definition of insanity as ‘doing the same thing over and over again and expecting a different result.’”

A scan of national school improvement and turnaround efforts, even those that are more systems-focused, reveals that most are limited to “what can be controlled”- that is, what happens within the walls of the school. Schools can control teaching,



<sup>40</sup> This section is based on, and quotes from “Scaling Up School and Community Partnerships: The Community Schools Strategy” on the Coalition for Community Schools website. <http://www.communityschools.org/ScalingUp/>

<sup>41</sup> Learning to Improve: How America’s Schools Can Get Better at Getting Better, Anthony S. Bryk et al. (2015), Harvard Education Press, p. 172.

curriculum, leadership, school culture and climate, policies and procedures. The Effective Schools Framework from the Texas Education Agency, shown right, illustrates these elements.<sup>42</sup>

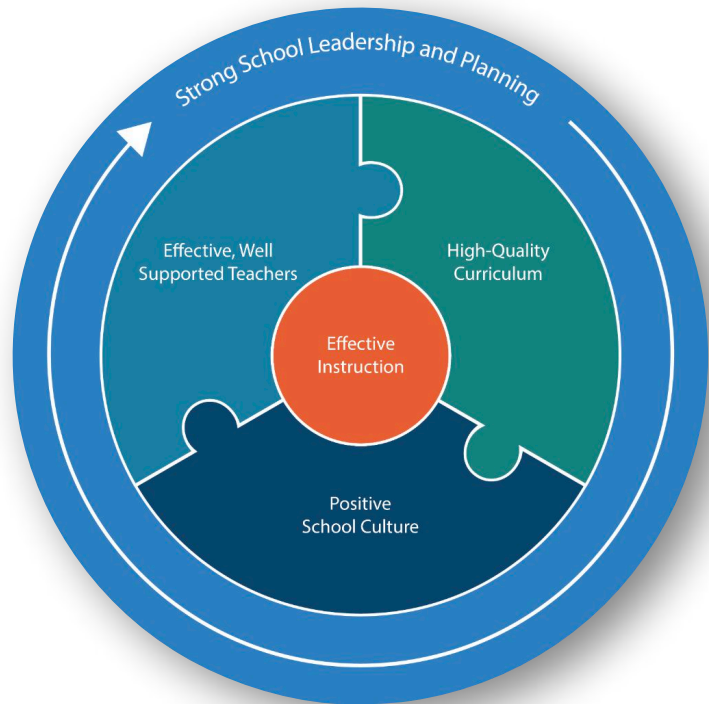
The five “levers” illustrated in the model make sense. If a school has a strong leader providing direction, the school should function reasonably well. Of course, a strong leader is one who can problem-solve and come up with innovative solutions, and some schools are lucky enough to have a “hero” principal who can do it all. Even when that is the case, principal turnover in low-income schools is high, with a change in leadership generally occurring every 2-3 years. The likelihood of having consistently strong leaders is limited.

It also makes sense that effective, well-supported teachers are a key factor in student success. But the sad truth is that low-income schools often have a higher percentage of first-year and inexperienced teachers, have trouble filling teaching positions in core subjects, and struggle to pay teachers a living wage.

Effective instruction and high-quality curriculum are also important, but aligning those components to a highly diverse student body, including English Language Learners, special education, refugee, and highly mobile students, is very challenging.

Finally, “positive school culture” is the category where the TEA model places behavior, student supports, and parent and community engagement. While most low-income schools offer some student supports, and might have staff dedicated to parent communication, few have the systems in place nor the partnerships necessary to match the significant need on their campuses in an effective and equitable manner.

But what if you could make the TEA model work in even the most challenging environment? What if you had a leadership pipeline trained to meet the challenges of low-income campuses? What if you had strategies in place to make sure teachers were supported and were involved in creating innovative solutions for their campus? What if you had a school that could actually meet the diverse academic needs of all of your students? What if you had a welcoming and positive school culture that supported both students and families, and embraced the opportunity to be a hub for community engagement?



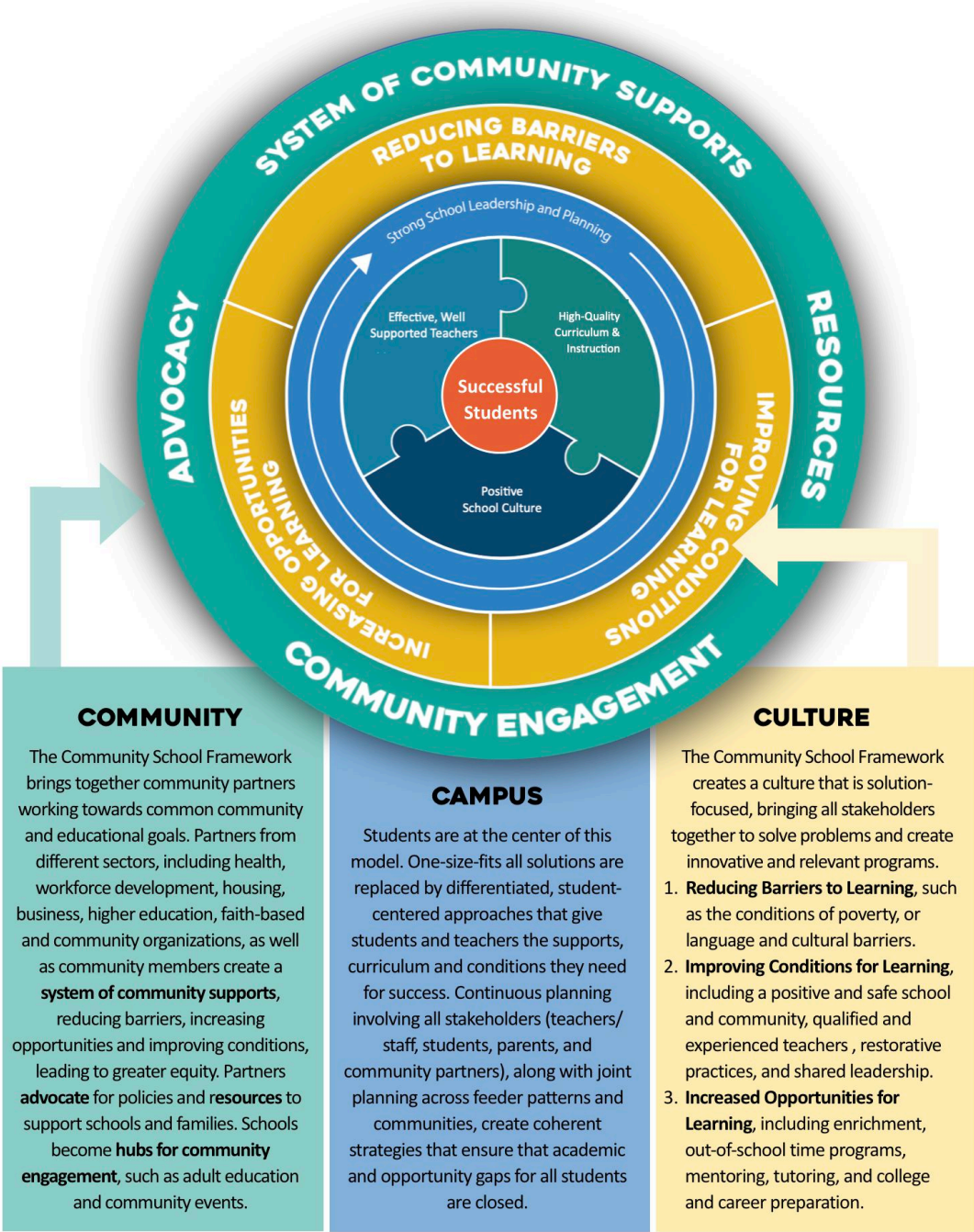
**Texas Education Agency Effective Schools Framework**

<sup>42</sup> <https://texasef.org/>



This diagram shows how a community school framework can (and should) be combined with a traditional school improvement model. With the student and family supports offered in a community school, with all stakeholders involved in analyzing need and problem-solving solutions, with teaching and learning designed to match the diverse needs of students, and with a system of community partners bringing the advocacy and resources necessary for schools to be successful in their mission, the traditional model can actually work.

## A School Improvement Model Supported by the Community Schools Framework



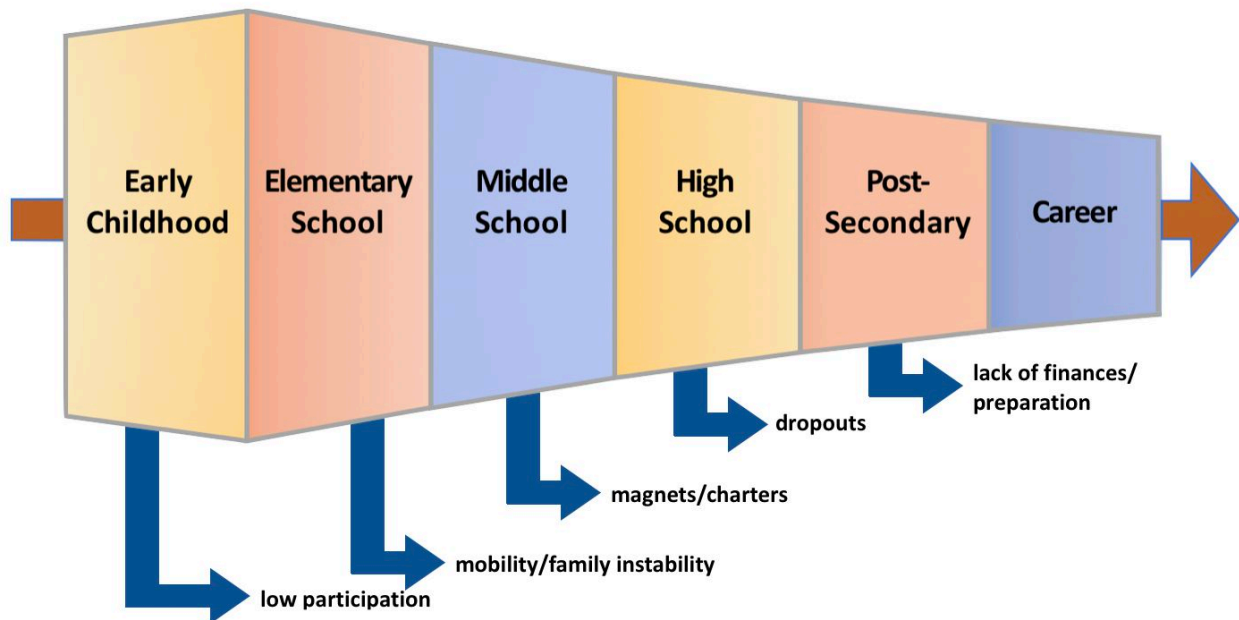
## Thinking Systemically: Schools as part of a continuum

As we begin to apply the community school framework, it is important to see schools and students in their larger context. A student's journey from childhood to adulthood is often shown as a continuum (or "pipeline"), showing how students matriculate from one level to the next, with the idea that students will be prepared for each new stage of their educational



In more affluent or stable areas, a student may travel with his or her peers from pre-K through high school. Investments in the early years pay dividends along the way, with most students on or above grade level throughout their educational journey. Those with special needs have been assessed early on, and a continuity of support carries with them throughout the pipeline.

The reality in low-income, urban schools is quite different. Students are often highly mobile, moving many times during the childhood. 20% or fewer of students entering high school will have begun their journey in local feeder schools. At every point along the journey, students will be entering, bringing with them whatever education (or gaps in education) they have experienced elsewhere. Some of these students may be arriving with little or no English. Others have special needs that need to be assessed and re-assessed, a cumbersome process at best. 25% or higher mobility is common in low-income schools, meaning that 25% of students at the end of the school year are different from those who began the school year. Adding to this reality are the unintended consequences of school choice, with easier-to-educate students being pushed towards magnets and charter schools, leaving local public schools with a higher concentration of English Language Learners, special education, homeless, and other children with significant needs.



If we're going to have more children from low-income communities in Austin on the path to prosperity, the leaky pipeline needs to be recognized. From low-participation in early childhood education to poor college completion rates due to lack of preparation and finances, each factor that reduces the number of students who successfully navigate the pipeline can be addressed, and we can change the trajectories of thousands of students in a positive way, as we have seen from our case studies.

What are some strategies for addressing leaks in the educational pipeline in low-income communities?

- **Low participation in early childhood programs:** Studies show that early childhood programs, such as Head Start and Pre-K, help close school readiness gaps between low-income/minority children and their non-minority counterparts. Funding pre-K for all, recruitment campaigns, community organizing, increased 2-gen programming in partnership with nonprofits, home visitation and focus on young children with special needs are all strategies that can increase early childhood program participation.
- **Mobility/family instability:** Student mobility is measured as the difference between the students on a campus at the end of September and the students at the end of the school year. In more affluent areas, mobility is typically around 5%. In low-income schools, mobility is between 15% and 40%, with middle and high schools having higher rates. Research shows that schools with 25% or higher mobility have to use heroic measures to be academically successful. Stabilizing families through strategies like building a safety net of Family Resource Centers have brought mobility down by 1/3 or more at several AISD campuses. Other strategies, such as focusing on transitions between elementary, middle and high school, providing a welcoming and barrier-free environment for parents, offering more transportation for students, and focusing on reducing mobility for homeless and refugee families and students, are effective in stabilizing families.
- **Magnets/charters:** Low-income campuses often lose students to district-connected magnet schools and non-district charters, based on the public perception that other options will provide a better education. Whether or not this is true, community schools are committed to all students having equitable educational opportunities within their neighborhood. As shown in the case studies, adding programs that meet the needs of all students, and especially ones that prepare students for college and career, makes schools more attractive to parents. Also, community schools provide supports, enrichment programs, sports, after school programs and opportunities for parent involvement that are may not be present at magnets and charters.
- **Dropouts:** Dropout numbers are low before 8th grade, and most dropout prevention strategies have been reactive, beginning in 9th grade when a wave of dropouts occurs, especially among girls. Community schools in Austin have seen dropout numbers plummet as middle schools have focused on making sure more 8th graders are ready for college-level work when they matriculate to high school, as well as using intensive strategies, including tutoring and mentoring. CIS, AVID and Breakthrough have been especially effective in helping at-risk students successfully transition to high school. Both Reagan and Lanier (now Northeast and Navarro) have seen dropout rates plummet as they have improved systems, used intensive academic and support strategies, and focused on family needs, which are often at the root of why a student leaves school. Reagan, in particular, has virtually no dropouts and a 98% 4-year graduation rate, through the use of community school strategies.
- **Lack of finances/preparation:** The percentage of students entering post-secondary education has grown steadily in Texas, but so has the percentage of students who drop out of college after one year, and who need remediation in college. Getting students across the finish line of college graduation (without a crushing debt load) and into a career is key for building economic equity. Community school strategies include increasing dual-credit and early college options, which provide free college tuition in high school, and intensive mentoring programs like Breakthrough for first-generation college goers.



While any one of these strategies would have a positive effect on the educational pipeline, it would be limited in its effectiveness without other strategies. We have said that schools are systems and “all parts of a system are interdependent.” Making lasting change means working on many fronts, as well as adjusting systems and strategies as we see what is working and what is not. Schools and communities are dynamic, especially in low-income areas, and adjusting strategies across the systems within a school will be an ongoing process, affected by changes in leadership, staffing, resources and conditions.

Using the three categories of in-school and out-of-school factors affecting learning (reducing barriers, improving conditions and increasing opportunities) can help us think systemically about helping students successfully navigate the educational pipeline.

	Strategies	Measurable Results
Reducing Barriers to Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce barriers to learning by providing wraparound supports that stabilize families, reduce student mobility, improve attendance and improve student focus on learning, leveraging partnerships with community agencies and volunteers.</li> <li>• Reduce faculty turnover and staff core subjects with experienced teachers. Highly mobile schools need teachers who are skilled in working with diverse needs in the classroom.</li> <li>• Use a tiered approach to student and family supports, and improve systems of coordination with weekly meetings with service providers and school staff</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved attendance</li> <li>• Reduced mobility</li> <li>• Increased parent involvement</li> <li>• Improved academic performance</li> </ul>
Improving Conditions for Learning	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop campus-wide ELL and special education strategies that work for mobile and late-entry students.</li> <li>• Train staff in school-wide positive approaches to behavior, as well as restorative practices, that limit disruption to learning time.</li> <li>• Use a shared leadership approach, with annual community school planning processes bringing teachers, staff, parents, students and community together to assess strengths, challenges and opportunities, and to develop and implement school improvement strategies.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved academic performance for ELLs and special ed</li> <li>• Reduced behavior referrals</li> <li>• Increased community engagement</li> </ul>
Increasing Opportunities for	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop common data systems to capture current efforts to support youth and families in the community, and to provide information for strategic planning.</li> <li>• Work together to advocate for resources and policies that will grow after school, enrichment, and fine arts programs.</li> <li>• Partner with other schools in your feeder pattern to coordinate adult education, events and summer programs.</li> <li>• Partner with businesses and higher ed institutions to provide free field trips for students and parents, and create real-world career training partnerships.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased community safety</li> <li>• Increase student engagement</li> <li>• Higher college completion rates</li> <li>• Greater equity</li> </ul>


On a practical basis, how do schools choose which strategies to use, and how do they implement these strategies without becoming overwhelmed? This is where “shared leadership” as a value of community schools comes into play.

Whether a school is a new community school or has been a community school for many years, it is important that school improvement planning efforts continue every year. Sometimes school turnaround is seen as an event, something that happens to mitigate a crisis, rather than an approach that results in long-term, sustainable change. It’s a little like the difference between going on a crash diet to lose weight or changing your eating and exercise habits. Both will result in short-term improvements,



but only one will resulting in long-term health. Becoming a community school means adopting practices around shared leadership and planning that will help the school weather challenges, both present and future.


Austin Voices has helped our existing community schools go through a planning process that includes extensive qualitative and quantitative data collection, analysis, creation of strategies to address challenges, and breaking down implementation into achievable actions. Below is an example of an annual community school plan:



## WEBB MIDDLE SCHOOL

### COMMUNITY SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT PLAN

Fall 2019 Mr. Raul Sanchez, Principal



**INCLUSIVE • CREATIVE • COLLEGE BOUND**

#### ELEMENTS OF A COMMUNITY SCHOOL

- School is a Welcoming Community Hub
- Engaging High-Quality Academic Programs
- College, Career and Service Focus
- Community Partnerships
- Coordinated Supports for Families and Students
- Expanded Learning Opportunities (after school/summer)
- Strong Early Childhood Programs
- Parent, Staff, Students & Community Plan Together

#### CAMPUS BASICS

School Mascot Wildcats	School Colors Blue and Gold
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#### STRENGTHS


- A diverse and experienced faculty forms strong relationships with students
- School provides a caring atmosphere where students are supported holistically
- School is college-focused, with AVID as well as high school and college-credit courses
- Strong after-school and elective programs
- Supports for English Language Learners, including ELDA (English Language Development Academy)
- Students and families are supported through community partners and Family Resource Center
- Campus is a hub for community classes, events and services, including adult and parenting education

#### DEMOGRAPHICS

Demographic	Student Enrollment
87.9% Hispanic	<b>631</b>
8.3% African-American	
2.0% White	
1.8% Other	

Economically Disadvantaged	93.8%
English Language Learners	56.3%
Special Education	17.5%
Student Mobility	26.8%
Attendance Rate	93.8%

Average Class Size **22.9** Students



- Restorative and positive behavior approaches to discipline
- Consistent and experienced leadership team
- Parents, teachers and community plan together
- Up-to-date technology for teachers and students

#### CHALLENGES

- Class sizes, especially in non-tested subjects
- Resources to sustain ELDA and Dual-Language Programs
- Recruiting, retaining and supporting faculty
- Alignment of programs with feeder pattern
- Supports for SPED students
- Lack of technology in the home for homework
- Communication barriers with parents limiting parent involvement and engagement
- Lack of knowledge in the community of Webb's programs and accomplishments
- Outdated building in need of beautification and better signage
- Student mobility, attendance and tardies
- Students struggling with behavior and discipline issues
- Mental health and counseling supports
- Safe routes to and from school
- Increasing student motivation

#### KEY COMMUNITY SCHOOL STRATEGIES

##### Support for Academic Programs

1. Work with district to create HR systems and incentive pay plan to attract, retain and reward highly-qualified teachers.
2. Maintain small class sizes in tested subjects, and work towards appropriate class sizes for all other subjects.
3. Create a sustainability plan for ELDA and dual-language program, with staffing and other resources.
4. Align Webb electives, CTE and academic classes with early college and CTE programs at Navarro and Northeast ECHS.
5. Assess SPED strategies to ensure all students have adequate supports.
6. Increase access to computers and internet in student's homes, as well as alternative places to access technology.

##### Parent Involvement and Communication

1. Hold new parent and community events, including a Webb Back-to-School Community Picnic and community dinners or other parent event each month.
2. Hold community walks before school starts and mid-year to reach out to families in the community.
3. Create a program and partner brochure for parents and staff.
4. Continue offering wide range of adult and parent classes, including ESL, GED, Plazas Comunitarias, and Strengthening Families.

##### Support for Parent Engagement

5. Use three-tier approach for parent engagement, including broad communication, more focused volunteer and workshops, and parent leadership training.
6. Increase number of languages used to communicate with parents.

##### Lack of knowledge in the community of Webb's programs and accomplishments

1. Re-envision Webb as Inclusive (multi-cultural, accepting), Creative (Fine Arts) and College-Bound (early college/AVID)
2. Improve communication with parents about programs through regular distribution of monthly calendar.
3. Work with parents to create marketing committee that would create strong advocacy for Webb.
4. Regularly update social media with positive program news about programs and partners.
5. Improve customer service and provide a welcoming school environment.
6. Market programs that make Webb unique, including ELDA, Fine Arts (like mariachi) and AVID.

##### Campus Beautification


1. Create a beautification committee with parents and community partners.
2. Fundraise for new marquee.
3. Work with landscape and building professionals to create a long-term beautification plan for the campus.
4. Paint and beautify portables.

##### Student Supports, Behavior and Discipline

1. Continue partnership with Austin Voices' Family Resource Center to support family stability and reduce student mobility.
2. Continue partnerships with CIS, CARY and other community partners to increase attendance and reduce tardies.
3. Expand mental health support for students and parents through a district-funded mental health clinic.
4. Support and increase after school and elective programs, including robotics, ballet folclorico and UIL academics.
5. Increase use of motivational speakers, incentives and field trips for students.
6. Work with local businesses, neighborhoods, district and city to increase safety around local sidewalks and intersections.

##### Increasing Student Motivation

1. Increase use of motivational speakers, incentives and field trips for students.
2. Develop service learning and student volunteering around topics such as the environment and other issues of concern, with integration into the curriculum, after school and clubs.



Engaged Communities, Empowered Schools. **AUSTIN** Independent School District

**Our experience in Austin has taught us that the community school framework, integrated with a student-centered school improvement approach, builds an effective culture of school improvement that has both the ability to move schools out of crisis and to create sustainable centers of equity and excellence. Over time, community schools build habits, traditions, structures and systems that are able to weather the challenges and changes endemic to low-income communities.**

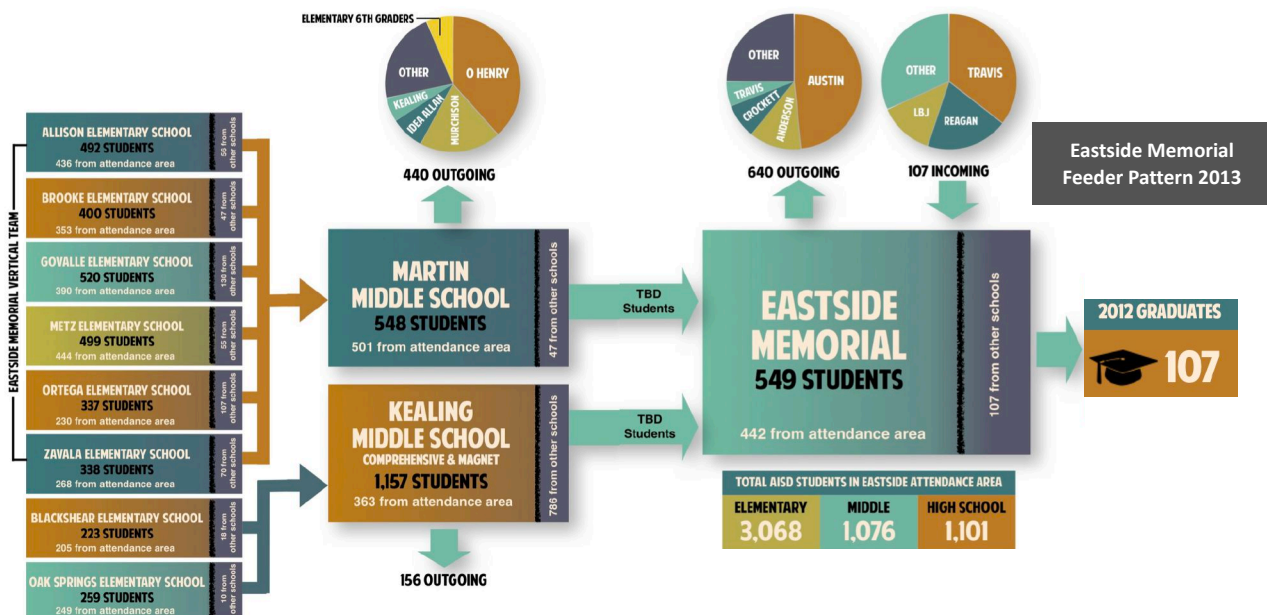
## Thinking Systemically: Schools as part of feeder patterns

Affluent areas tend to have “cleaner” feeder patterns, with most students matriculating with their peers to the same middle school and high school. Programs, including academic and enrichment, can be coordinated between levels. Parents know one another and move as a cohort of volunteers as their children progress. Supports, including special education, follow students from school to school.

The picture is quite different for more densely populated low-income communities, where students generally are assigned to multiple middle and high schools. The accountability and testing system tends to produce competition and blame among elementary, middle and high schools. Given the stresses on any one campus, feeder pattern coordination is a luxury. High teacher and principal turnover makes relationship-building between schools difficult. Parents may be told that they should send their students to magnet or charter schools at the middle and high school levels to get a better education. Options to transfer to more affluent schools drains even more students. The transition from elementary to middle to high school can be inconsistent.

Recognizing the mobility of students between campuses and feeder patterns, Austin ISD and surrounding districts, in the mid-2000’s, moved towards uniform daily lesson plans across districts, with more flexibility for high-achieving schools and little flexibility for low-income schools. This was a strategy that, while limiting teacher creativity, ensured some degree of uniformity as students transferred from one school to another, even within the school year. This is an example of systemic thinking and a first step in adjusting to the needs of low-income schools. However, if we’re going to see more students make it through the pipeline prepared for college and career, we need to stabilize and grow feeder patterns, reduce leaks, including student mobility, and strengthen the ties between feeder pattern campuses.

The illustration below, done by Austin Voices in 2013, illustrates the complexity of following students along the educational pipeline in a low-income, urban community. For a variety of reasons, 3,068 students are in feeder pattern elementary schools, with only 442 from the attendance area attending their designated high school. It should be noted that elementary schools have seven grades, as opposed to three for middle school and four for high school. This illustration shows enrollment at the end of September, and does not illustrate mobility during the school year.





The diagram obviously shows that there is a tremendous amount of movement of students between campuses, and while most students tend to go to their neighborhood elementary school, parents look for options at the middle and high school levels. Over half of the outgoing students from Martin and Eastside Memorial transferred to high-performing schools in affluent neighborhoods, using district transfer policies. It should be noted that this diagram was done before the growth of several charter networks in Austin.

It was obvious, as enrollment continued to struggle at Martin and Eastside, that feeder pattern strategies needed to be added to the school improvement work being done at both campuses. Between 2012 and 2015, Austin Voices worked with the feeder pattern campuses to develop a common mission statement and strategies, as well as a culture of collaboration instead of competition and blame. For two years, principals, teachers, parents and students met together to plan and implement ideas. A new early childhood center at the unused Allan facility met the need of increasing early childhood enrollment, as well as attracting young families to the area. Twice-yearly family resource festivals attracted large numbers of families, and gave schools a chance to market their programs jointly. New academic and career programs, which included higher ed partnerships with Austin Community College and the University of Texas, were instituted. Transitions between elementary, middle and high school were improved. Martin Middle School began an Innovation Academy, which helped the school grow enrollment significantly, with the program now expanded to Eastside as well. In short, the culture of the feeder pattern was transformed. It is likely that without these interventions, gentrification would have caused several of the campuses, including Martin and Eastside, to lose enrollment to the point of closure. Instead, schools in Central East Austin are stabilized and steadily growing, with improved academic performance.



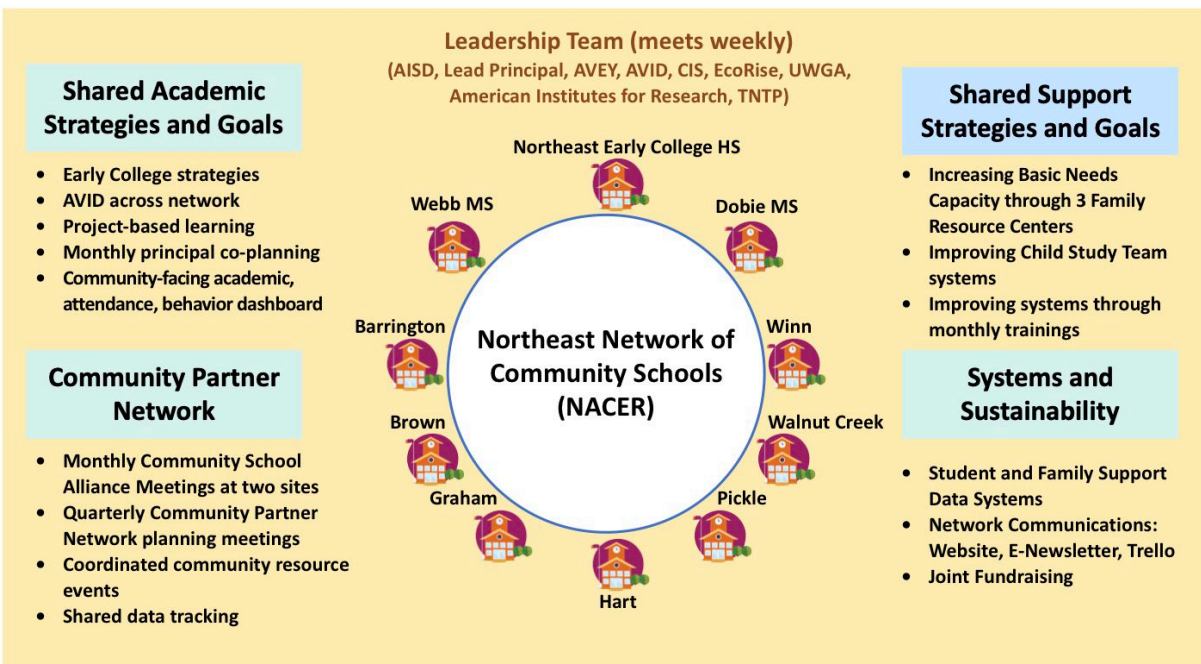
Perhaps the most exciting feeder pattern work currently happening in AISD is a project called “NACER” in the Northeast feeder pattern. Northeast Early College High School (formerly Reagan), along with Webb Middle School, Dobie Middle School and four feeder elementary campuses, have all been using the community school framework for five or more years, with campus planning teams, community-wide events and shared approaches to supporting high-needs families.<sup>43</sup> With three Family Resource Centers (Dobie, Northeast, Webb) providing a safety net of wraparound supports for families, and early college strategies in some degree of development from elementary to high school, the feeder pattern was poised to embrace the remaining three elementary campuses with the community school framework. In 2018, Austin Voices teamed with AISD to write a proposal to the Texas Education Agency for funding to support the development of feeder pattern systems. The two-year award (called a community partnership grant) has funded technical support, and has helped principals, district staff, and community partners engage in robust conversations about how to develop common strategies and systems.

The early results have been encouraging. Campuses and stakeholders chose three areas of focus across the vertical team: growing the capacity of the basic needs safety net through Family Resource Centers, extending early college strategies through a feeder-wide AVID

<sup>43</sup> Significant credit for the NACER project goes to Katie Casstevens, Administrative Supervisor for Community Schools in AISD, who has chaired the Leadership Team.

approach, and expanding project-based learning initiatives. A new feeder pattern dashboard has been developed that is public-facing, with academic, attendance, behavior and support data, along with community wellness indicators, showing school-by-school and joint progress. An already existing family support data system used by Austin Voices is being expanded to capture family supports across the feeder pattern. Quarterly community partner meetings are being held to get input for future development, including expanding early childhood education. Resources are being identified to make sure staffing is equitable across all campuses. Common communication and marketing tools are being developed. Transitions from elementary to middle to high school are being improved. And most importantly, a culture of collaboration rather than competition is growing among the feeder pattern, helping spread best practices and honest conversations about challenges.

This is a model of how to reduce leaks in the educational pipeline. Family instability is being addressed, with student mobility reduced by 1/3 or more over the past decade through a safety net of supports. A common academic theme, in this case early college strategies, is being used throughout the pipeline, which provides a counter-narrative to the charter school focus on college preparation. The use of AVID and project-based learning means that more students are prepared for the rigor of high school and college, reducing dropouts and improving college completion rates. Without a systemic approach, however, you are only able to develop “bright spots” at particular campuses, which at best is inefficient and at worst perpetuates a leaky educational pipeline.



As we have implemented our first network of community schools, we have learned several lessons that apply to future network development:

1. Schools are set up to function as individual units. An effective community school network, with common practices, systems and culture, will take 2-3 years to develop.
2. Stakeholders from throughout the network of schools should prioritize shared community school strategies, based on a network needs assessment, using both quantitative and qualitative data. People will own what they develop.

3. Campuses will have various levels of interest and commitment to community school development. What is important is that a foundational set of practices is offered to all, with training and resources.
4. A Memorandum of Understanding with each campus is helpful in clarifying expectations.
5. Shared events, such as resource fairs, STEM events and community walks, help to build shared identity with the local community.
6. Monthly network community partner meetings are very helpful in developing “collective impact.”
7. A strong relationship between a backbone partner (such as Austin Voices) and the school district is a win/win for community school development.

## **Thinking Systemically: Schools as part of a school district**

Anyone who has spent much time working on the campus level will express frustration with disconnects between schools and school districts. If you look from a business perspective, school districts are the same size as medium to large-size corporations. Schools can be seen local outposts, with central headquarters “downtown.” All of the advantages of corporations (centralized budgeting, strategic planning, public communications, compliance) and all of the dysfunctions (duplication, inefficiency, bureaucratic red tape, out-of-touch decisions, siloed departments) are present in school districts as well. School districts are also unique in that they are public entities, with their own governance structures independent (in most cases) from municipal government. In fact, schools are the only public function in America that has its own elected officials.

This mixture of corporation and public entity would be complex on its own, but school districts also answer to state and federal governments for compliance and funding, to unions, and most of all, to public stakeholders who are deeply invested in the welfare of their children. School districts are not able to choose who their customers will be (as opposed to businesses, charter and private schools), but must offer a high level of service to any and every student and family who walks in the door, no matter what their needs are.

For districts serving mainly affluent students, with simple pipelines, stable families and faculties, and very little leakage, organizing the district to attain positive student outcomes is easily attainable. Generally, these school districts have the resources they require, and are well-connected to policy makers at the local, state and federal level to design the system to their advantage. Even districts that serve mainly low-income students can manage success, as long as family and teacher mobility is low and resources are adequate to the mission.<sup>44</sup>

Unfortunately, most districts serving a large number of low-income students do not have the resources they need to adequately support students and families, and are faced with the challenges of high student mobility and teacher turnover. In these districts, the dysfunctions of corporate culture are magnified, as individuals and departments desperately try to plug holes in a leaky boat, using ad hoc and piecemeal solutions, often disconnected from campus planning. The result is inefficiency, wasted resources and disappointing results, with failure usually blamed on “implementation with a lack of fidelity.”

How do we make district systems work better to support community schools? This is a question that Austin Voices and other partners have been working on with AISD over the past decade. If we look at the school district, there are departments or functions of the organizational chart that directly impact community school priorities.

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<sup>44</sup> Several school districts in the Rio Grande Valley have been pointed out as examples of low-income schools able to achieve strong academic outcomes. While not wanting to take anything away from the efforts put forth by these districts, it should be noted that student mobility and teacher turnover are very low (in the single digits), perhaps a result of a unique, cohesive local culture. It also makes the point that mobility has a strong correlation to campus performance, a point that has shown in research over the past 15 years.



ACADEMIC/ENRICHMENT	STUDENT/FAMILY SUPPORTS	ADMINISTRATIVE
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Curriculum/Instruction</li> <li>• Bilingual/ELL Instruction</li> <li>• Early Childhood</li> <li>• Special Education</li> <li>• Career/Technology Ed</li> <li>• Core Subjects (ELA, Math, Science, Social Studies)</li> <li>• AVID/Gear Up</li> <li>• After School and Summer Programs</li> <li>• Fine Arts (Music, Art, Drama, Dance)</li> <li>• Creative Learning Initiative</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Child Study Teams</li> <li>• Social Emotional Learning (SEL)</li> <li>• Health/Mental Health Services</li> <li>• Parent Supports/Refugees/Homeless</li> <li>• Family Resource Centers</li> <li>• Adult Education</li> <li>• Mentoring/Tutoring</li> <li>• Counselors/Social Workers</li> <li>• Dropout Prevention</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Board of Trustees</li> <li>• Senior Administration/Elementary/Middle/High School Leadership</li> <li>• Data Systems</li> <li>• Evaluation</li> <li>• Technology</li> <li>• Grants, Partnerships and Volunteers</li> <li>• Communications</li> <li>• Government Relations and Legal</li> <li>• Finance</li> <li>• Testing/Accountability Compliance</li> <li>• Strategic Planning/Campus and District Advisory Councils</li> </ul>

It is good to remind ourselves of the definition of a system that was quoted earlier: “(a system is) a collection of parts that interact and function as a whole. Systems consist of elements and interconnections; they have a purpose, and they exist within a political, social, and cultural context . . . All parts of a system are interdependent. They are composed of numerous feedback loops that interact at several levels rather than in a strictly linear arrangement. The relationships form a complex, layered web. Effectively changing a system requires an awareness of how the various parts of the system work together and the leverage points most likely to produce desired change. Integrated action across several functional areas is needed to move and sustain complex organizations.”

School improvement at the district level can come in three ways: 1. Campuses or feeder patterns propose a strategy/solution and involve appropriate individuals and departments in planning and implementation; 2. District-level individuals or departments recognize a challenge/opportunity and involve campus or feeder pattern stakeholders in crafting strategies; 3. District-level individuals and departments work across silos to develop strategies. In a functioning network of community schools, all three ways may be appropriate at different times. What is NOT appropriate are non-collaborative district-level strategies, which do not work across silos and do not involve campus and community stakeholders in planning. These strategies are easy to plan but are rarely sustained or successful.

Here are two examples of how district-level community school planning worked in the real world:

**After School Programs:** In 2015, one of our community schools, Hart Elementary, was nearing the end of its 21st Century federal after school grant. Under the 3-year grant, Hart had developed a robust after school program, which was seen by parents as one of their most important assets at the school. The federal grant was administered at the district level by a dedicated grant coordinator. Parents from Hart approached Austin Voices for help advocating with the district for continued funding. Thinking systemically, Austin Voices gathered senior district administrators and trustees to problem solve Hart’s situation, and to see whether other AISD campuses might be in the same situation. Because the district did not have a specific after school program office, no one knew this information. Phone calls were made to all campuses throughout the district, and a spreadsheet developed. Some schools had federal or city/county funding for after school. Others had private donors and nonprofits providing services at no cost. A few paid teachers stipends to stay after school and deliver programming. In the end, a total of 11 Title 1 campuses, including some of AISD’s highest needs campuses, were without funding for after school programs in 2015-16, with a gap of \$900,000 needing to be filled.

The AISD governmental relations office had sent a letter to Austin City Council in April, 2015, requesting additional support for after school programs, but trustees and senior administrators were unaware of this communication. Austin Voices quickly organized a community meeting on a Friday night in June, and over 100 parents came to share with city council members and trustees why after school was so important to them. In small groups, parents told how their students were learning how to repair bicycles, how to garden, were in Boy Scouts or Girl Scouts, were getting exercise, were learning about aviation careers . . . their message was that these were things they were only available to their children through after school partners. They also told how after school programs allowed them to work full days, increasing their incomes to a livable level.

Austin Voices organized a school bus to take Hart parents and students to a city council meeting. They stood side by side with AISD trustees in a pre-council press conference. In the end, council members awarded an additional \$900,000 to support after school programs, and have continued to fill gaps in AISD.

**Lessons learned about systems:** Because AISD did not have an administrator over after school programs, no tracking of program funding was being done, as well as no advocacy. After school programming was seen in terms of grants, not as an important student support. Campuses were left to scramble as grant funding cycles finished. The result was an inequitable system of supports. Also, the role Austin Voices played as a backbone community schools organization that brought the right people to the table to problem-solve was key.

**Data Tracking of Student and Family Supports:** In 2007, when Austin Voices' leadership helped organize AISD's first community school, AISD lacked a robust and comprehensive data system for tracking student and family supports. Since that time, developing both an internal student support data system (eCST-Electronic Child Study Team) and an external family support data system (ETO-Efforts to Outcomes) has been a collaborative project between Austin Voices, Communities In Schools, and various district departments.

As Austin Voices grew its first two Family Resource Centers at Webb Middle School and Reagan High School, a secure way for social workers to keep notes and track their efforts was needed. A consultant helped with the development of an access database that was easy to use. However, it soon became clear that the access database would not be able to handle the growing number of records effectively. Austin Voices asked the school district, city and county to collaborate on a solution, knowing that the data would ultimately need to integrate with family support systems from those entities. Through an RFP process, Social Solutions was contracted to develop the system based on the access database, using their ETO database. Two years of development and testing were needed to launch ETO, which has proved a scalable solution as FRCs have grown to eight locations.

At the same time as ETO was being developed, eCST was being designed with the input of Austin Voices, Communities In Schools, and other key student support partners. The system was developed in-house by AISD, and has proved to be highly usable by district staff for tracking student support services. Parent Support Specialist also use CST for keeping notes on family engagement. In 2016, work began on building a "data bridge" between eCST and ETO, so that campuses could see which families were being served by Austin Voices in real time, and Austin Voices could have academic, attendance and behavior information on students of families they were serving.

The development of data systems seems never ending, but having two robust data systems has provided the data to serve students and families effectively, as well as to produce reports for funders required to sustain and expand services. As we talk with other districts about community schools, we find few which have the level of data tracking AISD, Austin Voices and other community school partners have achieved.

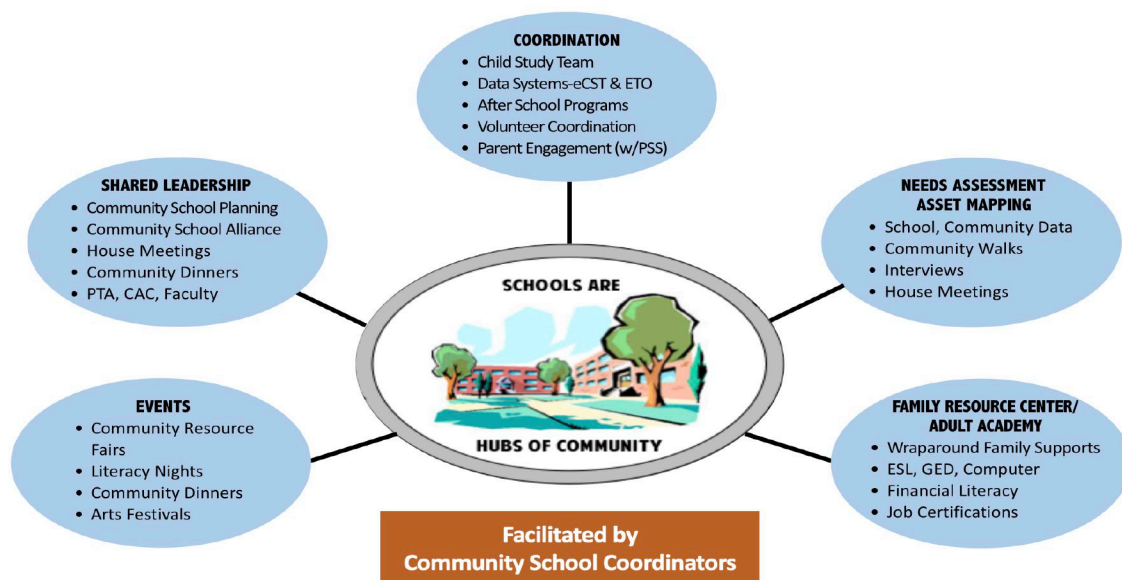
**Lessons learned about systems:** The district took a collaborative approach to developing student and family support data systems from the beginning, meaning that implementation would be based on real-world experience, as well as be user-tested. Funding for data systems was also done as a collaboration, making long-term funding sustainable. Development crossed silos, gathering input from a number of silos. Student and family support partners, who provide services and would ultimately use data systems, were brought to the table early.

Summing up, creating collaborative systems at the school district level is key to the broad implementation and success of community schools. When working well, school districts can organize partnerships (including health services, career education, after school programs, and adult education), can create district-wide data systems that support community schools, can help with grant writing and funding, can fund community schools with the teachers, staff and resources they need, can support policy change at the city and state level, and much more. As the examples above illustrate, a bridge “backbone” agency, such as Austin Voices, is a vital part of creating a system where campus, community and district work collaboratively to solve problems and create solutions.

## Thinking Systemically: Schools as part of a community

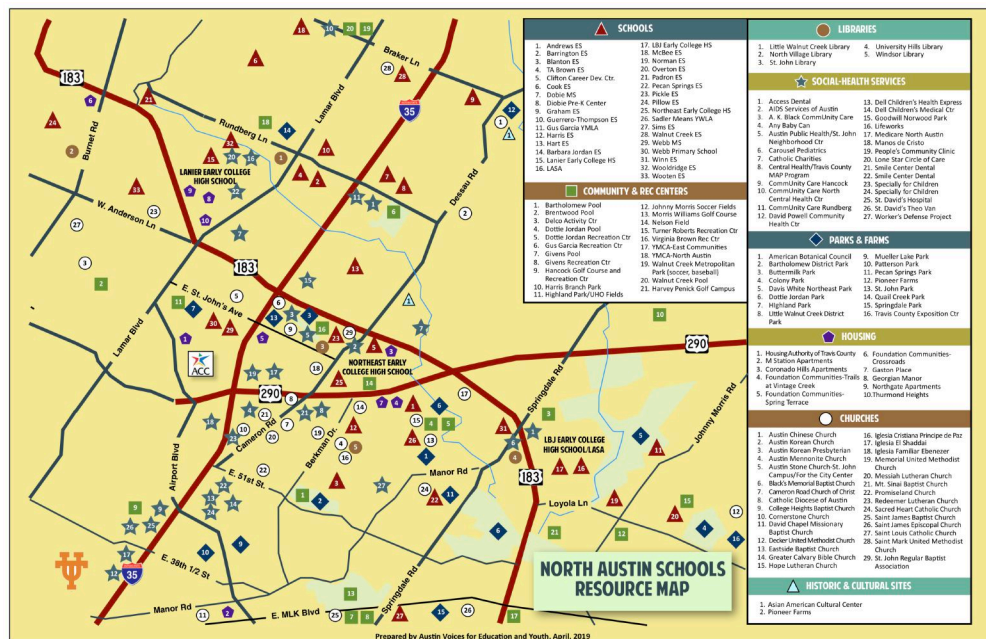
The Community School Framework brings together community partners working towards common community and educational goals. Partners from different sectors, including health, workforce development, housing, business, higher education, faith-based and community organizations, and individuals create a **system of community supports**, reducing barriers, increasing opportunities and improving conditions, leading to greater equity. Partners **advocate** for policies and **resources** to support schools and families. Schools become **hubs for community engagement**, such as adult education and community events.

It is an extraordinary lift for one community school to organize at the community level. Rarely does a school have a staff member who has the time or experience to be able to meet with partners, assess how they could help the campus, bridge cultural and logistical barriers, and put initiatives into place that are beneficial and sustainable. At most schools, partners (with the exception of a few district-level partners such as healthcare institutions or businesses) approach the principal with an idea for serving the campus. This can be frustrating for both principal and partner if no system is in place for integrating partners. This is why community school experts recommend that new community schools hire a **“community school coordinator,”** who can use a systemic approach to recruiting and integrating partners. Even with a coordinator, the process can be lengthy to organize an effective network of partners. The following diagram illustrates the model used by existing community schools in AISD, with the community school coordinator and other staff organizing and facilitating many activities involving partners:



**It makes much more sense to organize partnerships systemically across multiple campuses and communities, bringing existing networks of partners together with clusters of campuses.** It also makes sense to create larger multi-campus systems for data collection, communication and programs (adult education, after school, health services, etc.) At the same time, there are local partners that may be part of a single community, such as neighborhood associations, churches, service groups and individual volunteers (which can include parents and grandparents). In short, to be effective and efficient, partnering should be local (in a particular community), regional (in a cluster of communities) and citywide (across a city or county).

Partners can be divided into three categories: those who provide services, those who provide information or advocacy, and those who provide volunteers and financial support. All are important to reducing barriers, improving conditions and increasing opportunities. Currently, Austin Voices has over 200 partner organizations working at our community schools, many of whom who meet monthly at “community school alliance” meetings, provide services on campus, or participate in resource events on campuses. Austin Voices has also mapped all possible partners for more than half of the “crescent of opportunity” through resource and business partner maps and guides for north and central Austin. The guides contain contact information for resource and business partners, as well as neighborhood partners, including community organizations and faith-based partners. While there are citywide resources for discovering potential partners, including 2-1-1, ConnectATX (both through the United Way), these guides go the next step in showing where partners are located, and most likely to be useful to community schools.



**Creating systems at the community level:** Neighborhoods are usually served by one or two elementary schools, a middle school and a high school. Starting in 2006, Austin Voices began gathering partners together that served schools in and around the St. John neighborhood for monthly “St. John Community School Alliance” meetings. Between 25 and 40 partners, including representatives from four campuses (Brown ES, Pickle ES, Reagan/Northeast HS, Webb MS) have met monthly since that time, planning joint strategies, events, adding new services, and sharing calendars. Relationships have been built between partners and campuses, and partners have welcomed having access to campus leaders on a regular basis. Campuses have presented academic data to partners, as well as needs that cut across campuses. Partners have looked together at neighborhood data, and focused on key issues, such as access to healthcare and dropout prevention. Events such as the annual HopeFest resource fair at Reagan/Northeast High School





and the annual St. John Unity Walk, have been developed, and the SJCSA has been recognized as a 5-time winner of the “100 Best Communities for Youth in America” award from America’s Promise Alliance, resulting in an appearance on NBC’s “Today” show. The community school alliance model has been replicated by Austin Voices into other clusters of schools, including the Rundberg area (Graham ES, Hart ES, Walnut Creek ES, Dobie MS and Reagan/Northeast HS), north central Austin (Cook ES, Wooldridge ES, Burnet MS and Lanier/Navarro HS), central Austin (Martin MS, Eastside Memorial HS and surrounding elementary schools) and Dove Springs (Rodriguez ES, Widen ES, and Mendez MS).

**Creating systems at the city and county level:** Austin Voices has worked with the City of Austin Mayor’s Office, the Community Advancement Network (CAN), United Way for Greater Austin, Communities In Schools, AISD, Del Valle ISD, Manor ISD, Education Austin and several other organizations to begin building city and county-wide partner coordination to support community school strategies. Called the **Greater Austin Community School Coalition (GACSC)**, this team has hosted a number of quarterly strategic planning meetings across six strategic program areas that has resulted in a needs assessment, preliminary strategies to address needs, and a regional logic model that can serve as the basis for community school expansion. Groups participating in the planning have included:

EARLY CHILDHOOD	HEALTH	FAMILY STABILITY
United Way for Greater Austin Any Baby Can Austin ISD Early Childhood ASPIRE AVANCE Child Inc. (Headstart) CommunitySync Easter Seals Head Start Healthy Families SAFE Alliance Success by 6 Thinkery YMCA ELR	Ascension Seton Austin ISD Health Services Austin Public Health Austin Travis County Integral Care Central Health Child and Youth Mental Health Partnership CommUnity Care Dell Children’s Health Express Dell Medical School It’s Time Texas Marathon Kids Michael & Susan Dell Foundation People’s Community Clinic Project Access Samaritan Center St. David’s Foundation Travis County Medical Society UT Community Collaborative	Asian American Resource Center Austin Energy Austin Voices for Education and Youth Family Resource Centers Austin Tenants Council BASTA City of Austin/Austin Public Health ECHO (Ending Community Homeless Coalition) Foundation Communities Housing Authority City of Austin Housing Works Travis County Health and Human Services
WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT	STUDENT-CENTERED LEARNING	EXTENDED LEARNING
American Youthworks Austin Community College Austin Urban League Capital IDEA Community Advancement Network Goodwill of Central Texas SkillPoint Alliance University of Texas Entrepreneurship and Innovation Workforce Solutions	Austin ISD Austin Voices for Education and Youth Breakthrough Communities In Schools Del Valle ISD Education Austin Manor ISD Ready by 21	Andy Roddick Foundation Austin ISD 21st Century and PrimeTime Programs City of Austin Parks and Recreation Boys and Girls Club of Central Texas Campfire Creative Action 4-H Learn All The Time

Since 2015, the GACSC leadership team has created a number of tools that can be used to support the “Campaign for the Future,” including:

1. Community School Logic Model
2. Results of quarterly planning meetings by six program area groups (Early Childhood, Extended Learning, Family Stability, Health, Student-Centered Learning, and Workforce Development)
3. Sample GACSC strategic plan document (Health program area)
4. 4-page Community Schools Brochure

# Community School Logic Model

## Greater Austin Community School Coalition Logic Model

Vision: Community Schools are neighborhood centers of flourishing communities where everyone belongs, works together and thrives

**What We Know**  
The Needs & The Research

**What We Do**  
Strategic Inputs

**What We See Happen**  
Short-Term and Long-Term Outcomes

Key Belief: Student success in school is affected by both in-school and out-of-school factors.

### Needs and Challenges

- High Student Mobility
- Shortage of Affordable Housing
- Concentration of Child Poverty
- High # of non-English speakers and immigrant families
- High rates of violence, trauma and bullying
- High-risk students underserved
- Limited access to health and mental health services
- Limited access to high-quality early childhood programs
- Inconsistent academic performance by local schools
- Overcrowded or under-enrolled schools
- Low parent involvement at middle and high schools
- Reductions in state and local funding for social services
- Reductions in state and local funding for out-of-school time and enrichment programs

### Strategic Practices

		
Family and Community Engagement	Coordinated Student and Family Supports	Shared Leadership and Planning
		
Welcoming and Positive School Climate	Sustainable Resources and Infrastructure	Positive Behavior Practices

### Short-Term Outcomes

**Family/Community Engagement:** Schools use tiered approach to engage parents; Partner teams and events in place.

**Coordinated Supports:** Structures in place to coordinate student and family supports. Partners share data and outcomes.

**Shared Leadership/Planning:** All stakeholders (teachers, staff, parents, students, community) involved in planning.

**School Climate:** School is welcoming to parents and community. Teachers, staff and students work collaboratively.

**Resources/Infrastructure:** Cross-sector funding opportunities explored. Processes for district and partner collaboration.

**Positive Behavior:** Schools assess approaches to discipline; Positive behavior and restorative practice training in place.

### Long-Term Outcomes

**Family/Community Engagement:** School is hub of community and family engagement.

**Coordinated Supports:** Student and family supports coordinated, resulting in efficient and effective partnerships.

**Shared Leadership/Planning:** Campus stakeholders plan and implement annually to support agreed upon goals.

**School Climate:** Schools are open to all, with processes in place to support parent, student, teacher and volunteer involvement.



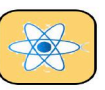


**Resources/Infrastructure:** Cross-sector funding at all levels supports campus needs. Partner structures in place.

**Positive Behavior:** All campuses use positive and restorative approaches to student behavior, with reduced discipline referrals.

### What Does the Research Tell Us?

- Poverty puts kids at risk of not being successful in school. (Jensen, 2009; Moore & Emig, 2014)
- Helping families stabilize increases attendance and reduces mobility. (Rumberger & Larson, 1998, Rhodes, 2005)
- Early childhood education helps kids read on grade level by 3rd grade. (Hart & Risley, 1995)
- Fine arts and enrichment programs help academic performance. (McRel, 2004)
- Coordinating supports for students improves student outcomes. (Adelman & Taylor, 2005)
- Increasing connections with parents and community leads to improved student outcomes. (Epstein, 2001)

### Strategic Programs

		
High Quality Early Childhood Programs	Effective Student-Centered Learning & Supports	High Quality Expanded Learning & Enrichment
		
Workforce Development Programs	Health Supports (Social, Emotional, Physical)	Family Stability Supports

### Short-Term Outcomes

**Early Childhood:** Increased participation by 3-4 year olds; Increased awareness of high-quality resources.

**Student-Centered Learning:** Programs reflect needs, diversity and interests of students; Experienced teachers retained.

**Expanded Learning/Enrichment:** Programs match needs/interests of students & community; Improved program quality.

**Workforce Development:** College and career preparation is part of curriculum; Students and adults access workforce opportunities.

**Health:** CATCH planning in place. Partnerships provide access to health/mental health, insurance, immunizations.

**Family Stability:** FRCS provide resources to increase stability; Schools involved in partnerships to improve housing, health, etc.

### Long-Term Outcomes

**Early Childhood:** All families have access to parenting resources and high-quality early childhood learning environments.

**Student-Centered Learning:** Individualized learning meets needs and interests of students; Schools meet/exceed standards.

**Expanded Learning/Enrichment:** Common standards support high quality programs; Assessment and sustainable funding in place.

**Workforce Development:** All students and adults have access to real world work opportunities and training, including internships.

**Health:** Schools have adopted CATCH framework. All families have access to healthcare supporting regular school attendance

**Family Stability:** All families have access to stabilizing resources (health, housing, employment) and adult education.

Overall Outcome: All students are prepared for college, career and life.



## Results of GACSC Quarterly Planning Meetings

	Overall Goal	Existing Challenges	Proposed Strategies
EARLY CHILDHOOD	All children and families have access to high-quality early learning environments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Awareness of early childhood opportunities</li> <li>•Lack of pre-K/early childhood/childcare capacity</li> <li>•Quality of childcare</li> <li>•Lack of campus early childhood needs assessment</li> <li>•Training for school staff and parents</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•100% of community schools, family resource centers, and AISD family support staff are trained in early childhood resources</li> <li>•Work to increase participation in Pre-K for eligible 3 &amp; 4 year olds</li> <li>•Advocate for funding full day Pre-K</li> <li>•Offer early childhood/2-gen programs at schools in partnership with local providers</li> <li>•Use community-based strategies to increase quality of childcare</li> <li>•Perform an early childhood needs assessment at all campuses, and add an Early Childhood Navigator to each vertical team</li> </ul>
HEALTH	All students, school staff and community have access to high-quality physical & mental healthcare, supporting lifestyles and school attendance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Reducing uninsured</li> <li>•Immunization compliance</li> <li>•Chronic conditions (i.e. asthma, diabetes)</li> <li>•Lack of comprehensive health strategies</li> <li>•Gaps in health/mental health access</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Adopt CATCH (Comprehensive Approach to Children’s Health) strategy at all community schools</li> <li>•Use needs survey, FRCs and events to increase % of insured</li> <li>•Make immunizations easily available to all ages of children</li> <li>•Work with schools and partners to prevent and manage chronic health conditions (i.e. asthma, diabetes)</li> <li>•Use multiple strategies (mobile clinics, campus-based clinics, telehealth, school/clinic partnerships, events) to increase access to primary care providers, school physicals and wellness activities</li> </ul>
FAMILY STABILITY	Reduce student mobility by providing all families with supports and knowledge that increases long-term family stability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•High student mobility (&gt;20%) at many low-income campuses</li> <li>•Lack of equitable resources</li> <li>•Rising rents due to gentrification</li> <li>•Language and education barriers</li> <li>•Difficult to navigate systems for families</li> <li>•Transportation barriers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Expand capacity of Family Resource Centers at strategic campuses to provide stabilizing resource (i.e. housing, utilities, employment)</li> <li>•Expand “Adult Academy” concept of adult education across campuses, giving parents more opportunities that fit their schedule</li> <li>•Advocate at city and county level for funding to mitigate rising housing expenses for low-income families</li> <li>•Use a tiered approach to communicate about resources to families, using targeted strategies to overcome language and other barriers</li> <li>•Partner with workforce development to expand job opportunities</li> </ul>
STUDENT-CENTERED	All students will be in learning environments that support their needs, interests, cultural backgrounds and learning styles	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Gaps in resources to meet the needs of ELLS, special ed</li> <li>•Over-focus on testing and accountability rankings</li> <li>•Needs for more teacher, parent and student co-planning</li> <li>•Gaps in student supports</li> <li>•High teacher turnover affecting learning</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Schools will be structured and teachers continually supported in developing differentiated learning environments that support success for all students</li> <li>•Teacher turnover will be reduced, especially at low-income schools, through incentive pay, improved work environment, and training</li> <li>•Student and family supports, especially for ELLS and special education students, will have improved coordination and capacity</li> <li>•Students, families and teachers/staff will co-plan their school to reflect their needs, interests, aspirations, culture and learning style</li> <li>•Schools will be provided with resources to provide equity across AISD in access to enrichment, after school, athletics, and fine arts.</li> </ul>
EXTENDED LEARNING	All students have access to high-quality after school, summer and school day extended learning and enrichment programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•After school programs do not have sustainable funding, leading to campus inequities</li> <li>•Improved program quality</li> <li>•Programs that reflect needs and interests of students and community</li> <li>•Academic needs crowding out enrichment at some campuses</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Survey all schools annually for after school, summer and enrichment funding sources/needs and develop long-term equitable funding plan</li> <li>•Offer no-cost training through Learn All the Time to expanded learning providers to help raise program quality</li> <li>•Make after school programming, including homework help, universal at all Title 1 campuses</li> <li>•Work with Title 1 campuses to ensure enrichment opportunities are part of the school day for all students</li> <li>•Use focus groups and surveys to assess student/community interests</li> </ul>
WORKFORCE DEV.	All students and parents have access to real-world college and career training and experiences through public/private partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Inequities in connections to workforce opportunities</li> <li>•Lack of adult workforce training on school campuses</li> <li>•Capacity of ACC for training in high-need jobs</li> <li>•Logistical barriers to internships and practicums</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Partner with businesses and workforce agencies to expand and standardize access to practicums, internships and workforce training</li> <li>•Expand on-campus workforce training, and design off-campus college and career programs with minimal disruption to school-day</li> <li>•Expand # of ACC Career Academies providing workforce training and certification in high-need and high-demand industries</li> <li>•Make it easier for adult workforce training to use school sites</li> <li>•Use campus-based workforce counselor or a community workforce partner to publicize job opportunities to students and adults</li> </ul>

Strategic Program #5: Health Supports

# Community Schools are Healthy Schools!



We know that healthy students feel better, attend school regularly, and are ready to be academically successful. Our Community Schools use a comprehensive approach to health that builds healthy practices and supports into schools, families and communities.

For example, community schools assess the access families have to healthcare each year, whether through health insurance other means. Working together with local health partners, we make sure that all students and families have the most access possible, and that gaps are filled through mobile clinics and other supports.

**Other examples of ways local community schools are increasing health include:**

- Working with partners to make sure all children are immunized
- Providing free health, vision and dental screenings at campus and community health fairs, as well as free sports physicals on campuses
- Working to increase access to campus-based health and mental health services
- Supporting families with crisis health needs through Family Resource Centers
- Improving nutrition through food pantries, nutrition classes, and feeding programs
- Working with partners to increase opportunities for children to be physically fit



## Greater **Austin** Community School Coalition

City of Austin/Travis County/AISD/DVISD/MISD/Community Partners working together to build strong schools and vibrant communities





**Strategic Program #5: Health Supports**

# Community Schools are Healthy Schools!



In September of each year, community schools will assess health needs by using:

- Campus-based Family Needs Survey (insurance, asthma, prenatal, healthcare access)
- School district health data (immunizations, obesity, fitness, mental health)
- Hospital and clinic data (health needs by zip code, mobile health express use)
- City and County health data (public health, chronic health needs, healthcare access)
- Nonprofit and coalition data (nutrition, access to healthcare, health insurance)



Through a series of planning meetings, healthcare and education partners have set the following strategic goals:

- All community schools will use a coordinated approach to healthcare (CATCH) to improve health outcomes on their campuses and in their communities
- All community schools will leverage community health partnerships to help families access health insurance, mental health services and a primary care provider
- All community schools will reach 95% immunization compliance



Community Schools in Austin will work together to coordinate actions and resources around improved health outcomes. Examples include:

- Neighborhood health fairs providing information, health screenings and immunizations
- Providing free or low-cost sports physicals on campuses, through events and local clinics
- Supporting families with crisis health needs through Family Resource Centers
- Improving nutrition through food pantries, nutrition classes and feeding programs
- Ensuring children with chronic health needs have access to appropriate providers

**Healthcare Partners Working Together**

*Partners who have helped in the development of community school health strategies include:*

- Austin ISD Comprehensive Health Services
- Austin Public Health
- Austin Voices for Education and Youth
- Central Health
- Communities in Schools
- CommUnity Care
- Dell Children’s Health Express
- Foundation Communities
- It’s Time Texas
- Manor ISD
- Marathon Kids
- People’s Community Clinic
- Project Access
- Samaritan Center
- Seedling Foundation
- St. David’s Foundation
- Brenda Strama
- Travis County Medical Society
- UT Community Collaborative

**What is CATCH?**

**CATCH (Coordinated Approach to Children’s Health)** is a national healthy schools framework that is used by Texas schools (including Central Texas). CATCH has been used in Austin for over a decade, and provides a strong foundation of best practices for improving campus and community health.

The 10 elements of CATCH are:

1. Health Services
2. Health Education
3. Phys Ed/Physical Activity
4. Nutrition
5. Counseling/Social Services
6. Social/Emotional Climate
7. Physical Environment
8. Employee Wellness
9. Family Engagement
10. Community Involvement



View diagram at: <https://catchinfo.org/coordinated-school-health/>

# GACSC Community Schools Brochure

## What is a Community School?

The over 5,000 Community Schools across the country come in many shapes and sizes, but all of them are committed to one thing: doing whatever it takes to help students be successful in school, life and beyond.

The key strategy Community Schools use to support students is **PARTNERSHIP**. Government agencies, businesses, nonprofits, community and faith-based groups, healthcare organizations, after school programs . . . the list is long of those who join together to make sure that students and families have what they need to succeed.

Community Schools also practice **SHARED LEADERSHIP**, involving parents, teachers, staff, students and community in the creation of great schools.

Community Schools are a welcoming **HUB FOR THE COMMUNITY**, opening their doors early and late for adult education, extended learning for youth, and community events.

Finally, Community Schools use **EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICES**, developed over decades of work, to help schools improve, students succeed and families thrive.



## USEFUL RESOURCES

**Coalition for Community Schools**  
www.communityschools.org

**National Center for Community Schools**  
www.nccs.org

**National Education Association (NEA)**  
www.nea/communityschools

**The Center for Popular Democracy**  
Publication: "Community Schools: Transforming Struggling Schools into Thriving Schools"

**Learning Policy Institute**  
Publication: "Community Schools as an Effective School Improvement Strategy: A Review of the Evidence"

### Contact Us

GACSC is facilitated by the  
Community Advancement Network  
(512) 414-0323  
info@canatx.org



## Greater Austin Community School Coalition



**Our Vision:**  
All schools are centers of  
flourishing communities where  
everyone belongs, works together  
and thrives

## Who We Are

The **Greater Austin Community School Coalition** was formed in 2016, born out of a year-long process convened by Austin Mayor Steve Adler to find new ways to support education. The planning team, which included regional school districts, nonprofits, city and county agencies, workforce, higher education, early childhood and health partners, decided to adopt the Community School framework, with the goals of supporting existing community schools, growing new community schools, and strengthening cross-sector partnerships supporting students and families.

Since 2016, the GACSC has convened cross-sector partner strategic planning meetings, resulting in a logic model and strategic planning goals set across six program areas. The Community Advancement Network (CAN) has facilitated the GACSC Leadership Team, which consists of the following members: Austin Area Urban League, AISD, Austin Voices for Education and Youth, City of Austin, Communities in Schools, CAN, Education Austin, Learn All the Time, Texas AFT, Travis County, and United Way for Greater Austin. Over 40 partner organizations and school districts, including Del Valle ISD and Manor ISD, have participated in planning.



## The Evolution of Community Schools in Austin

Austin's Community School efforts stretch back nearly four decades. In the late 1980's, schools significantly increased funding for adult education and after school programs, supported by local, state and federal partners. Over the next two decades, city-wide conversations addressing poverty brought new workforce, early childhood, health, and social service initiatives to support students and families. Nonprofits supporting youth, including Communities in Schools, partnered with many high-needs campuses.



In 2007-09, community partners used the community school framework to support successful turnarounds at Webb Middle School and Reagan High School, two AISD campuses at risk of closure for low academic performance. Family Resource Centers at both schools began providing needed wraparound supports, and partners worked with AISD to strengthen services. Today, 12 AISD campuses identify as Community Schools, with many others adopting elements of the model. While still developing, Community Schools has shown promising results, including increased attendance and graduation rates, reduced student mobility, stronger community engagement, and new innovative programming.

## Strategic Practices and Programs

Community Schools increase equity in education by reducing barriers for students and families, improving conditions for learning, and expanding opportunities for all students. While every school and community are unique, the GACSC has identified six common program areas to target for improvement in Austin:



High Quality  
Early Childhood  
Programs



Effective  
Student-Centered  
Learning & Supports



High Quality  
Expanded Learning  
& Enrichment



Workforce  
Development  
Programs



Health Supports  
(Social, Emotional,  
Physical)



Family Stability  
Supports

These six program areas are supported by six strategic practices:

- Family and Community Engagement
- Coordinated Student and Family Supports
- Shared Leadership and Planning
- A Welcoming and Positive School Climate
- Sustainable Resources and Infrastructure
- Positive Behavior Practices

### Community School Strategic Process

ANNUAL NEEDS  
ASSESSMENT  
of Schools and  
Communities



STRATEGIC  
COMMUNITY  
GOALS  
Shared by  
Schools and  
Partners



ACTIONS  
& RESOURCES  
Coordinated in a  
Tiered Approach



SUCCESSFUL  
& THRIVING  
Students,  
Families, Schools  
& Communities



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Austin Voices would like to thank the many partners who have walked this community school journey over the past 13 years.

- The St. John, Webb, Reagan/Northeast, Dobie, Pearce, Lanier/Navarro, Eastside Memorial, Martin, Burnet and Mendez communities, including their elementary schools.
- The City of Austin, Travis County, and AISD who have jointly funded Family Resource Centers since 2014.
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- The leadership team of the Greater Austin Community School Coalition (CAN, United Way, Communities In Schools, Austin Voices, Learn All the Time), and especially Raul Alvarez from CAN.
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- Our many fellow education advocates, including the Austin Voices board, thousands of Save Texas Schools parents, teachers, and students, TAMSA, TEV, Education Austin, Texas AFT, Texas State Teachers Association, ATPE, and the many public officials and legislators who have supported community schools in Texas. Special thanks to Kyle Serrette from the NEA and Shital Shah from the AFT.
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**WE WANT**  
**COMMUNITY**  
**in OUR SCHOOLS**

**AUSTIN VOICES FOR EDUCATION AND YOUTH**  
**5221 LEDESMA RD. AUSTIN, TX 78721 512-653-4935**